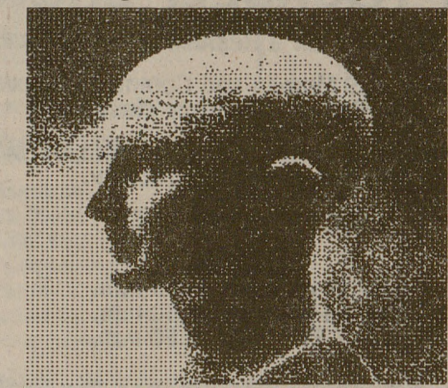


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'I'm very frightened by a split in society' Soviet first lady recalls coup

MOSCOW (AP) — Raisa Gorbachev, in an interview published Tuesday, described how her health failed and her blood pressure rose during last month's failed coup — sleepless days and nights she is still reliving.

The wife of Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said in her first public comments since the abortive coup that she now feels better, but fears a surge of ethnic violence in her country.

"Again and again I'm reliving what happened. And I'm very frightened of a split in society," she was quoted as telling the labor newspaper Trud.

Mrs. Gorbachev, 59, has not been seen in public since she walked from the airplane that carried the president and his family from their dacha at the seaside resort of Foros in the Crimea early Aug. 22.

The newspaper did not say when the interview took place.

Gorbachev said last week his wife suffered a "bad bout" because of the Aug. 18-21 coup, but

he did not name her illness.

"After three sleepless nights, when all these events started to wind up with particular speed, (my health) became worse," Mrs. Gorbachev was quoted as telling Trud.

"I had developed an acute hypertensive crisis that was accompanied by a speech disorder. ... Now I'm better, and must be treated just a little more. For now, I'm not leaving home," she was quoted as saying.

"Acute hypertensive crisis" usually refers to a sharp rise in blood pressure, most often in people already suffering from hypertension, said Dr. Henry Black of the Yale School of Medicine.

"I feel and I live through all the same things that our citizens live through. I'm a sympathizer with our society, and these are not just words," Mrs. Gorbachev was quoted as telling Trud.

During their three-day detention at the dacha, Mrs. Gorbachev said the family walked to a nearby beach to disprove the coup plot-

ters' statement that Gorbachev was ill.

"We left the dacha grounds and went to the sea with a definite goal: so that people could see the president was alive and well," she was quoted as saying.

Mrs. Gorbachev told Trud she learned of the coup when her husband came to her on the afternoon of Aug. 18 and said "something serious has happened, maybe terrible."

"Mikhail Sergeyevich told me, 'I will make no deals with any adventurists. I will not give in to blackmail. But we may have to pay dearly for this. Everything, our whole family. We have to be ready for anything,'" Trud quoted Mrs. Gorbachev as saying.

She said the family — daughter Irina, son-in-law Anatoly and two granddaughters — gathered and told Gorbachev: "We'll be with you." This was a very serious decision. We know our history," she said, apparently referring to the Bolsheviks' execution of the family of the last czar, Nicholas II.

Cleanup studies of waste sites remain inadequate, report says

WASHINGTON (AP) — Government studies of the health risks from hazardous wastes at nearly a thousand Superfund priority cleanup sites were "seriously deficient," the General Accounting Office said Tuesday.

The health assessments, which the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry was required by law to perform under a tight deadline, "generally have not been useful" to the Environmental Protection Agency and others supervising the cleanups, the GAO said in a report to Congress.

"Because ATSDR health assessments have not fully evaluated the health risks of many Superfund sites, communities have not been adequately informed about possible health effects," the congressional investigators said.

If the agency cannot improve its performance, Congress should consider abolishing the assessment program, the GAO said.

The "EPA has seldom used the assessments, and most local officials and community representatives did not value the assessments highly, if they knew of them at all," the report said.

Rep. John Dingell, who commissioned the report as chairman of the oversight subcommittee of the House Energy Committee, said it "paints a very troubling picture of the ATSDR's implementation of its health assessment mandate."

Dingell, in a letter to William L. Roper, the agency's administrator, urged him to "move forward aggressively" to improve the quality of the health assessments.

Michael Greenwell, a spokesman for the agency, said most of the recommendations already have been put into practice.

"We agree that there were deficiencies in the work we did in the past," Greenwell said. "Our focus now is working with communities and making sure they have ways to make input as the assessments are done."

Local advisory panels are routinely established and the public is invited to comment on draft assessments before they become final. Greenwell said the agency is also working more closely with EPA officials to make sure the assessments are useful to them as well.

EPA issued a brief statement Tuesday saying it will "continue to work with ATSDR to improve the timeliness and quality of their health assessments."

The Superfund program was established to identify the nation's worst hazardous waste problems and make sure they were cleaned up. Superfund amendments in 1986 gave ATSDR responsibility for looking into the dangers to human health at each site on the national priority list.

Court reduces jail sentence given in S & L crackdown

DALLAS (AP) — A federal appeals court has reduced the longest prison sentence given in the crackdown on fraud in the nation's savings and loan industry.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans last week reversed six of the 13 fraud counts for which Woody Lemons, former chairman of the failed Vernon Savings and Loan, was convicted.

The court dropped Lemons' sentence from 30 years to 10 years, his attorney, Michael Gibson, said Tuesday.

Lemons was convicted in December 1989 for misapplication of funds, conspiracy and bank fraud for soliciting a \$9,000 kickback from a loan broker in January 1986 and receiving \$212,000 from the same broker in April 1986.

The appeals court threw out six of the counts after finding they duplicated two others related to the scheme. The court upheld conviction on the other seven counts.

"We are disappointed that the other points of error didn't result

in a total reversal of conviction," Gibson said.

But he added that Lemons is "personally very pleased that he's got some light at the end of the tunnel."

The decision reduces the time Lemons would have been eligible for parole from about 10 years to between four and five. He entered the minimum-security federal correctional facility in Fort Worth in June 1990.

Gibson viewed Lemons' sentence as extremely harsh compared to other former Vernon officials.

The failed thrift's former owner, Don Dixon, was sentenced this spring to five years in prison and a \$600,000 fine on a 23-count fraud conviction.

Ten others, including seven former Vernon officers, have been convicted of criminal wrongdoing in the thrift's \$1.3 billion failure. After Lemons' sentence, the lengthiest was five years given to Dixon and several others.

Attorneys make move to drop drug charge

MIAMI (AP) — Prosecutors on Tuesday moved to drop a minor charge against Manuel Noriega, whose drug-trafficking and racketeering trial is scheduled to begin this week.

The charge to be dropped involved a drug pilot-turned-informant the government has paid more than \$500,000. It is the only charge in the February 1988 indictment that mentions Panamanian pilot Tony Aizprua, whose intercepted 1985 drug flight helped launch the Noriega investigation.

The count said that, in violation of federal law, Noriega caused Aizprua to travel from Fort Lauderdale to Panama in 1984 in furtherance of the cocaine-trafficking conspiracy. It provides no other details.

Diane Cossin, spokeswoman for the Miami U.S. Attorney's office, refused to explain prosecutors' reasons for dropping the charge.

"We're not commenting as to why we moved for dismissal of this count," she said.

Noriega's lead attorney Frank Rubino was not immediately available for comment, his receptionist said.

The dismissal motion was on U.S. District Judge William Hoever's desk but had not yet been signed Tuesday afternoon. Approval is usually only a formality.

The travel charge was punishable by a maximum five-year sentence, only a small fraction of the potential 145 years Noriega faced on racketeering and drug conspiracy charges. Dismissing the charge would still leave the deposed Panamanian leader facing 10 other counts.

A separate 1985 Aizprua flight not mentioned in the indictment is usually pointed to as the beginning of the Noriega investigation. Aizprua was spotted flying from Panama to Broward County, and was forced down on an empty highway by drug agents. The pilot initially escaped but was later picked up and turned informant against Noriega.

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