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Televorot: The Role of Television Coverage in Russia's August 1991 Coup

Victoria E. Bonnell and Gregory Freidin

... Но сейчас идет другая драма . . .

Б. Пастернак, "Гамлет"¹

When the State Committee on the State of Emergency (henceforth the Emergency Committee) seized power in the early morning of 19 August 1991, it took steps immediately to assert control over Central Television, radio and the press. At one o'clock in the morning on 19 August, Gennadii Shishkin, first deputy director of TASS, was awakened by a phone call from Leonid Kravchenko, the conservative director of Gosteleradio (the State Committee on Television and Radio) and asked to come to Central Committee headquarters.² By 2 a.m., the chief editor of the nightly news program "Vremia" had been awakened. Then, at dawn, military vehicles and paratroopers surrounded the Gosteleradio building at Ostankino.³

We are grateful to Elliott Mossman for proposing that we write a paper on Russian television coverage of the August 1991 coup. His support and encouragement helped us to complete this project. Joelle Ehre at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, and Pegge J. Abrams at the Media Center, Duke University, were extremely helpful in providing video tapes of Russian television broadcasts during the week of the coup. We would like to thank Nancy Condee, George Breslauer, Todd Gitlin, Eric Naiman, Anne Nesbet, Vladimir Padunov, Yuri Slezkine, Victor Zaslavsky and Reginald Zelnik for their valuable comments and suggestions. An earlier draft of the paper was presented at the Fourth Meeting of the Working Group on Contemporary Russian Culture, "Russian Culture/Soviet Hieroglyphics," held with support of the Social Science Research Council, the British Film Institute and the School for Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London, 5-9 July 1993.

1. "A different drama is now playing . . ." Boris Pasternak, "Hamlet."

2. In February 1991, USSR Gosteleradio was renamed the All-Union State Company for Television and Radio Broadcasting. On the situation in Gosteleradio before the coup, see Vera Tolz, "The Soviet Media," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 1 (3 January 1992): 29-30.

3. For details, see Bill Keller's interview with Sergei Medvedev, "Getting the News on 'Vremia'" and the "Chronology of Events of August 19, 20, 21" in Victoria E. Bonnell, Ann Cooper and Gregory Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), part 5. Accounts of the coup and its aftermath may be found in the following Russian sources: *August-91* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1991); . . . *Deviatnadsatoe, dvadtsatoe, dvadtsat' pervoe. . . : svobodnoe radio dlia svobodnykh liudei* (Moscow: Shakur-Invest, 1991); *Kras-Slavic Review* 52, no. 4 (Winter 1993)

By 6 a.m., arrangements were complete. From that time until the flight of the putschists on Wednesday afternoon, 21 August, regular television programming was suspended and the central channels became instead vehicles for the transmission of official announcements, news and press conferences.⁴ A similar policy went into effect in radio broadcasting, although several local stations managed to elude official control. In Moscow, all but nine central and local newspapers were silenced by the Emergency Committee.⁵

Since the actions of the plotters were concentrated in Moscow, Leningrad and the Baltic republics, most people in the Soviet Union (and even some who lived in these cities) acquired information about the events, especially during the first two critical days, primarily through television and, to a much lesser extent, through newspapers

noe ili beloe? Drama Avgusta-91: Fakty, gipotezy, stolknovenie mnenii (Moscow, 1991); *Korichnevyy putch krasnykh, avgust '91: Khronika, svidel'stva pressy, fotodokumenty* (Moscow: Tekst, 1991); *Khronika putcha: chas za chasom: Sobytiia 19–22 avgusta 1991 v svodkakh Rossiiskogo Informatsionnogo Agentstva* (Leningrad, Agentstvo 1991); *Putch: Khronika trevozhnnykh dnei* (Moscow, 1991); V. Stepankov and E. Lisov, *Kremlevskii zagovor* (Moscow: Progress, 1992). English language sources on the coup include the following: James H. Billington, *Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope: Moscow, August 1991* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades: Eyewitness Accounts of the August 1991 Coup*; John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Mikhail Gorbachev, *The August Coup: The Truth and the Lessons* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991); Amy Knight, "The Coup that Never Was: Gorbachev and the Forces of Reaction," *Problems of Communism* (November/December 1991); Stuart H. Loory and Ann Imse, eds., *Seven Days That Shook the World* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1991); Michael Mandelbaum, "Coup de Grace: The End of the Soviet Union," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 1 (1991–1992): 164–83; William E. Odom, "Alternative Perspectives on the August Coup," *Problems of Communism* (November/December 1991): 13–17; David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Random House 1993); Lilia Shevtsova, "The August Coup and the Soviet Collapse," *Survival* 34, no. 1 (Spring 1992); Anatole Shub, "The Fourth Russian Revolution: Historical Perspectives," *Problems of Communism* (November/December 1991):20–26; Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York: Random House, 1991); Melor Sturua, "The Real Coup," *Foreign Policy*, no. 85 (Winter 1991).

4. Resolution No. 1, issued by the Emergency Committee on 19 August, decreed that a specially created organ under the GKChP would "establish control over the means of communication." Resolution No. 3, issued on 20 August, gave further details concerning Gosteleradio's control over all Central and local TV and radio broadcasting in the USSR. The resolution prohibited television and radio broadcasts by the RSFSR channels, especially "Moscow Echo," because they "do not promote the process of stabilization of the situation in the country." The USSR KGB and MVD were authorized to take measures to carry out the resolution. *August-91*:27, 75–76.

5. "Radio Rossiia" and "Ekho Moskv," both established in 1990, continued to broadcast from the White House and other locations during the coup, as did several other stations on short and medium wave frequencies (*Putch: khronika trevozhnnykh dnei*, 91–92). The nine newspapers permitted to continue publication were: *Trud*, *Rabochaia tribuna*, *Izvestiia*, *Pravda*, *Krasnaia zvezda*, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, *Moskovskaia pravda*, *Leninogradskoe znamia* and *Sel'skaia zhizn'*. During the coup, Soviet citizens with short wave radios were able to receive news from foreign stations, most importantly Radio Liberty and the BBC.

and radio.⁶ Eventually, television brought into people's homes most of the dramatic moments occasioned by the coup: the tanks rolling into Moscow, the building of barricades and Yeltsin mounting a tank on 19 August; mass pro-democracy rallies in Moscow and Leningrad on 20 August; the tank incident that led to the death of three civilians defending the White House in the early hours of 21 August; the return of Gorbachev to Moscow twenty-four hours later; the celebration of Freedom Day on 22 August; and the funeral on 24 August. Television provided people with a great deal of information during the coup and by no means all of it proved favorable to the plotters. Predictably, the plotters attempted to use television as a mouthpiece for the Emergency Committee and to suppress information that contradicted the image of a smooth transition to emergency rule. They operated on assumptions that dated from the era before *glasnost'*, when television had been a dependable, cowed propaganda instrument of the regime, promoting its glories and editing out the slurred speech and mispronunciations of its leaders.⁷

Here, as in other respects, members of the Emergency Committee and their supporters underestimated the changes that had taken place in Soviet mass media since 1985. The previous six years had brought far-reaching changes to television, gradually transforming it into a genuine forum for a broad range of ideas.⁸ When Kravchenko was appointed the head of Gosteleradio in fall 1990, he took steps to eliminate some of the more outspoken programs, such as the popular "Vzgliad" (viewpoint) which featured controversial reporting and dis-

6. The following television programs were viewed for this essay (all dates refer to 1991): "Vremia": 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25 August, 19 September; Vzgliad": 22, 23, 25 August; "Fakt": 20 August; "Piatoe koleso": 20 August; "600 sekund": 20 August; "Vesti": 21, 22 August; "Novosti": 19 September; "Do shestnadsati i starshe": 19 September. Televised press conferences: Gennadii Yanaev et al: 19 August; Vladimir Shcherbakov: 21 August; Mikhail Gorbachev: 22 August; Arkadii Vol'skii et al: 21 August. Other coverage: session of the Russian Parliament: 21 August; funeral: 24 August; interview with Yeltsin: 25 August.

7. On Soviet television before 1985, see Mark H. Hopkins, *Mass Media in the USSR* (New York: Pegasus, 1970); Ellen Propper Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public* (New York: Praeger, 1981); idem, *Split Signals: Television and Politics in the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); ; Kristian Feigelson, *L'U.R.S.S. et sa télévision* (Paris: Institut national de l'audiovisuel, 1990). The last years of Brezhnev's regime saw a torrent of jokes about his slurred speech and the official doctoring of recordings. In one of the most popular jokes of this type, audio engineers are trying to puzzle out what Brezhnev had in mind when he offered praise to *sosiski sranye* (crappy hotdogs). They finally realize that what he meant to say was *sotsialisticheskie strany* (socialist countries) and spliced those words into the tape.

8. For a perceptive discussion of the early impact of *glasnost'* on television, see Mickiewicz, *Split Signals*; James Dingley, "Soviet Television and Glasnost'," in Julian Gaffay and Geoffrey A. Hosking, eds., *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today* (New York: MacMillan, 1989); Feigelson, *L'U.R.S.S. et sa télévision*; Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media* (London: Routledge, 1991); Marsha Siefert, ed., *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

cussions of current affairs.⁹ Such repressive measures soon provoked a response from those more sympathetic to the aims of *glasnost'*. The USSR Journalists' Union expelled Kravchenko on 12 April 1991, citing his efforts to reintroduce censorship on television. A number of well known commentators resigned from Central Television in "a dramatic protest" against Kravchenko's policies.¹⁰

That the spirit of *glasnost'* had made deep inroads into Gosteleradio despite Kravchenko's conservative leadership soon became evident on 19 August. Faced with an order to return to the pre-1985 style and content of journalism, some reporters, cameramen, editors and supervisors at Gosteleradio did their best to circumvent the new rules. The situation at Leningrad television—for some years a maverick station in the production of controversial programs—was even more remarkable.¹¹ Boris Petrov, the president of Leningrad television, cooperated fully with the democratic opposition, led by Mayor Anatolii Sobchak. With a viewing audience of about forty-five million people extending to Moscow, the Baltic republics and Belarus', the Leningrad station exerted considerable influence. On the first day of the coup, Petrov secured a satellite connection to facilitate broadcasting beyond the station's normal range.¹²

From the inception of the crisis, Central and Leningrad television transmitted reports, images and commentary that conveyed not just one version of the events—the official version promoted by the Emergency Committee—but several other views of what was happening and why. There were, in fact, three major "scripts" that dominated media coverage of the coup. By "script" or "scenario" we do not mean a prepared text that a director or an actor uses in a theatrical performance.¹³ Rather, we are suggesting that the leading individuals and

9. In addition, Kravchenko interfered with the broadcasts of "TSN," a news program that provided an alternative to the official news, "Vremia." His move to suppress "TSN" in March 1991 was a response to the program's coverage of the events in Lithuania and Latvia in January. Under his leadership, Central Television broadcasts "constantly criticized the RSFSR leadership and the democratic forces opposing the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). See Tolz, "The Soviet Media," 29–30 for more details on Kravchenko's efforts to curb *glasnost'* on Central Television.

10. Later in April 1991, the union recalled Kravchenko as its representative to the USSR Supreme Soviet, a position to which he had been elected by the union in 1989. Among those who resigned were Vladimir Pozner, Vladimir Tsvetov, Aleksandr Liubimov and Vladimir Molchanov (*ibid.*).

11. In the era of *glasnost'*, the Leningrad studio produced some of the most probing and provocative programs on television anywhere in the USSR, including "600 Seconds," "The Fifth Wheel" and "Alternative" (Sergei Aleksandrovich Muratov, "Soviet Television and the Structure of Broadcasting Authority," in Siefert, ed., *Mass Culture and Perestroika*: 174).

12. See the interview with Anatolii Sobchak, "Breakthrough: The Coup in St. Petersburg" in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 3; Fieglson, 85.

13. "Script," according to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, is, among other things, "a text of a play, broadcast, or motion picture; especially the copy of a text used by the director or performer."

groups during the coup had intellectual agendas and political outlooks already well formed before the curtain rose on the putsch (hence, our “script”), and that these, in turn, shaped their responses to the events as they unfolded during the crucial three days and subsequently.¹⁴ Furthermore, “script” implies for us a set of symbols, images and styles which, in accordance with a given situation, signal actors to act or improvise and signal “audiences” to interpret what they see in particular ways. The theatrical metaphor is, of course, an essential ingredient in politics in general and in mass politics in particular, a theme well researched and well documented in cultural and political scholarship.¹⁵ What makes “script” (*stsenarii*) even more apposite is that it was used by various public figures, along with such related theatrical notions as “plot” (*siuzhet*), “action” or “performance” (*igra*), “characters” (*personazhi*) and “to perform or act according to a script” (*razygryvat'*). Gorbachev's recollections of the coup offer a telling passage:

... during the preceding days, I had actually been working with my assistant Chernyayev on a major article. It dealt with the situation in the country and the possible ways it might evolve. And one of the *scenarios* considered was in fact the introduction of a state of emergency. And now the *characters* from it had turned up here. My reasoning about that *scenario* was that it would be a disaster for our society and a dead end, that it would turn the country back and ruin everything we now have [emphasis added].¹⁶

14. For a pioneering discussion of a similar symbiosis between television and politics in the United States, see Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

15. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphor: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Karen Hermassi, *Polity and Theater in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 121–46, *idem.*, *Negara: The Theatre State In Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Iu. Lotman, “Teatr i teatral'nost' v stroe kul'tury nachala XIX veka,” *Stat'i po tipologii kul'tury* (Tartu: Tartuskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1973), 42–73; Iu. Lotman and B. Uspenskii, “The Stage and Paintings as Code Mechanisms for Cultural Behavior in the Early Nineteenth Century” in *The Semiotics of Russian Culture, Michigan Slavic Contributions* no. 11, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1984). For a study of bolshevik holiday celebrations as political theater before the era of television, see James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals, 1917–1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

16. Gorbachev, *The August Coup*, 23. Gorbachev echoes here almost verbatim the statements he made in interviews immediately following his return to Moscow on 22 August 1991. In his televised press conference on that day, he also used such terms as “*tiazhelaia drama*” (a heavy drama) and “*fars*” (farce) to describe the coup d'état. In his 25 August interview with Soviet TV, Yeltsin, too, resorted several times to the term “script” in describing the plotters' course of action. Aleksandr Kabakov, a popular writer and the author of the sensational 1991 best-seller *Nevozvraschenets*, claimed in the TV program “Vzgliad,” aired on 23 August 1991, that his most recent novel,

The Emergency Committee's script was signaled, first of all, by its "Appeal to the Soviet People" and other decrees and resolutions issued on the morning of 19 August.¹⁷ But their views were already well known. In the months preceding the coup, conservative groups in the RSFSR Communist Party and leading members of the KGB, MVD and military forces had closed ranks with ultra-nationalist writers in opposition to perestroika and the impending Union Treaty. In mid-June, future putschists Valentin Pavlov, Dmitrii Yazov, Boris Pugo and Vladimir Kriuchkov attempted to carry out a "constitutional coup d'état" by expanding the power of Prime Minister Pavlov, an outspoken critic of the union treaty that was then being negotiated. Their efforts failed. On 23 July twelve Soviet leaders, including high-ranking army officers, published a dramatic appeal in a right-wing paper, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, calling on Soviet citizens to resist the break-up of the union.¹⁸

According to the conspirators, the crisis in the Soviet system—a situation they characterized as imminent chaos and anarchy—could only be resolved by revitalizing the country's links with the past, which for them meant the Soviet Union before perestroika. This desire to reconnect was encoded in the very designation of their committee, the GKChP, translating into the lumbering *Gosudarstvennyi komitet po chrezvychainomu polozheniiu* (State Committee on the State of Emergency). These initials implied an association with the venerable ChK (Cheka), the progenitor of the KGB, with KP, the Russian initials for the Communist Party, and, of course, with ChP (an emergency situation), an overused colloquialism over the seventy-five years of incessant "emergency situations" in the economy, society and politics. The continuity thus implied was that of the Communist Party, the military-industrial complex, the secret police and, more generally, a unified state untroubled by the nationalist aspirations of its member republics.

The most important counterpoint to the Emergency Committee's scripting of events between 19 and 21 August came from the democratic resistance, led by Yeltsin. Yeltsin's response to the formation of the GKChP was swift. By 9 a.m., he had issued an "Appeal to the

Sochinitel', had scripted in advance many of the developments that took place on 19-21 August (we thank Nancy Condee for the reference to *Sochinitel'*). Characteristically, General Aleksandr Lebed' who, together with his commanding officer General Pavel Grachev, did most to prevent the storming of the White House, entitled his forthcoming memoirs *Spektakl' nazyvalsia putch* (the show was called putsch). The memoir is currently being serialized in *Literaturnaia Rossiia* (the first installment, *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, no. 34-35 [24 September 1993]).

17. The following were issued at the inception of the coup: a decree by Gennadii Yanaev announcing his assumption of power because of Gorbachev's ill-health; an "Appeal to the Soviet People" from the Emergency Committee; "Resolution No. 1 of the Emergency Committee"; a declaration from Yanaev, Pavlov and Baklanov; Yanaev's appeal to foreign nations and the United Nations Secretary General. In addition, there was a statement by A. Luk'ianov, president of the USSR Supreme Soviet on the Union Treaty.

18. Scott R. McMichael, "Moscow Prelude: Warning Signs Ignored," *Report on the USSR* 3, no. 36 (1991): 8-11.

Citizens of Russia.”¹⁹ This was followed by other statements and decrees in the course of the day.²⁰ Shortly after noon, he held a press conference in the White House and at 1 p.m. he mounted tank no. 110 of the Taman Division near the White House and appealed to



Muscovites and all citizens of Russia to give a worthy response to those involved in the putsch and to demand the return of the nation to normal constitutional development.²¹

When the crisis began, the position of Yeltsin and the Russian democrats was also already widely known. They advocated the creation of a new Russia—a country, a culture and a polity—that would be, through a miraculous act of will and plenty of wishful thinking, discontinuous with Soviet and much of pre-Soviet history. Theirs was to

19. The “Appeal to the Citizens of Russia” was co-authored and cosigned by Ivan Silaev, chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, and Ruslan Khasbulatov, acting chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.

20. “Decree of the President of the RSFSR No. 59” (declaring the Emergency Committee unconstitutional, its actions null and void, and those involved subject to criminal penalties); “Appeal of the President of the RSFSR to Soldiers and Officers of the USSR Armed Forces, KGB, MVD”; and “Decrees of the President of the RSFSR” nos. 60, 61, 62, 63. The texts of all the preceding appear in *August-91*: 34–42, 61–62.

21. “Chronology of Events of August 19, 20, 21,” in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*.

be a democratic Russia, one that had no connection with either communism or the empire. The barricades were not related to those of the Paris Commune or the 1905 “dress rehearsal of 1917.” They hailed instead from the landmarks of struggle against communism: the streets of Budapest in 1956, Prague in 1968, the Gdansk shipyards and, most recently, the streets of Vilnius in January 1991 where the old tried-and-true bolshevik script of “national salvation” was applied on a smaller scale in preparation for the August counter-revolution.²²

A third script—the perestroika script—remained on the sidelines during the first two days of the crisis, only to emerge with Gorbachev’s release from incarceration on 21 August. Unwilling to change his perspective even after the coup, Gorbachev persisted in reading from that script, which portrayed the country’s democratic future as flowing out of her cruel and tyrannical communist past. Socialism and the Communist Party as the sole surviving pan-Union political institution could not be omitted from his script. But, if before the putsch a drama revolving around the socialist idea and the Party was attracting fewer and fewer good actors, not to mention an increasingly sparse audience, it became a solo performance in a nearly empty theater after the coup had failed.

In an era of instant replay, major political players and commentators tend to swap rhetoric as much as they swap their primary functions: commentators are a real force in the political game, which in the era of nationalism and democracy revolves around symbols, whereas politicians use their authority and visibility to shape the public discourse in a way that automatically implies a framework of legitimacy for their policies. Having gone through the school of bolshevism, with its treasury of experience in manipulating public discourse, having graduated from the academy of Gorbachev’s glasnost’, which introduced into public consciousness the necessity of logical reasoning, open-minded analysis, humanistic values and, almost, public honesty, the players and commentators of the August days were offered an unprecedented opportunity to deploy their rhetorical and aesthetic skills. It was as if their life depended on it, and in fact it did.

22. Sergei Medevdev’s 19 August “Vremia” segment discussed below included a Moscow intellectual who explicitly drew the connection between the events in Vilnius and the August coup. For A. Akhmedov, a member of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan who went to Moscow during the coup, this association was also self-evident. As he said during the funeral on 24 August: “I came to Moscow as soon as the coup started. . . . It was a continuation of the bloody events in Baku and Vilnius, where I was during the January bloodshed. And the three boys whom we are burying today died for the same cause that people in other republics have given their lives for” (V. Konovalov, E. Maksimova and L. Savel’eva, “Proshchanie,” *Avqust 91*: 217). See also Valerii Zavorotnyi’s “Letter from Leningrad” which recounts that the leader of the team building barricades in Leningrad on 19 August had learned barricade construction in Vilnius where he helped to guard the Parliament building as a member of the Leningrad detachment of young volunteers (Bonnell, Cooper, Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 4).

19 August, Day One: Two Scripts

With the seizure of power in the early morning of 19 August, the eight plotters declared their actions to the world and put forward their claim to legitimacy. Even before the specific formulations in the GKChP's decrees, resolutions and appeals could be grasped, the style of presentation by television announcers immediately gave a distinctive clue concerning their position: a vintage Soviet script, the absence of the word "communism" notwithstanding. In fact, the tone of voice and intonations—ponderous and solemn, reminiscent of the days when the Party still had its sacred aura and its pronouncements resonated like the word of God—alerted people to a major change not just of government but of their entire style of life. After six years of glasnost' and perestroika, the announcers of 19 August were, discursively and gesturally, herding people back to a time before 1985.²³

The Emergency Committee's major declaration, the "Appeal to the Soviet People," was read numerous times on television the first day.²⁴ With its heavy emphasis on the vocabulary of Soviet patriotism and official Russian nationalism, it is reminiscent of the "developed socialism" of the Brezhnev era. The terms "fatherland" (*otechestvo*) and "motherland" (*rodina*) appear numerous times. They are code words, loosely but unmistakably associated with the nascent right-wing Russian nationalism of the imperial variety (*otechestvo*) and traditional Soviet-style patriotism (*rodina*). The proclamation concludes with a summons to manifest "patriotic readiness" and to restore "age-old friendship in the unified family of fraternal peoples and the revival of the fatherland."²⁵

Apart from regular readings of the Emergency Committee's proclamations and decrees, Central Television broadcast no additional news or information until the late afternoon on 19 August. Ballet, opera and classical music—all harking back to the good old days when Soviet mass media was dominated by edifying material—replaced the "aerobicized" fare found on Central Television in the twilight years of perestroika.²⁶ Then a real TV news event took place: the Emergency

23. Prior to glasnost', television announcers read their texts "practically by rote, and words like 'I' and 'I think' were excluded." The style of the announcer and anchorperson had been changing under Gorbachev; on the day of the coup the style of presentation reverted back to the old form. On changes in style under glasnost', see Muratov, "Soviet Television and the Structure of Broadcasting Authority," in Siefert, *Mass Culture and Perestroika in the Soviet Union*, 175.

24. The statement was dated 18 August 1991 and signed "Gosudarstvennyi komitet po chrezvychainomu polozheniiu v SSSR." When the text was published in *Izvestiia* on 20 August, it was given the title "Appeal to the Soviet People."

25. These are the closing words of the "Appeal to the Soviet People." The original Russian text is reprinted in *August-91: 20-24*. A translation can be found in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 1.

26. In the days before perestroika, Gosteleradio characteristically responded to dramatic official events, such as the death of a leading official, by replacing regular TV programming with classical music and ballet.

Committee's press conference was broadcast live, in its entirety, on Central Television.

For their first—and as it turned out, only—press conference, the plotters adopted the format introduced by Gorbachev in 1985, which permitted spontaneous questioning by foreign and Soviet reporters. Considering the care with which the plotters attempted to seize control of the mass media—even to the point of forbidding employees of Gos-teleradio to leave with film except by permission of the chief editor—it is certainly puzzling that they submitted to a press conference of that kind, with all its attendant risks. One can only surmise that they felt compelled to do so in an effort to establish their credibility with foreign powers and, perhaps, the Soviet population as well.²⁷ The press conference cast in sharp relief the style of the conspiracy, leaving little to the imagination with regard to its master script and the ineptitude of its members.²⁸ Five of the eight plotters participated: conspicuously missing were KGB head Kriuchkov, Defense Minister Yazov and Prime Minister Pavlov. Since it was a matter of common sense that neither the KGB chief nor the chief officer of the armed forces could have played second fiddle in a conspiracy of this magnitude, their absence diminished the stature and seriousness of the Emergency Committee. Attention was focused on Gennadii Yanaev, the least respected and least powerful member of Gorbachev's entourage and, it turns out, the most reluctant participant in the conspiracy.²⁹ Yanaev held center stage and answered nearly all the questions, with Interior Minister Pugo participating occasionally. Aleksandr Tiziakov and Oleg Baklanov made only one comment each and Vasilii Starodubtsev spoke twice.³⁰ The press conference was, for the most part, Yanaev's show.

In camera work, there are always choices and the camera lens can be a merciless eye, if so directed. During the press conference the choice was to focus on Yanaev in such a way that his hands were continuously visible—hands that trembled intermittently, conveying

27. It is quite possible that the members of the Emergency Committee taking part in the press conference were not aware that the press conference was being broadcast live. The cameras were not turned off right after the press conference drew to a close but lingered for a minute or two, long enough for the viewers to be privy to the following exchange between an enterprising reporter and Yanaev. The reporter: "Gennadii Ivanovich [Yanaev], can you give us assurances that this press conference will be broadcast in its entirety?" Yanaev: "Well, I don't think I am the man to answer this question. You shouldn't really address it to me..." The reporter: "Can you give us assurances that this press conference will be broadcast to the public in its entirety?" Yanaev: "No really, you should not address this question to me. It is not up to me to decide..."

28. An English translation of the press conference appears in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 1.

29. Stepankov and Lisov, *Kremlevskii zagovor*, 89–91.

30. Aleksandr Tiziakov was president of the Association of State Enterprises and Industrial Construction, Transport and Communications. Vasilii Starodubtsev was chairman of the Peasants Union. Oleg Baklanov was first deputy chairman of the National Defense Council and leader of the military industrial complex.

great agitation in contrast to his authoritative booming voice. Remarkably, the camera returned again and again to that particular framing of Yanaev, though it would have been easy enough to direct the camera's eye elsewhere—perhaps to a close-up of Yanaev's face or a long shot in which the tell-tale tremors would have been invisible to the television audience. In the control room a decision had been made to capture the image in a particular way. Veteran "Vremia" director, Elena Pozdniak, who had made a career splicing out Brezhnev's bloopers from videotape, decided she would do what she could to preserve, at the very least, a marginal sense of honesty. She had gotten word from Kravchenko and his deputies that, if it was technically possible, she should edit out Yanaev's trembling hands, the laughter in the hall and the scoffing reactions of the correspondents for the rebroadcast of the press conference following the nine o'clock "Vremia." Although this was easy enough to do, Pozdniak decided: "Let them see it all!" She'd



had enough of the lies.³¹ Thus even the officially engineered coverage of the press conference turned out to be a visual humiliation for the plotters.

In the charged atmosphere of an unfolding conspiracy, the desire to understand and to interpret every detail pertaining to it is overwhelming. Yanaev's trembling hands and runny nose (like Nixon's legendary five-o'clock shadow) became for many people a symbol of the plotters' criminality, ineptitude and inexperience. They evoked the common Russian saying, "trembling hands give away the chicken thief" (*ruki drozhat—kur voroval*) and the usage of *soplivyi*, literally meaning

31. Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*: 473–74.

someone with a runny nose and figuratively a person who is inept, untutored, unskilled and infantile. The journalist corps contributed to transforming what was planned as a show of political savvy and competence into a chillingly comic farce. One correspondent asked Yanaev about the state of his health, another whether he had consulted with General Pinochet concerning his plan for the takeover.³² These questions and others elicited occasional snickers from the assembled correspondents and, in the case of the health question, uproarious laughter at Yanaev's expense. The high point of the press conference came when Tatiana Malkina, a young reporter from *Nezavisimaaia Gazeta*, pointedly asked Yanaev: "Could you please say whether or not you understand that last night you carried out a coup d'état [*gosudarstvennyi perevorot*]?" No other correspondent was quite so blunt. Yanaev responded to her question during a prolonged close-up of Malkina, whose face took on an expression of disdain. The camera work, the mocking attitude of the journalists, and the words and gestures of the plotters combined to deprive them of the appearance of authority and legitimacy that they sought to create.

The press conference had a profoundly discouraging effect on potential supporters, such as KGB Major General Aleksandr Korsak and his fellow officers. When Korsak first heard the announcement of the state of emergency at 6 a.m., he responded favorably: "The words were the right ones and the people on the committee carried some weight." The support of KGB officers was indispensable if the coup was to succeed, but the press conference helped to turn them against the conspirators. According to Korsak, "after the press conference by the GKChP, the general impression was created that this was a simple adventure and the perplexing questions multiplied."³³ Many army and police officers shared Korsak's reservations and refused to cooperate with the Emergency Committee.³⁴

In Leningrad, not long after the live broadcast of the press conference, the Leningrad TV news program "Fakt" went on the air. The appearance and demeanor of the anchor on "Fakt" immediately suggested a deviation from the straight-laced, Soviet-style announcer favored by the conspirators, a style that dominated Central Television

32. The question about Yanaev's health was asked by the correspondent from *La Stampa*. It was a double-entendre question, referring not only to the alleged sickness of Gorbachev, but also to the answer Yanaev gave when he was asked about his health at the Supreme Soviet at the time he was being considered for the post of vice-president. "My health is all right," he responded, "My wife ain't complaining." The question about Pinochet was asked by the correspondent from *Corriere della Sera*. A Russian transcript of the press conference appears in *August-91*: 43-61. An English translation can be found in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 1.

33. These statements appeared in an interview with Korsak, "Nam byl ot dan prikaz arestovat' Popova," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (11 September 1991). A translation appears in *Russian Politics and Law: A Journal of Translation* 31, no. 1: 16-20.

34. See the interview with KGB Major General Viktor Karpukhin and subordinate officers, "Oni otkazalis' shturmovat' Belyi dom," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (28 August 1991): 5, translated in *Russia Politics and Law* 31, no. 1: 8-15.

throughout the day. This anchor was a modern-looking, well dressed young woman who looked straight at the camera and functioned more as a pleasant interlocutor than a mouthpiece for official decrees. The high point of the program came at 7:20 p.m. when Leningrad Mayor Sobchak made a dramatic live appearance, accompanied by Vice Mayor Viacheslav Shcherbakov and Iurii Iarov, the president of the regional soviet. The plotters had listed both Shcherbakov and Iarov in the local Emergency Committee, without consulting them. The three men repudiated the conspirators and made a moving appeal to the television audience, addressing them as “dear Leningraders,” “dear countrymen” (*zemliaki*) and “fellow citizens” (*so-grazhdane*). Their appearance had a profound effect on Leningraders. According to an interview with Sobchak conducted soon after the coup, the television appeals helped to dispel “the suffocating atmosphere and disorientation” that people were experiencing and to mobilize popular resistance in Leningrad to the putsch.³⁵

19 August, Day One: “Vremia”

Central Television’s authoritative evening news program, “Vremia,” was eagerly awaited by millions of television viewers at 9 p.m. on the nineteenth.³⁶ It began as an archetypal Soviet performance, with incredibly somber, stone-faced announcers—the sexless Adam and Eve of Soviet television—reading the Emergency Committee’s first declarations. Time and again, the announcers stressed the dangers of “chaos” and “anarchy” in the country. Reading from the Emergency Committee’s “Appeal to the Soviet People,” the two announced that: “The country is sinking into an abyss of violence and lawlessness.” This alarmist language remained central to the plotters’ scripting of the events. The tanks, after all, had ostensibly been sent to Moscow in response to the imminent threat of chaos and anarchy. These dangers provided justification for such a massive show of force in Moscow and, more generally, for placing troops on alert in other parts of the country.

35. The interview with Sobchak was conducted by A. Golovkova and A. Chernova and appeared originally in *Moscow News*, 26 August 1991. An English translation of the interview with Anatolii Sobchak, “Breakthrough: The Coup in St. Petersburg,” can be found in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 3.

36. Beginning on 1 January 1968, “Vremia” appeared every evening at 9 p.m. The program lasted 40–45 minutes, sometimes longer on the occasion of a major policy speech. American research on Soviet television, published in 1987, disclosed that “Vremia” generally covered 22 news items, with precedence going to domestic news. In the second half of the 1980s, some modifications in “Vremia” took place, such as the inclusion of more foreign news. Around the time of the coup, on a typical evening “Vremia” had an average viewing audience of 150 million people or over 80% of the adult population in the Soviet Union (Mickiewicz, *Split Signals*: 8-9 and chap. 3). See also Dingley, “Soviet Television and Glasnost” in Graffy and Hosking, eds., *Culture and the Media*: 8–9.

But Monday's edition of "Vremia" presented a far more complex and contradictory picture of the situation than the plotters and their supporters at Gosteleradio had intended. Following the lengthy reading of appeals and decrees issued by the Emergency Committee, the announcers introduced reports from Moscow and Leningrad. The first of these is a five-minute segment by Sergei Medvedev, the reporter, and Vladimir Chechel'nitskii, the cameraman. They get off to a good start—visually. The tanks are rolling from across the river and onto Red Square, passing St. Basil's at high speed. As if to provide some link to the overwhelmingly Soviet ambiance of what had preceded this scene, the voice-over of the Soviet announcer comments cheerfully as though welcoming a shipment of bananas: "Today, on the streets of Moscow, there appeared tanks and armored personnel carriers. They moved quickly toward the center of the city." With these words, the life line connecting this report to the Soviet universe is severed. Unlike the preceding voice-over, Medvedev speaks with urgency and animation, each phrase punctuated with a gasp. It is a report from a battlefield from the very first line, and the gasping in the reporter's voice conveys the immediacy of battle, the fright and also the resolve, with great conviction and force.³⁷ Held unsteadily, as if by a man elbowing his way through a crowd, the camera pans in all directions, pausing for a moment on the faces of the soldiers, looking confused and apprehensive, smoking, reading a protest leaflet, confronting civilians. The trolleybuses block the tank traffic and a group of political activists stand atop a speakers' platform in Manège Square, one of them addressing the crowd through a megaphone: "An indefinite political strike has begun, a strike of political protest." More shots of tanks, with children and civilians in the background. Commenting on the shots of small crowds surrounding and haranguing the soldiers, Medvedev resorts to metaphors: "And the human waves kept rolling in, one after another. . . They were forming eddies. . ." Finally, the camera cuts to Yeltsin mounting a tank near the White House to read his first declaration. In a clear and steady voice-over, Medvedev announces that the decree "defines the actions of the Emergency Committee as a coup d'état." With Yeltsin's voice in the background and his towering figure filling the entirety of the frame, Medvedev carefully summarizes the main points of the declaration, down to the very last one, the call for an indefinite political strike. The report concludes with footage of the barricades outside what had become the front line, the immediate surroundings of the White House. Long shots of people building barricades are followed by an interview with a few men who had come to defend the White House, including a worker, an engineer, a student and an intellectual. Yes, they are planning to stay there all night if need be. "Do you have enough bread to last you?" "Yes, we do," answer

37. For Medvedev's comments on the circumstances surrounding the preparation of the segment, see his interview with Bill Keller, "Getting the News on 'Vremia'" in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 5.

some. “We don’t need any bread,” answers a younger man (a worker, judging by his appearance) with grim determination, “We’ll do it without any bread at all.” “What made you think that this was the place you should come to?” Medvedev asks them. “It’s Vilnius, Vilnius taught us our lesson,” answers the intense-looking intellectual with a carefully trimmed beard. One of them, a man in his fifties, most likely a worker, points to his heart and says that it was his heart that told him to be here. He works at the ZIL factory, one of Moscow’s biggest industrial employers, where they gave him time off when he informed his bosses about his plans. “We are here because we have something to defend—our legitimate elected representatives, our power,” the intellectual cuts in.

Medvedev’s interview not only conveyed a great deal of information about developments around the White House; it also presented a symbolic image of the support that Yeltsin enjoyed among a broad cross-section of Muscovites. None of this spectacular theater would have had significant impact had it not been for the framing by the cameramen and the later editing of segments, such as the one by Medvedev on “Vremia.” For example, the image of Yeltsin on the tank, an image reminiscent of Lenin’s famous speech on top of an armored car in Petrograd in April 1917, almost immediately became emblematic of the democratic resistance. Yet the crowd around Yeltsin and the tank was quite small, virtually lost in the vast space of the White House driveway and the steps leading down to the embankment; many spectators held umbrellas to shield themselves from a light drizzle. One can easily imagine a long shot through a telephoto lens from atop the high banister. Such an angle and frame could have easily diminished Yeltsin’s considerable physical stature to a visually unimpressive human figure flailing impotently on top of a mammoth piece of hardware, surrounded by a sparse crowd of onlookers who were melting away as the drizzle turned into a shower. This memorable symbol of opposition to the conspiracy was carefully scripted, cast, directed, shot and produced. The team that was present on the spot improvised—it had no time to do anything else—but it was improvising from a particular point of view. Thus filtered, most likely through the eye of a CNN cameraman,³⁸ Yeltsin’s rather awkward bulk makes him appear someone “larger than life,” his unrefined speaking style the “voice of the people,” his rather unkempt appearance a sign, not of the confusion of a politician caught by surprise but of a strong leader, righteously indignant and full of selfless resolve.

Yeltsin’s first statement on the morning of the 19th was addressed “To the Citizens of Russia,” as Medvedev indicated in his report. The plotters’ major appeal, by contrast, was directed to “Compatriots, Cit-

38. Whatever the source of the clip of Yeltsin on the tank, it was not acknowledged in the 19 August “Vremia” broadcast. See “Getting the News on ‘Vremia’” in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 5.

izens of the Soviet Union.”³⁹ The language of propaganda encoded two very different ideas about national allegiances and political unity—one was based on a vision of an independent Russia, the other on the tradition of the all-powerful, unitary Soviet state. Visual symbols reinforced these differences: whereas the Soviet flag remained the national emblem of the Emergency Committee, the pro-Yeltsin forces were shown displaying the old Russian tricolor flag which symbolized Russian national identity.⁴⁰

The circumstances surrounding the filming and the airing of Medvedev’s segment disclose a great deal about the situation confronting the plotters at Gosteleradio. Medvedev did not get out into the streets until early in the afternoon. His main source of information until that moment, including the entry of tanks into Moscow, was CNN. Officials at Gosteleradio had attempted to shut off CNN but the staff had resisted.⁴¹ Medvedev’s crew was the only one that applied for permission to film the first afternoon of the coup and permission was granted. According to Medvedev, he returned to the studio from the White House around 8 p.m. The segment was prepared under great time pressure; about five minutes before “Vremia” went on the air at 9 p.m., it still had not been completed. Valentin Lazutkin, a deputy to Kravchenko responsible for overseeing the content of the program, looked at the first part of the report and asked what came next. “Well, we’ll show the barricades and the people on them,” Medvedev replied. The footage of Yeltsin on the tank originally ran for four minutes but Lazutkin told Medvedev to shorten it. “The rest of what [Yeltsin] said I will try to put in my script,” said Medvedev. Lazutkin gave his approval.⁴² Lazutkin and Medvedev were just two of the Gosteleradio employees who cooperated spontaneously to undermine the plotters’ effort to create an illusion of calm and unanimity in the country.

The conspirators and their supporters reacted swiftly to the airing of Medvedev’s segment. As Medvedev said, “It was as though the ceiling crashed in on my head. All the telephones began to explode.”⁴³ Calls came from Yurii Prokof’ev, secretary of the Moscow party committee,

39. The Russian text has been reprinted in *August-91*: 35–36. For an English translation, see Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 3.

40. The flag has a long history in Russia, dating to 1799 when it was introduced as the country’s merchant flag. In 1883 it became an alternative civil flag and in 1914 Tsar Nicholas II added a double-headed eagle, the symbol of the monarchy. The flag, minus the eagle, served the Provisional Government but was abandoned after the bolsheviks seized power. Resurrected after 1985 as a symbol of Russian national identity and citizenship, the tricolor flag encapsulated a set of substantive, symbolic and rhetorical issues that remained central throughout the crisis.

41. This information was conveyed by Aleksandr Petrov, CNN general manager of Soviet sales and liaison with Soviet TV in Moscow. He observed: “We can thank the coup plotters for their ineptitude in underestimating the power of CNN” (Betsy McKay, “From Coup to Champagne,” *Advertising Age* 62, no. 35 [26 August 1991]: 37).

42. See the Interview with Medvedev, “Getting the News on ‘Vremia’” in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 5, 297–98.

43. *Ibid.*, 298.

and Aleksandr Dzasokhov, a Central Committee secretary. Interior Minister Pugo phoned Lazutkin and angrily accused him: "The story on Moscow was treacherous! You have given instructions to the people on where to go and what to do. You will answer for this." By contrast, Yanaev, who had not seen "Vremia," as Lazutkin suspected, congratulated him for a "good, balanced report." "It showed everything from different points of view," concluded the acting president of the USSR.⁴⁴ Apparently, even the plotters could not agree about "Vremia." Kravchenko subsequently ordered the chief editor to demote Medvedev from commentator to senior editor, with half the salary. Medvedev was also deprived of the right to appear on the air. The chief editor advised him to "go hide somewhere, because I don't know what will happen next. Go take a vacation immediately." Some among the "Vremia" staff were also appalled by Medvedev's uncompromising stance:

I didn't wait around to see how everything would come out, although before I left, one of the deputy editors began to shout at me: "How could you deceive us? You gave an interview to people in the opposition." He blamed me for a phrase at the end of the report: "If we have the chance, we will give you additional information later about what is happening in Moscow." Everyone blamed me for this phrase.⁴⁵

But the next day, the obstinate Medvedev took a cameraman and again went to the White House to film. The footage he shot that day did not get on the air until Thursday, when Medvedev himself anchored the first uncensored "Vremia" since the coup began.

Medvedev's segment provided the high point for Monday's "Vremia." It was followed by a brief report on the situation in Leningrad, showing an anti-putsch gathering in Palace Square and many tricolor flags. Juxtaposed to the Moscow and Leningrad reports were a number of short segments designed to show that in provincial cities and other republics—Latvia, Moldova, Estonia, Alma-Ata—life was proceeding as usual, with no disturbances. The repetitive images in these short segments showed ordinary but mostly well dressed people (especially women and children) walking down streets, standing in lines or working at their jobs. Within the framework of the pre-Gorbachev Soviet-style reporting, it was, of course, impossible to present scenes of disorder or popular resistance to the government in any form. In these segments, "Vremia" reporters attempted to follow the old script: everything was peaceful, harmonious and industrious in the country. The scenes of pedestrians moving smoothly along well paved streets created precisely the desired imagery of Soviet citizens—imagery that prompted both Elena Bonner and Anatolii Sobchak to comment on Tuesday: "They think we are cattle (*bydlo*)."⁴⁶

44. *Ibid.*; Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, 474.

45. Medvedev, "Getting the News on 'Vremia,'" 298.

By the end of the first day of the coup, the Emergency Committee had made its case to the Soviet people and had applied massive force to ensure its hegemony. Nevertheless, television coverage already revealed major weaknesses in their efforts. Despite strict censorship, the take-over of Gosteleradio and the closure of many newspapers, by Monday evening everyone in the Soviet Union who watched Central or Leningrad television knew that resistance to the Emergency Committee had begun to take form. Viewers saw images of barricades, pro-democracy demonstrations and tricolor flags.

The Medvedev segment on “Vremia” had a profound impact. As Medvedev told *New York Times* correspondent Bill Keller a few days after the putsch: “Later, I learned that many who defended the White House found out where to go and what to do precisely from this report.”⁴⁷ His segment turned the image of Yeltsin on a tank into a symbol of resistance and it brought into millions of homes Yeltsin’s memorable words declaring the actions of the Emergency Committee a “right-wing, reactionary, anti-constitutional *perevorot*,” spoken from the rostrum of a tank—in a symbolic appropriation of Lenin’s famous armored-car speech at the Finland Station—as the minicams were rolling. *Perevorot*—commonly used by Soviet sources to describe the bolshevik take-over of October 1917⁴⁸ and translated into English variously as “coup d’état, revolution, overturn and cataclysm,” was not the only term in the rhetoric of the democratic movement to describe the situation. In Yeltsin’s “Appeal to the Citizens of Russia” and on the streets of Moscow where chalk-scrawled slogans soon appeared on armored personnel carriers (APCs), tanks and sidewalks, the events were quickly encapsulated in the word “putsch,” the plotters were labeled the “junta.” These words of foreign origin, reminiscent of the nazi take-over and banana republics, made their way onto national television and from there into the national consciousness, before the take-over was even a day old.

20 August, Day Two: The Struggle of Scripts, Images and Symbols

The second day of the coup brought an intensification of the struggle in the war of scripts, images and symbols that had begun on Monday. Central Television remained under the control of the Emergency

46. Bonner’s remark came at the mass rally held at the White House at mid-day on Tuesday. Sobchak made the remark that evening on the Leningrad television news program, “Fakt.”

47. Medvedev, “Getting the News on ‘Vremia,’” 298.

48. Literally *perevorot* means the turning of things upside down. In modern usage, however, the term has a clear political connotation. The 1939 edition of the Ushakov *Tolkovyi slovar’ russkogo iazyka*, vol. III, eds. B.M. Volin and D.N. Ushakov (107) defines a *perevorot* as a sharp change in the existing social and political order, such as the October *perevorot* of 1917.

Committee. The same announcers as the preceding day presented news in the somber and officious Soviet style. But once again, the official news program "Vremia" was far from consistent in its presentation of events. Two very different interpretations could again be inferred from the reports. Tuesday's "Vremia" contained a good deal of information to suggest that things were not running smoothly for the Emergency Committee. Viewers learned, for example, that the Moscow Cadets refused to participate in the imposition of martial law; a rally against the coup had taken place in Kishinev; people in Volgograd supported Yeltsin; in Latvia, parliament called the Emergency Committee "illegal"; young soldiers were reading leaflets with Yeltsin's decrees and proclamations; and Estonians, dismayed by the arrival of tanks in Tallinn, appealed to all democratic forces to express solidarity.

Particularly telling were two reports on the situation in Moscow. Both contained similar images: civilians, especially children, sitting and climbing on tanks and APCs with no interference from soldiers or officers. The reports attempted to convey an atmosphere of calm by showing people eating ice cream on tanks, while others posed in front of them. Yet the situation was not as amicable as the images suggested. An interview with an army major disclosed that some Muscovites viewed the soldiers and their hardware as "the enemy" and not saviors, as the plotters would have had them believe. These reports were intended to persuade viewers that, in the words of one reporter, "Now everyone understands that the troops are a necessary guarantee of general safety." But the images created a complex and contradictory impression. A bouquet of roses in a gun barrel at the conclusion of the first Moscow report (though the report was obviously cut abruptly at this point) was probably intended to suggest cordial relations between soldiers and civilians, but it also indicated that the fraternization, reported on Monday by Medvedev, was continuing. The implication was that soldiers were refusing to use their guns.⁴⁹ A "normalcy" shot focused on a line of people queuing up for vodka. The camera panned to a solitary bottle of Moskovskaya vodka placed on the pavement by an old lady. For several seconds viewers were treated to an extreme wide-angle close-up of the bottle, transformed into a visual metaphor of Russia at the crossroads with vodka as a symbol of the country's future.

The second report on Tuesday's "Vremia," put together by B. Baryshnikov and A. Gromov, contains a striking visual image. A huge banner is stretched across a street above a tank. The banner announces the premiere of a play whose title is clearly etched in bold letters: Tsar Ivan Groznyi. Beneath are teenagers romping on the tanks and young soldiers reading Yeltsin leaflets. The juxtaposition between the tyrannical tsar and the Emergency Committee leaps out from the screen. The framing of this image for the television audience—and there can

49. This segment was put together by R. Oganegov and B. Antsiferov and concentrated on the Moscow scene in Manège Square.



be no doubt that the sequence was deliberately shot and knowingly inserted into the report—sent a powerful message to viewers.

Following these reports, “Vremia” abruptly brought to the screen the reporter Vladimir Stefanov. His appearance was pointedly informal: hair slightly ruffled, a casual sports shirt open at the collar. Stefanov reminded viewers that the Emergency Committee consisted of important people, “members of the Government,” appointed by even more important people. Although he himself did not like the precise procedure involved in this transfer of power, he did not believe it was worthwhile to risk one’s life over the quarrel among top-ranking politicians. “We may not like what has happened,” he continued, “but life willed it otherwise.” With tears welling in his eyes, as the camera moved in for the final close-up and his face expanded to fill the entire frame, Stefanov implored his audience: “Anything, anything at all, but please no blood!” (*use chto ugodno—tol’ko by ne krov’*). Stefanov’s appearance was strikingly different from other “Vremia” announcers and reporters on Monday and Tuesday, with the exception of Medvedev. And, like Medvedev, the camera showed him speaking with earnestness and informality directly to the television viewer. The decision to put him on the air during Tuesday’s “Vremia” emphasizes the importance of style as a component in the battle of the competing scripts: precisely by appropriating the style of their democratic opposition, officials at Gos-tele-radio expected to make their message more palatable and plausible to the viewing audience or, at least, to some critical portion of it.⁵⁰

50. For a provocative discussion of style, see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1983).

On Tuesday, Leningrad television continued its presentation of programs supporting the democratic resistance. "Fakt" included a report of the mass meeting in Palace Square earlier that day, attended, the reporter declared, by 120,000 people. Sobchak was shown addressing the crowd and many tricolor flags appear in the film footage. The program also presented a lengthy interview with the Leningrad party boss who amiably chatted with the reporter about the impossibility of committing oneself one way or the other regarding the Emergency Committee. A special program on Leningrad television that evening featured Mayor Sobchak, flanked by Vice Mayor of Leningrad Shcherbakov and Rear Admiral E.D. Chernov, commander of the Atomic Flotilla of the Northern Fleet. Shcherbakov minced no words: the junta stands for totalitarianism, he said; they want to make us pay with our bodies for the communist paradise. Chernov and Sobchak urged people to use their consciences and honor (*sovest'* and *chest'*) to defend the legal government, to assert their human individuality (*chelovecheskaia lichnost'*) in defense of the "great motherland" (*velikaia rodina*) and "great city" (*velikii gorod*). The alternative, Sobchak pointed out, was to submit to the junta and be transformed back into cattle (*bydlo*).

Both the Leningrad station and Central Television aired news programs on Tuesday that, in one way or another, alerted viewers to the mounting opposition to the Emergency Committee, not just in Moscow and Leningrad, but in Kishinev, Volgograd, Tallinn and elsewhere. The mere presence of this information on "Vremia" implied a serious weakness in the Emergency Committee, which had obviously tried and failed to control the one and only news program on Central Television. On this second day of the crisis, the progress of the events could be measured and assessed in terms of television coverage: what began as a *perevorot* had turned into a *televorot*, with television occupying the front line in the political struggle over legitimacy and authority.

21-23 August, Days Three, Four, Five: The Victorious Version of the Russian Democratic Script

By Wednesday afternoon, it was clear to all who followed the news that the Emergency Committee was in a full-scale retreat from the democratic forces under Yeltsin's leadership. Seen in retrospect, the victory over the conspirators was, first and foremost, a symbolic one: the conspirators never achieved enough cooperation from the military and the KGB to overwhelm the opposition physically.⁵¹ As it turned

51. For accounts of the Emergency Committee's failure to persuade military and KGB officers to execute orders against Yeltsin and his democratic supporters, see introduction, in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*; Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, 482-84; Stepankov and Lisov, *Kremlevskii zagovor*, 171-80 and elsewhere; "They Refused to Storm the White House" and "We Were Given the Order to Arrest Popov. . ." in *Russian Politics and Law* 31, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 8-20 (Russian citations of these articles appear above in notes 33 and 34).

out, the really critical struggle was fought not only in the streets but on millions of television screens, where competing scripts, images and styles offered viewers starkly opposed versions of the past, present and future. The Emergency Committee suffered defeat in this critical battle over hearts and minds when it failed—whether through oversight or inability—to control Central Television completely and to deploy rhetoric and symbols in a compelling and credible manner in support of their claim to rule.

While the coup was in progress, “Vremia” functioned as the authoritative news program on Soviet Central Television and also, to a considerable extent, the mouthpiece of those in power. When the conspirators’ ship sank, so did their supporters in high places. On the afternoon of 21 August, Yeltsin issued Decree No. 69 “On the Means of Mass Communication in the RSFSR,” abrogating the GKChP’s measures to reinstate censorship, dismissing Kravchenko from his position as president of Gosteleradio and placing Gosteleradio under control of the government of the Russian republic.⁵² At 5 p.m. Central Television began broadcasting live the session of the Russian Parliament that was in progress.⁵³ Gorbachev had not yet returned to Moscow and his government, what was left of it, was in disarray.

Wednesday’s “Vremia” was produced in a power vacuum. The program aired that evening was a hybrid, combining elements from the Russian democratic narrative and some of the style and ambiance of the Soviet script. The announcers were the same dour figures who presided during the previous two days but the content of the program was radically different. In a voice that showed little emotion or deviation from the Soviet standard, the announcer began with the dramatic statement that the putsch had been overthrown by the democratic forces. Members of the Emergency Committee were labeled “adventurists” by the same announcers who only twenty-four hours earlier had reported on behalf of the Emergency Committee. Although the plotters had been repudiated, the scripting of Wednesday’s “Vremia” did not disengage entirely from the rhetoric and format of the junta days. The key word was still *stabil'nost'* and the format of the program duplicated that of the previous two evenings; only the political content had changed. After a summary of the major developments, the program showed segments from different parts of the country. As on previous evenings, pictures of urban serenity dominated the newscasts; only now, in such cities as Alma-Ata, Barnaul and Kuzbass, the proverbial man or woman in the street was implacably opposed to the junta.

52. For the Russian text of the decree, see *August-91*: 85–86. On 27 August, Kravchenko was replaced by Egor Iakovlev, chief editor of *Moscow News*. Iakovlev reversed some of Kravchenko’s key decisions and restored “Vzgliad” as well as “TSN” with its controversial moderators (Tolz, “The Soviet Media,” 30).

53. TV programming returned to normal on Thursday morning (McKay, “From Coup to Champagne,” 37).

“Vremia” gave extensive coverage on Wednesday evening to public protest in Leningrad. The camera dwelled on the vast crowd that filled Palace Square, many carrying tricolor flags. Here was the archetype for the victory script of the Russian democratic forces: the finale of the narrative that began with the putschists seizing power in order to re-impose totalitarian rule on the Soviet people. According to this version, ordinary citizens in great numbers and with great courage and conviction defeated the junta. They were inspired by their love of democracy and country, Russia, symbolized by the tricolor flag. A memorable image concluded the report: the Alexander column archangel blessing the city and, above and around it, Russian tricolor flags. The struggle, according to this scenario, was between good and evil. As Khasbulatov put it to the Russian Supreme Soviet on Wednesday afternoon (in an ironic appropriation of Stalin’s war-time slogan): “We won because our cause was right!” Live television and radio coverage of the Supreme Soviet meeting that day made it possible for millions of people to witness this remark and others praising Muscovites, and Russians more generally, for their resistance to the junta.

Only on Thursday did a dramatic change take place in “Vremia.” The day had been proclaimed a national holiday, Freedom Day, by the Russian Parliament. Most members of the Emergency Committee had been arrested; one (Pugo) had committed suicide. Yeltsin was at the peak of his popularity. When “Vremia” came on the air, the anchors had been changed: now Sergei Medvedev, the reporter who had put together Monday’s pro-democratic segment, presided over the news program. Not only was this a great vindication for Medvedev, but his appearance marked an important shift in the style as well as the content of reporting. Far more casual and direct than his predecessors, he functioned as an anchorman and commentator rather than a mere mouthpiece. Young, energetic and articulate, he spoke in a natural and unformulaic way, without the standard Soviet rhetoric.

The heart of Thursday’s “Vremia” was film footage, apparently unedited, of an incident early Wednesday morning that had left three men dead. This clip, shot in semi-darkness and accompanied by somber music, had a moving, almost piercing effect: a Moscow street, the barricade of trolley busses, unarmed people trying to prevent the APCs from passing through the barricades, shots, bodies falling and crushed by tank treads, Molotov cocktails going off, more shots, blood on the pavement; and later that day, an improvised shrine and grief-stricken Muscovites in mourning over the “martyrs” who “perished as a result of an unsuccessful attempt to storm the White House.” The report helped to create a national surge of feeling for the three young men who lost their lives “defending our freedom.”⁵⁴ The “Vremia” broad-

54. Three men perished: D.A. Komar', I.M. Krichevskii and V.A. Usov. At the time this report was aired, it was generally believed that the fatalities had occurred during an attack on the White House. Only in the days and weeks following the event did it become clear that, although a military attack on the White House had been planned,

cast was a feast of symbols. The tricolor flag was now the official flag of the Russian Republic, adopted by the Russian Parliament the preceding afternoon, and flags were prominently featured in footage shown on the program. The area behind the White House was renamed Freedom Square. And it was the Day of Freedom, a Russian version of the Fourth of July or Bastille Day, complete with fireworks in the evening. The celebratory events of the day, the speeches by Yeltsin and others, the gathering on Dzerzhinsky Square and the subsequent removal of Dzerzhinsky's statue (another highly symbolic moment), were all televised live. Television once again—this time with live uncensored coverage by reporters who had a style and demeanor much like Medvedev's—brought the events and the Russian democratic script to viewers throughout the country.

With the return to television of the feisty program of news and commentary, "Vzgliad," 253 days after it had been banned by Kravchenko, the Russian democratic script was recast to correspond to the victorious but tragic culmination of events. The Thursday and Friday programs featured documentary films, both called "Perevorot," that chronicled the preceding three days of political turmoil without narrative or voice-over. The images told it all.

To appreciate the rescripting of the events that was under way, it is helpful to note what the documentary montage did not include in "Perevorot." Excluded were scenes of the fraternization between Moscow civilians and soldiers, as was the footage of the animated exchanges alongside tanks and APCs, the discrete passing of sausage and cigarettes to the soldiers in tanks, instances of camaraderie. All of that remained on the cutting room floor. A similar fate befell numerous film clips of civilians who had climbed on tanks and APCs, eaten ice cream atop the tank turrets, scrawled slogans on the armor and used the heavy equipment as so many soap boxes from which to address assembled multitudes (Yeltsin's was only the most famous among the numerous improvisations in the "Finland Station" style). The children romping on the tanks—a familiar sight on the nineteenth and the twentieth—were likewise excluded from the documentary. In the version of "Perevorot" shown on Thursday, the ominously rumbling tanks and APCs in Moscow encountered unarmed civilians, who used their own bodies to prevent the tanks and APCs from moving forward (some remarkable footage of this resistance appears in the film). Soldiers, always very youthful, read Yeltsin's decrees. Yeltsin—in person and through his decrees and proclamations—was central to this version and, of course, "Perevorot" included the footage of his appearance on a tank. The democrats' most important symbol, the tricolor flag, found its way into many of the film's segments—a reminder that the resisters

it never actually took place. The three deaths occurred when a column of APCs, trapped by the barricades, attempted to extricate themselves by ramming through a row of streetcars blocking an underpass. In the ensuing melee, two of the men were shot and a third crushed by an APC.

owed their primary allegiance to Russia. Brief interviews with such well known figures as the cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (in the White House on Tuesday evening, sporting a rifle), the film director Sergei Mikhalkov, and the editor of *Moscow News* and newly appointed Gos-teleradio president, Egor Iakovlev, were included in the film, juxtaposed to a short segment from the Emergency Committee's press conference, including the famous image of Yanaev's trembling hands.

In "Vzgliad's" scripting of events, the junta and its military hardware now emerged as truly threatening and ominous—no mere occasion for child's play! Ordinary citizens were shown as fantastically courageous, to the point of holding back tanks and defending the White House with their bodies; entreaties to soldiers and gifts of sausage and cigarettes did not do justice to this level of heroic resistance. The degree of peril faced by those on the barricades was now fully evident: three had died. But ordinary citizens were not the only heroes. They were helped by soldiers who crossed over to Yeltsin's side, such as Major Sergei Evdokimov's tank battalion from the Taman Division which was shown making the heroic move from one side of the barricade to the other on Monday evening.

Soldiers appeared in the narrative as extremely young and naive but receptive to Yeltsin's decrees. It was Yeltsin whose words and deeds won soldiers over to the Russian democratic cause instead of middle-aged Russian matrons entreating soldiers not to shoot at their mothers. Yeltsin is the larger-than-life hero of the film, the inspiration and the leader of the democratic resistance. His appearance on the tank now had all the qualities of an iconographic image. The interviews with leading Russian cultural figures during the coup was a novelty; in these segments may be discerned a process of "heroization": tell me what you were doing during the August coup, the film implicitly argues, and I will tell you who you are.

22 August, Day Four: The Perestroika Script

Gorbachev's first public statement following his release from confinement to his Crimean dacha was aired on "Vremia" on Thursday evening. Here Gorbachev spoke of the "attempted coup, foiled as a result of the decisive actions taken by the country's democratic forces. . . ." The term "attempted coup" (*popytka perevorota*) attested to a very different interpretation of the events from the one put forward by Yeltsin and his democratic supporters. Earlier that same day, television had carried a live broadcast of Yeltsin's speech before Russia's Supreme Soviet where he offered a three-fold narrative, reminiscent of Russian folk tales: thrice did the right-wing forces try to stage a coup d'état; twice did they fail; the third time, they succeeded.⁵⁵

55. For an English translation of this speech, see Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia on the Barricades*, part 3.

... the first attempt took place at the beginning of the year, but at that time they were scared off by the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shervadnadze, and the corresponding reaction of public opinion in Russia, the country and the world. You all recall the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, when the same people—Pavlov, Kriuchkov, Yazov—tried to extract for themselves some special powers at the expense of the authority of the president of the country, which virtually amounted to his removal from office, and so forth. But this second attempt also failed: the Supreme Soviet gave them no support. *And finally, the third, this time successful, attempt* came when the president was vacationing away from Moscow. . . . [emphasis added]

Yeltsin's message in his Thursday speech to parliament was that the coup may have failed miserably in Russia, but it had succeeded in the USSR, since no major all-union institution had declared itself squarely against the conspiracy: not the army, nor the KGB, nor the MVD, nor the Supreme Soviet, nor the Cabinet nor the Communist Party. Indeed, the leaders of these institutions were the key conspirators and, now that they had been routed, the USSR had only an ephemeral existence. Gorbachev swiftly countered this rhetoric of Russia's supremacy over the Union. Returning to Moscow in the early hours of 22 August, in his first statement before the television cameras, he offered praise, first and foremost, to the *Soviet* people (emphasis added).⁵⁶

I congratulate the *Soviet* people, who have a sense of responsibility and a sense of dignity, who care, who respect all those whom they have entrusted with power. . . . Some pathetic bunch, using attractive slogans, speculating on the difficulties. . . . wished to divert our people to a road that would have led our entire society to a catastrophe. *It did not work.* This is the greatest achievement of perestroika. . . . I want to express my appreciation to the *Soviet* people, to the citizens of Russia, for their principled position, to Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin, to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, to all the deputies, work collectives, which took a decisive stand against this caper.

The scripts offered by the two presidents differed down to the very last detail. Whereas Gorbachev tried to diminish the whole affair by referring to the conspirators as a "pathetic bunch" of treacherous but incompetent men engaged in a "caper" (*avantiura*), Yeltsin portrayed the Emergency Committee as dangerous opponents of epic proportions—powerful men who had presided over the government as part of Gorbachev's latest perestroika team. The stature of the enemy, apparently, conferred stature also on the resisters: the men and women who stood up to tyranny.

In Gorbachev's further statements on Thursday, 22 August, includ-

56. The text of Gorbachev's remarks was published in *Pravda*, 23 August 1991. It is reprinted in *August-91*: 102–3.

ing a press conference broadcast live on Central Television,⁵⁷ he appeared chastised but unreformed, still insisting on the role of the Communist Party as a necessary bridge between Soviet totalitarianism and democracy. The scripting of events by the democratic opposition was by then triumphant in the mass media and his appearance was framed by scenes from the mass celebration of the Day of Freedom in Moscow and elsewhere. Gorbachev's rhetoric and ideas accorded poorly with the images of a courageous people celebrating a heroic victory over a formidable enemy.

24 August, Day Six: The Funeral

On Saturday, 24 August, the live televised broadcast of the funeral for the three who had died on Wednesday morning gave the democratic Russia script its most moving, most fitting coda. The camera followed the progress of the funeral, which began in Manège Square where the mourners were addressed by several prominent political figures including Gorbachev. After the speeches, the funeral procession turned its back on the Kremlin and moved on to the White House. Here Yeltsin, somber, proud, fully in control, spoke the most memorable words of the day, if not of his entire career. Addressing the victims' parents and implicitly the entire nation, expressing traditional humility before the people and implicitly projecting the image of the nation's patriarch, he spoke slowly and clearly: "Forgive me, for I have failed to protect your sons." Now transformed by Yeltsin's speech into a symbol of the entire nation, the procession moved on to the Vagan'kovo Cemetery for the two religious services, Russian Orthodox and Jewish, and finally the interment.⁵⁸

The funeral rally and procession were carefully choreographed media events viewed by millions of people throughout the Soviet Union. The images and rituals served to crystallize some of the major themes developed by the democratic opposition over the preceding week. The main symbolic leitmotif was that of a nation—Russia—committed to common citizenship in civil society. That this commitment was now sealed by the martyrs' blood was of singular ritual importance, especially in view of the long-standing Russian tradition, both secular and

57. For the Russian text of Gorbachev's speech, see *August-91*: 109–12. Later that day he made another extensive statement to introduce his press conference. The Russian text appears in *August-91*: 112–28. A partial English translation may be found in Bonnell, Cooper and Freidin, eds., *Russia at the Barricades*, part 3.

58. The Russian Orthodox funeral service was for Dmitrii Komar' and Vladimir Usov and conducted in the Vagan'kovo Cemetery by the Patriarch; the Jewish service was for Il'ia Krichevskii. Jewish funerals are not held on Saturdays. An exception was made in this case to coordinate with the two Russian Orthodox funerals, which according to tradition were scheduled for the third day after the deaths. Because the Jewish funeral was held on the Sabbath, the rabbi and cantor (from one of Moscow's two synagogues, both Orthodox) could not offer a regular service in a synagogue.

religious, of defining the nation around a martyr's ultimate sacrifice.⁵⁹ The phrase "they gave their lives for our freedom" was repeated again and again throughout the broadcast of the funeral. Naturally, the leit-motif of this new social bond found its fullest expression in the television coverage of the two funeral services conducted concurrently for the victims: one in a Russian Orthodox church, the other, a Jewish service, held out of doors.

The television coverage moved back and forth between the Jewish and Russian Orthodox services, from the rabbi and cantor to the priests and Patriarch and back again, with an even-handedness that bespoke deliberate staging for the television audience. In light of the many decades of Soviet anti-religious and anti-Semitic policies, the lengthy coverage of both services provided a fascinating spectacle for millions of viewers. But equally remarkable and politically eloquent was the balanced treatment given to the two religions. That all three should be mourned together was critically important for the victorious democratic resistance. The coverage was scripted to emphasize not only the ecumenical, but also the multi-ethnic, multi-class citizenship in the new Russia (Dmitrii Komar', an Afghan veteran and a worker, was, judging by his name, Ukrainian; Il'ia Krichevskii, was a Moscow artist of Jewish origin; Vladimir Usov was Russian and an entrepreneur⁶⁰). This important *ecumenical* message was captured in the civic ritual of the heroes' interment. Each coffin was covered with a Russian tricolor flag and then lowered into the grave to the accompaniment of the *Russian* national anthem. The TV cameras were positioned high above the graves, figuratively transporting the viewers high into the sky. The image of the flag-draped coffin, with the Russian anthem playing in the background, signaled the fact that this was, above all, a funeral for national heroes, "martyrs," whose deaths were inextricably linked to the forging of a new nation.

59. On the political authority of martyrdom in the Russian intelligentsia tradition, see Mikhail Gershenzon, "Tvorcheskoe samosoznanie" and Sergei Bulgakov's "Geroizm i podvizhnichestvo," in M. O. Gershenzon, ed., *Vekhi: sbornik statei o russkoi intelligentsii*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1909), 84 and 37, respectively. On the special significance of the institution of martyrdom for eastern Christianity, see Peter Brown, "Parting of the Ways," *Society and the Holy In Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). On the institution of martyrdom in Russian culture see Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); and D. Obolensky, "Russia's Byzantine Heritage," in *The Structure of Russian History*, ed. M. Cherniavsky (New York: Random House, 1970). Among the more recent works on this subject, see G. Freidin, "By the Walls of the Church and State: On the Authority of Literature in Russia's Modern Tradition," *Russian Review* 52, no. 2 (April 1993): 149–63. See also the seminal work on the relationship between violence, martyrdom, and political authority by René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1972).

60. In eulogising the victims in Manège Square, Moscow Mayor Gavriil Popov spoke of them as follows: "Volodia Usov, an employee at a joint venture, an entrepreneur; Dima Komar', a worker, and Afghan veteran; and Il'a Krichevskii, an artist. For six years they had been thwarted [by those who had opposed reform]. They had hindered Usov from being an entrepreneur, Komar' from being a worker and Krichevskii from being able to create. . ." (cited in Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia*, 230).

The week ended as it had begun: millions of television screens beaming the gripping, real political drama into people's living rooms, bringing the affairs of state and nation-building into a close and intimate relationship with every viewer. The funeral served as the culmination of the television coverage of the *perevorot*—coverage that created the first true media event in the history of the Soviet Union. The crisis in high politics had been profoundly and decisively shaped by the electronic eye which transformed, instantly and continuously, elements of a political confrontation into meaningful scripts with their corresponding images, styles and symbols. The 1991 *televorot* that began at 6 a.m. on 19 August with the televised announcement of the formation of the Emergency Committee received a fitting closure on Saturday afternoon, 24 August, with live coverage of a funeral that was as much a memorial to the three men as the consecration of a nation.