

From the DttP Vault: Librarians and the Moscow Coup—August 16 to 23, 1991

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Editor's note: This article originally appeared in vol. 20, no. 2, June 1992, which is available online at <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/489643>. This is the final historic article from DttP celebrating 50 years, which I thought appropriate with the ongoing war in Ukraine. The author was Chair of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Section on Official Publications from 1985 to 1989.

As we waited in line for a flight out of Moscow on Friday, August 23, E. J. Josey said it for all of us—“It was an emotional week, tiring because of the emotions.” We librarians had been part of the revolution against the Moscow coup, the revolution for freedom. One of the Soviet librarians, who has risked her life at the barricades, explained that because we stayed in Moscow during the coup and continued the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) meeting, that it helped protect those librarians fighting the coup. She and the other Soviet librarians thanked us with hugs and kisses.

I believe that she was right and that IFLA's decision to continue the conference in as normal a manner as possible including holding all the evening receptions, protected the 1500 librarians from 60 countries, especially 500 Soviet librarians. It provided an official reason for their presence in central Moscow and protected them, at least for a few days, from the consequences of their critical analysis of the state of libraries in the Soviet Union. There was no way they could retract their criticism because it has been printed and distributed to all the delegates several days before the coup.

One of the Soviet librarians apologized to me on the morning of Wednesday, August 21 for the possibility that she might not make it back to our Section's Workshop on Freedom of Information the next morning because she was going to spend

the night at the “White House,” the Russian parliament, protecting Yeltsin.

She explained that even though she and her family were unhappy about the economic situation, they valued freedom and without freedom the economic situation would not improve. She believed that Gorbachev was doing his best and that she did not want him deposed by a coup. She emphasized how important it was to protect the democratically elected Russian government, especially their President Yeltsin. She thanked me for staying for the meetings and for giving her moral support.

She said that she loved her country and that she and her husband and their three young sons had discussed immigration but had rejected the idea because of their love for their country. I told her that as a mother of three sons and a lover of my own country, I could understand her feelings and that I was proud of her.

Unbelievable as it seemed Wednesday morning, that night we were celebrating at the Palace of the Kremlin, arriving shortly after the tanks withdrew from the entrance. It was a wonderful, joyous victory celebration. We and the Soviet librarians toasted each other with vodka and danced to gypsy music. Tanya took the gold and black flowers she had made from her blouse and pinned them on my blouse as a memory of our victory.

The Minister of Culture, Nikolaj Gubenko, toasted our bravery and we toasted his and we all toasted victory. He thanked us and our countries for our support during the coup.

In order to put the celebration in context, let me share the events of the week of August 16 to the 23rd. The week had started on a rather stressful note since I had barely managed to obtain a visa in time to catch my Thursday, August 15 flight. Getting a visa from the USSR is so complicated that people in Washington, D.C. pay a firm \$65 to do the paper work. My case was complicated further because a group of us were making

arrangements through a free enterprise firm, not Intours, therefore making my paperwork suspect.

Friday, August 16

As the plane landed Friday at noon, I looked outside at the patched runway with some uneasiness and wondered why I had gone to so much trouble to get there. My fears were somewhat relieved when I saw Emma, a sweet Russian lady waving a sign with my name on it waiting at the gate. She handed me a bunch of flowers and in Russian told me to wait while she got the car and driver. The harrowing ride into town over a highway being repaired during heavy traffic and our arrival at a decrepit hotel renewed my fears that this was not going to be my favorite IFLA. Our tour director had changed the hotel several times and this hotel was definitely not the hotel in the central city near a metro stop we had been promised. But as events unfolded we were grateful for our out of the way hotel.

My first day in Moscow turned into a bit of a comedy as I was ushered into a room already occupied by a man. Only after many nyets and showing Emma the man's clothing did I convince her that he was not my roommate. My roommate Sieglinde Rooney from the University of Alberta, Canada was scheduled to arrive until that evening. After reading the tag on the luggage I discovered that were were in Rowland and Heather Brown's room since they were part of our tour, at least I knew I was in the right hotel. The floor lady stepped in to resolve the problem and after several phone calls I was taken to another room with startlingly bright red 50s type Scandinavian furniture, a small sitting room, TV, refrigerator and tea cups.

Emma made gestures about my possible hunger, took me to a large dimly lit dining room and left me to a late lunch. All the meals at the Zvezdnaya Hotel were regimented. You had no choice, unless you call refusing the food a choice, and after several days we did en masse refuse the raw eggs served at breakfast. During the coup the chef did not arrive and others made us kasha or mush (similar to grits), which was delicious and kept us full until dinner. We had been warned that there would be no lunch at the Conference Center and we had all brought snacks. After the first couple of days the IFLA organizers convinced the Center staff to sell salami and cheese sandwiches, rolls, instant coffee and Pepsi, which we at standing up at tables.

As coffee addicted Americans, we persuaded the hotel staff to change the rules in one respect. We insisted on our coffee immediately and not at the end of breakfast. We even resorted to going back to the kitchen and fetching it for ourselves.

That night we piled into buses and drove for several hours to a cooperative restaurant housed in a building that reminded me of a tenement. The restaurant itself resembled a tent and the

walls were adorned with icons. We feasted on all the food, juice, vodka, and champagne we wanted for only eight American dollars apiece. I had been warned by several Ukrainian friends who had recently returned from the USSR not to drink the water or juice, so I immediately asked for the vodka and champagne. This impressed Valery, our guide, and he and I started our friendship over a toast and my one Russian word, *nostrovnia*.

Our Russian guide Valery, about 50, our 25 year old interpreter Sergei, and our bus driver Luv took good care of us all week, getting us to the meetings and receptions around tanks, barricaded streets and demonstrators in our mini yellow buses. They interpreted the news on the radio and TV and help keep us calm, even though they were visibly worried and believed that if the coup succeeded that their free enterprise tourist business was doomed as Valery said, "I'll go back to growing potatoes." On Monday, as we dodged tanks, he looked in his English/Russian dictionary and wryly commented that "These are slippery times."

We seemed to be constantly talking with each other and our Leningrad Russians about the fast moving events. They were with us from breakfast until bedtime and were very protective. My appreciation and affection grew for them as the week progressed. We could see that the generations were interpreting events differently. Although Valery, former chair of the Communist party in Leningrad, was very unhappy about the coup, he was more certain of a coup victory and spoke cautiously from the beginning.

Saturday, August 17

We spent the day registering, attending Standing committee meetings and taking a tour of the Kremlin grounds and churches. That night we went to the Arabat, listened to music and surveyed the wares of they many young vendors. We didn't buy anything, thinking that we would be back later. Many of us never got to buy anything because the vendors, like many other Soviets, disappeared when the coup started.

Al Kagan, Linda Williamson and I enjoyed a lunch at the Belgrade Hotel and discovered the cheapest meal in town, a large bowl of borscht for only 17 cents. We also discovered that even if it is on the menu that does not mean it is available for ordering.

Sunday, August 18

Siglinde and I took a tour of the Kremlin grounds and walked around downtown streets watching the Muscovites line up for ice cream and children's toy store. There were long lines everywhere, particularly in front of Lenin's tomb and St. Basil's. We decided to save Red Square for another day.

Our hotel was located very close to the television tower and was the headquarters for the troops that took it over. The military moved in on Sunday night. We saw the medal encrusted officers and the fatigue clad elevator guards as we picked up our room keys about 11 p.m. after our return from dinner.

The fifth floor was off limits, as we learned when we accidentally stopped at that floor and were ordered not to get off. By Tuesday morning the elevators were locked so that we could not use certain elevators at all, and we saw them hauling boxes of canned good and armfuls of fresh vegetables up to the blocked off floors.

Monday, August 19

Our American group suddenly found itself eating alone in the vast dining room, while the other guests used the first floor public room. There must have been a party in our dining room on Sunday night, because we found the tables and floor littered with dirty glasses, empty vodka bottle, cigarettes, bread, and a stage still set up for music.

Sergei, our interpreter, openly expressed great dismay and kept repeating, "This is terrible." He sadly speculated that the Russian people might say there is no meat in the stores so perhaps a coup is for the best, but by nightfall he was convinced that his people would fight. He told me that he and his wife had considered immigrating but they loved their country and thought being part of a free enterprise business gave them a good future. He thought that they were much freer under Gorbachev and was optimistic about the future, but now with the possibility of return to the old ways, he was in great despair.

I had brought a history of Russian literature and an unexpurgated English translation of Gogol's "Dead Souls" to share with a Soviet librarian, but seeing Sergei's despair, I decided to give him the book instead. It seemed to cheer him up a bit.

I gave Valery a Budweiser beer key ring and he promptly put his house keys on the ring. I told him that was the beer I drank back home Missouri, and I thought it an appropriate present since he and I toasted each other with vodka that first night in Moscow when we ate dinner at a cooperative restaurant. I did not tell him that it was a favor handed out at the White House Conference on Libraries and I had gathered it up with other small items to trade on the advice of some of my friends who had recently visited the USSR.

We had conferred that morning at breakfast and had decided that we would take the tour of the Kremlin and St. Basil's in spite of the coup because it might be our last opportunity to see them. In spite of our guide's warning, we took photographs of the takeover by tanks and troops of the television tower as we passed it on our way into the central city.

When we arrived at the Rossiya Hotel we proceeded directly up the hill to the Kremlin. Everything seemed normal. Tourists were walking about and standing in line at St. Basil's. I photographed the Chair of the Rare Books Section as he stood listening to our tour guide. He seemed unaware of any danger.

We decided to tour Gum's department store first and stop at St. Basil's on our way back. Gums was jammed with people, many of them in line. Gums was built in 1893, still lovely, but in deplorable condition. The clothing, linens and other goods smelled of mold and dirt. Sieglinde and I bought post cards from two enterprising teenagers, but refused the opportunity to buy a military hat.

As we stepped outside we saw an American woman reporter and sound man interviewing people. It occurred to us that we should have stopped them and gotten on TV so our family would know we were all right, but we were too busy photographing the people crossing themselves at the small replica of St. Basil's, which had been constructed as a way to collect funds for the renovation of the church. We learned later that Brian Jacobs, one of our accompanying persons, had been interviewed.

Unlike the day before, a holiday commemorating the Air Force, there were no long lines in front of Lenin's tomb. We stopped and took photographs in front of the tomb and then we went across Red Square to St. Basil's. We heard the unworried voices of American tourists. We joined the ticket line of mostly mothers and children until one of the church guides told us that as IFLA delegates we could tour the church for free.

After our tour, we headed down the hill to the Rossiya Hotel to change some money. It would be our last opportunity since the banks closed that day. We compared notes about the coup with American students standing in the exchange line. As we left the Rossiya and descended the long steep steps to the mini yellow buses, we saw a long line of tanks driving down the highway along the river headed for the central city and the "White House" (Russian Parliament). I climbed up on the wall and photographed the tanks. Our Russian guide urged me to get off the wall and all of us to get into the bus and head back to our hotel.

As we drove back to our hotel, we were stopped in a traffic jam at the Novotny news service as tanks backed onto the front steps. We took photographs through the curtains of the bus, in spite of Sergei's caution about the danger. Those behind us in the traffic jam started honking their horns, perhaps not realizing that this was no ordinary traffic jam. After the tanks were in place, they allowed us to continue and we saw people surrounding the tanks talking to the soldiers. We saw them putting flowers onto the tanks. We saw knots of people discussing the crisis.

Rowland and Heather Brown and Brian Jacobs told us about how they had walked over to the White House to see what was going on and talked with some of the people defending the White House. They had seen an old grizzled war veteran uniformed and adorned with medals, pounding on a tank telling the young soldiers not to side with the fascists and kill their grandmothers and grandfathers. They saw people of all ages arguing with the soldiers that they should not defend the fascists and kill their own people. Rowland said the defenders had been reluctant to allow them inside the lines until they convinced them that they were for the good guys.

On return to our hotel, we caucused as to whether we would return to the Rossiya Hotel for the official opening, reception and ballet. We decided that the only way we were going to find out what was happening was to attend, and we all went to our rooms to change clothes.

As we drove back to the Rossiya, we saw even more tanks and crowds of people discussing the situation. All but one of the TV stations had been shut down, and only one voice could be heard on the radio. And he simply kept repeated that Gorbachev was ill and that the Soviet people should support the emergency committee, go to work and work hard. Sergei told us that probably meant that Gorbachev was dead or would soon be dead.

On arrival at the Rossiya for the 2:30 p.m. official opening, we heard a babble of voices from the delegates, all comparing notes. The Minister of Culture, Nikolaj Gubenko, tried to assure us that we would be protected at that he would personally protect the Soviet librarians, who were beginning to fear that their candid appraisal of the state of Soviet libraries would get them in trouble with hard liners. Mr. Gubenko said that he had spoke with the Emergency Committee and the Head of the Supreme Soviet, and had been assured that the librarians would be find. He asked us to stay calm and to continue our conference.

Bob Wedgeworth, newly elected President of IFLA, told me that the Executive Committee of IFLA would meet Tuesday morning and would decide whether to continue or cancel the meeting. It was our understanding that the Baltic librarians were preparing to leave and that the Scandinavian librarians were considering sympathy boycott of the conference. The Scandinavian librarians were later told by their government to stay.

After the official opening, we had a light buffet, music and dancing. My friend Tae Moon Lee, an American teaching in Korea, came up to visit and told me that some 40 Koreans were attending the conference. The Koreans did not seem inclined to leave the conference.

Several of us had difficulty finding food and decided to go to the other side of the hotel to find a café. On the way we encountered Dr. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, on his way to join a Congress of Compatriots, organized by Boris Yeltsin. Many of the attendee were emigres and they had come back to confer with the Soviets on how to structure a new democracy. Dr. Billington told us that he preferred finding out from them what was going on rather than attending “Romeo and Juliet,” our entertainment for the evening. Mr. Billington told us that he was a delegate to the Conference. He also told us that he had heard that Yeltsin was under house arrest. As we entered the hotel we saw many bearded men leafletting the crowd in the lobby.

Not finding hot food, we returned to our side of the hotel and went to a pub for bratwurst and beer. No one in the pub seemed worried. I assumed that the demonstrators, seen on Red Square that afternoon carrying a large pre-Lenin Russian tri-color flag must be part of the conference that the Librarian of Congress was attending.

After our snack we returned to “Romeo and Juliet,” which seemed quite appropriate as the confrontation on stage mirrored the outside world. Sergei, our interpreter, was quite amazed at the sight of 1000 librarians watching a ballet while a coup was going on just up the hill in Red Square. As the ballet progressed, more and more people left for their hotels. Tanks were already at the White House and those delegates at the Belgrade Hotel would have to walk right past them.

During the intermissions, I exchanged Documents to the People and Depository Logo pins with librarians from Canada, New Zealand, Holland, and the Soviet Union. A friend told me the next day that he had heard shots coming from the Kremlin later than night as he took a walk outside the Rossiya.

At the close of the ballet, we went outside to our buses, only to find that the Leningrad licensed bus had not been allowed to return to pick us up, since only Moscow vehicles were allowed on the streets. Sixteen of us piled into a 10-seater bus. We were reluctant to send anyone home on the subway, not knowing what was going on. Some of our colleagues told us that they had gone to Red Square that afternoon and photographed the tanks that had moved in after our visit, and Jean had even given photos to the soldiers sitting in the tanks. It almost seemed like a party.

We sat on each other’s laps and made jokes about the tanks at every bridge and whether we would make it back to our hotel. We were grateful to be together and heading away from the central city and the growing crowds. We heard that Yeltsin had called for a strike and had asked people to come to the White House. As we drove on, we saw a wall of demonstrators on the

bridges and buses blocking streets and bridges. Our Moscow bus driver was very adept at getting us around barricades. We learned about the famous Moscow u-turns.

Valery gave us a briefing after our return from the ballet and cautioned us to be quiet, let Russian people do whatever could be done, and not try to do anything. We should be careful about photographing tanks and demonstrators. He would protect us and would continue to take us to meetings and receptions as long as it was possible. I had the feeling he had had conversations with the military occupying our hotel. I got the impression that the military had not expected to find a group of American librarians staying at the hotel and were doing their best to keep us isolate and unaware of what they were doing.

Tuesday, August 20

Tuesday morning some of us brought small Russian tricolor flags to wear on our badges. We wore our badges and carried our IFLA bags as if they were our armor, telling each other that even the emergency committee would not want to kill a bunch of librarians. We boarded our buses at 8:30 a.m. and headed into the central city for our meetings. We could look out the window of the conference center and see the giant blimp with the tricolor Russian flag hanging from it tied to the Russian Parliament building. At one point helicopters seemed to be trying to knock down the blimp.

I attended the 9 a.m. organizing meeting of the new women's group and then went to the American caucus where we were promised a briefing on what our embassy advised us to do. We waited in vain. We had given our passport numbers, names and hotels to Bob Doyle of the American Library Association for transmission to the American Embassy on Monday night. Bob offered his room in the Rossiya as a place for Americans to watch Cable News Network (CNN) between meetings. They soon brought a TV down to the Conference Center lobby so people could stop for a few minutes between meetings.

The IFLA Executive Board met and decided to continue the meeting as if nothing was wrong. We were given no official advice as to whether we should leave early or not. We were advised to consult our embassies. We were told that the reception at the Pushkin Museum would be held that night and that there would be buses. We heard that so many people were canceling their post tours and leaving early that there was a strong possibility that there would not be a quorum on Friday for our next IFLA Council meeting. Sections started canceling workshops for Thursday.

Our Section on Government Information agreed that our workshop on Freedom of Information had taken on added importance because of the coup and the disinformation that

the Soviet people were receiving, and that unless prevented by subsequent events, we would convene our workshop. All of our speakers indicated they were staying. Our Berlin based Chair Siegfried Detemple said that to cancel our workshop would be to give in to what was happening.

Sieglinde and I went to the Pan Am airline office in the conference building and checked to see what earlier flights would be available if we were advised to leave. We were considering canceling our post tour to Kiev and Leningrad. We had heard that tanks were surrounding Leningrad. The ticket agent informed me that a change to my ticket would cost me an additional \$450. I asked her if she had looked out the window to see that there was a coup in progress. Later that day they had lowered the penalty to \$125 and by the end of the week they were making any change you wanted.

Our group returned to our hotel to change for the reception. We arrived at the Pushkin Museum about 7:00 p.m. People were abuzz comparing notes as to when they were leaving and if they were going to take a post tour. Several people told us that the State Department advised Americans to leave as soon as possible. The delegate from the U.S. Geological Survey said he had been called and advised to leave as soon as possible, and when he had asked his Soviet counterparts for some assistance on the phone they had shown a certain amount of reluctance. The Executive Director and International Relations Director of the ALA, as well as many other delegates, were leaving on Wednesday. The U.S. Federal librarians planned to meet that night after the reception to discuss when they should leave. They felt particularly vulnerable as government representatives. Since I was not on an official passport and not in the same hotel as most of the Federal librarians, I decided to skip that meeting.

We heard that the Russian "White House" would be attacked that night. Everyone was sad and subdued. The Minister of Culture gave a brief presentation. The President of IFLA announced that the IFLA meetings would continue. A Lenin State Librarian asked what I thought of the Museum and the Conference. I praised the wonderful museum, the Soviet Librarians' hard work and wished her the best for the future.

They shut down the reception early because of the 11:00 p.m. curfew and we were once more on the streets in our mini bus. We were worried because Sergei was not with us. The official story was that he had gone to see his 90 year old Muscovite grandmother but I suspected that he had gone to the barricades. The streets of Moscow were full of people. We could see thousands of dark figures covering bridges, blocking streets, surrounding tanks. Many of the streets were blocked with buses and the bridges were blocked with people and things that formed the impression of dark metal sculptures against dim

lights. Many of the people were massed on the bridges leading to the Russian “White House.” Our 15 minute trip took over an hour. We passed Pizza Hut and for the first time there were no waiting lines. Because of the curfew and the blockades, there had been little food at the reception and we were tempted to stop for pizza, but our guide was anxious to get us home.

On arrival at our hotel, Sieglinde called the Canadian embassy. We were advised not to leave the hotel. We were told that our hotel was safe because it was 20 minutes from the central city. We did not bother to tell him that our hotel had been taken over by the military, and we were probably the safest librarians in Moscow. He confirmed that the rumored attack on the White House was to take place that night. The Canadians said we were safer at the hotel than trying to go to the airport, because it was rumored that a military plane was going to bring in Mr. Gorbachev and an attempt might be made to attack him at the airport.

Wednesday, August 21

There was a good turnout for the Section on Government Information program. Tatiana (Tanya) Ershova gave a paper in English on the government publications program at the Lenin State Library, which is the library that receives U.S. publications on exchange from our Government Printing Office. Peter Hajnal of the University of Toronto gave a paper on the Seven Power Summit meeting. Yelena Sarelyeba, our Soviet member of the Standing Committee, expressed her gratitude to the Standing Committee for continuing our meetings.

At the end of the program, I photographed Tanya, Peter, Yelena, Siegfried Detemple and Al Kagan (officers of the Standing Committee) in celebration of the Soviet Librarians’ first attendance at an IFLA meeting since East Germany in 1980. We had issued a number of speaking invitations. But it was only after Henriette Avram of the Library of Congress introduced me to the Director of the Lenin State library at an ALA reception in New Orleans and we had dance, did he promise a speaker for the Moscow program.

Peter Hajnal presented Tanya and Yelena with several books that he had written about international publications. I gave them copies of “Our Flag,” some pamphlets and bookmarks about the depository library program and buttons saying “Documents to the People” and “Documents Love CIP.”

Unbelievable as it seemed Wednesday morning, that night we were celebrating at the Palace of the Kremlin, arriving shortly after the tanks withdrew from the entrance to the Kremlin. It was a wonderful, joyous victory celebration. We and the Soviet librarians toasted each other with vodka and danced to gypsy music. A red bearded Soviet Professor of library automation,

standing across the table from me, toasted me as an American and thanked my President and me for our support. He also thanked my British colleague, Michael Hopkins, who said he had spent most of his time on the barricades instead of at our Section’s meetings, not wanting to miss such an historic event.

Tanya, our speaker from the morning, and I danced with my friend, a Dutch Parliamentary Librarian. Soon it seemed as if everyone in the room was dancing in circles or in long conga lines. Tanya took the gold and black flowers she had made from her blouse as a memory of our victory.

The Minister of Culture, Nikolaj Gubenko, toasted our bravery and we toasted his and we all toasted victory. He thanked us for our countries and for our support during the coup.

Thursday, August 22

On Thursday morning, August 22nd, our Section on Government Information held a Workshop on Freedom of Information (FOI). The promised Soviet speakers did not appear, but all of our other speakers had stayed through the coup: Celine Walker from the United Nations ACCIS, Lydia Merigot, Documentation Francaise, Siegfried Detemple from Germany, who read a paper prepared by Professor Aubake m El Housh, Al Fatah University Libya. I made a few remarks about the FOIA in the U.S. since Scott Carpenter was unable to attend. Scott later told me that he would take our invitations seriously the next time. As a report and someone who had met with a lot of Soviets interested in FOIA, he missed one of the greatest stories ever.

Siegfried, Chair of the Section, spoke about the necessity for access to government information and that due to the special situation, our workshop on Freedom of Information was particularly appropriate. In the question period, the Chair of the Association of Leningrad Librarians told us that in order to get government information they needed the cooperation of the Leningrad officials and how did we suggest they do that. Siegfried invited them all to a seminar at the IFLA meeting in Spain designed to bring East European librarians together with documents librarians from the West to assist them in addressing the problems involved in changing from the old systems to democracies.

After the meeting, Tanya gave me a hand carved trivet and wood charm from her husband, a rocket scientist, thanking me for protecting his wife. I gave Tanya “Dr. Zhivago” and Yelena “Gorky Park.”

They both praised the international exchange program, and said the publications were an important source of information about what was happening in the rest of the world and helped them and the users of the Lenin State Library to understand

democracy. They invited our sections members to a special visit at the Lenin State Library Friday morning to see the government publications.

That night we attended a victory reception in the great reading room of the Lenin State Library under the watchful eye of the state of the student Lenin. I met Tanay's staff, who hugged and thanked me for the exchange program and for staying in Moscow through the crisis. Our circle of celebrators included an Afghanistan author, who said that ten of the books he had authored were in the Lenin State Library. He hugged us and said he love the Americans and he loved the Russians. We all toasted victory. Tanya invited me to stay at her house on my next visit to Moscow.

I found Arthur Curley, Director of the Boston Public Library, leaning up against the wall watching the dancers. He commented upon the difficulty of giving a speech Wednesday morning at 9:00 am on the "public library and political change," when he did not know the outcome of the historic struggle taking place right across the river. We could see the Yeltsin "White House" from our conference windows, including the giant blimp and the tricolor flag hanging from it. I agreed with him that it had been difficult and that the Soviet librarians had been very brave indeed.

After the celebration, we took the metro home. We saw groups of people reading news sheets posted on the walls. A Romanian delegate was waiting for the train and I asked him to join us. He told me that I was a brave American and when he realized that the librarians with me were also Americans, he called them brave. He said he was writing the great book about Romania and needed a publisher.

On the train we were quite a hit with the Soviet passengers who saw U.S.A on our IFLA badges. A father and his two little boys gave us big smiles and allowed me to take their photograph. The only thing I had to give the boys was a package of gum.

On returning to our hotel, we listened to Gorbchev's speech and press conference, but had to wait until Friday morning for our interpreter to tell us what he said. We celebrated with Sergei, Valery and our bus drivers at breakfast. They were very relieved and happy. I gave the old cleaning woman, who reminded me of my children's Polish grandmother or "Busha," my coffee maker, and the remaining coffee, tea, and sugar. She had already given me a hug just for being an American and after my gift gave me a kiss. I photographed her, the kitchen, and our dining room. Everyone seemed happy, even the guards at the elevators.

Good communication, including fax machines, access to radio, CNN, local telephone service and info sheets posted in the subways and on buildings, helped undo the coup. We, along with many others, managed to get a fax out of Moscow to our loved ones. The coup planners made a mistake when they chose the week 1500 librarians and some 600 Soviet emigres came to town for conferences. The people from these conferences were not only at the barricades but they interacted within their own conferences as a support group for the Soviets who were opposing the coup. They also helped spread the word about the coup all over the world and the Soviet Union.

I left Moscow happy to have become friends with so many fine and brave people. I believe that we librarians can help the Soviet people develop their democracies. I suggest the following actions as a beginning: 1) each person reading this article could adopt a Soviet librarian and begin by writing a letter of encouragement., 2) GODORT could sponsor a Soviet documents librarian's attendance at an ALA meeting, 3) GODORT could start a scholarship fund so a Soviet librarian can attend an American Library School, 4) GODORT International Documents Task Force could establish a working group to develop a strategy on how American librarians can help Soviet librarians.