

Dave and Jerry, Is there a real CIA? And what do they do at State? 8/19/91

As of now, a little after 10 a.m., not much has been reported on the radio news I've heard other than that the military, the KGB and the reactionaries threw Gorbachev out in a coup. From the beginning of his reforms this was always a possibility but there was no discussion of it in any news I've seen lately. I suppose that most of us thought that if it were going to happen it would have happened and gave it no thought.

My attention was taken by the repeated reports that the Bush administration was taken completely by surprise and by the inadequate and all in all rather timid statement Bush himself made. The statement reflected both surprise and lack of anticipation of the possibility where government agencies are supposed to anticipate and prepare contingencies, as at the CIA and the State Department.

Whether or not Gorby considered a coup unlikely we may never know. But he and our dumdums in official position both should have recalled that the identical thing happened to Khrushchev. When earlier efforts to get rid of him failed because he was able to contend and oppose them the effort made when he was on vacation succeeded. Gorby took too long a vacation. Had he ended it a few days earlier and returned to Moscow he might have been able to frustrate the coup.

From the little I know it seems apparent that not only he but the CIA and State intelligence and the USSR component at the very least should have regarded a significant formalization scheduled for today ^{as} ~~and~~ at the least a possible coup trigger. Today there was to have been a signing of the new relationship between the national and the state governments, along with a change in the state's name from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics into of Sovereign republics. It would have meant a basic change in the national-states relationship. Along with all the internal commotion and the military's concern over the instability it reflects the formalization of the new relationship seriously weakened the positions of the military and the reactionaries.

If for no other reason, the foregoing should have generated intelligence estimates and analyses the thrust of which would and should have been that just before this scheduled formalization of the new relationship an attempted coup was possible and more likely than in the past.

There now is no way of knowing whether on the lower levels within CIA and State any such papers were prepared but it is apparent that if they were they were not bucked up through the bureaucracy high enough or if they reached the top level within any component, like the USSR divisions within CIA and State, they went any higher. Otherwise Bush would not have been caught by surprise and would not have made only wimpish comments about it.

When there is a situation that can lead to a coup anywhere the president should be well informed, whether or not he indicates a desire to be.

I think it is not impossible for there to be some leaking if analyses were made and

forwarded upward because the interests if not the survival of those who had the responsibility to think about such possibilities and call them to attention requires it.

It is more necessary for Bush and his Baker because Bush has long been preparing to run for re-election as a foreign-policy president. His foreign policy claimed successes are propaganda successes but are actual disasters, the Gulf war being a clear illustration.

Bush and Baker have been so intense in their currying of Arab favor and in what is to those not blind or uninformed an anti-Israeli policy that they seem to have nothing else in mind.

I just can't believe that long before the scheduled signing today those under Baker in State did not alert him to the possibility or at least make a strong effort to do this. If it happened and they didn't they would lose their heads. (Ditto here and in what follows for the CIA and the National Security Council.) I can't believe that on the lower levels something along this line wasn't done. However, with the ideologues put in place beginning with Reagan, this kind of stupidity and departure from normal operating procedures is not impossible. I am inclined to believe that the higher-level, appointed rather than professional are more interested in Bush's reelection than in the normal conduct of State's business.

Within the CIA, and this also is applicable to the other agencies, there did not have to be any human or electronic information that a coup was imminent for Bush and Baker to have been alerted to the possibility. Simple, and I do mean very, very simple, the most elemental intelligence analysis had to reflect the possibility that the situation made an attempt at a coup possible and that the attempt had a better chance of succeeding with Gorby away from Moscow.

Normal intelligence analysis would also have evaluated the developments possible because of all the internal turmoil and because of the steadfast opposition from the right to Gorby's reforms.

So we have still another intelligence disaster. If it had no human or electronic intelligence indicating what happened was in the works then the CIA probably has no more culpability than State and NSC. But this newest of the endless intelligence failures again raises the question, what in the world does the CIA do other than overthrow democratically-elected governments, as in Iran, Chile and Guatemala and support all military dictatorships? Of what we know its greatest successes are its failures because when it does not fail the consequences are worse. Witness Iran, Chile and Guatemala and, in the long run, all of Central America and most of South America. To say nothing of Asia and Africa.

What made me think of the caption may amuse you. In 1967 or 1968, at the American Booksellers Annual convention I was asked to improvise all the interviews for a book-and-author syndicated radio show, Authors' Roundtable. This was because the man who owned it and had a voice that sold very well had just gotten married and apparently his new wife

had a hangnail. Or something else that kept him on his honeymoon when his work demanded his presence. I'd not read any of the new books, like by General Wavin, Art Buchwald and a couple of Miami woman rep^{er}ters who had rssearched the widespread practise of senior citizens of living in sin in their retirement because marriage reduced their benefits so drastically. So^y not knowing what was in his book, the first question I asked Buchwald, after some kind of introduction alleging he had all kinds of secret sources, was what is the real CIA and what does it really do. Quicker than a snapped whip he came back, "The real CIA? The real CIA," possibly stalling for a few seconds to come up with what was up to his usual remarkably good ^{stuff} ~~line~~, then in a feigned hushed voice he replied, "The real CIA is actually two unknown divisions of the Agricukture Department. The rest is all show." And we went on from there, both of us enjoying it. He liked it so much that he soon did one or more ^Columns on this real CIA inside Agriculture.

What I've written above in haste, as soon as I returned from my physical therapy that followed the trip to the medical lab, has much wider application. In each and every respectable country the same kind of intelligence analyses should have been prepared. There was more urgency for some states, like Israel, because of the great^{er} potential to them of any internal changes within the USSR. Perhaps to a lesser degree this is true also of those Muslim states formerly in the USSR's camp.

If for no other reason, and there are other reasons, the resolute in-gathering of Jews especially from the Soviet Union being the policy of all political parties, any changes that could retard or end Jewish emigration is an important consideration for Israel. Whether or not the reactionary/military coup will change the rate of permitted emigration or end it, perhaps for those with better educations, is not easy to predict for those not within intelligence or foreign departments, but in Israel and in the Muslim states intelligence should have addressed this.

This coup is a major and predictable development. That the U.S. was caught by surprise is what years ago would have been regarded as an unimaginable failure, a real fiasco. I do hope that if the proper intelligence analyses were prepared that is leaked or that, if Congressional committees look into it, both on foreign affairs having proper jurisdiction and authority, the truth does some out. The patsy Democrats are insane if they do not hold hearings immediately.

Thinking about this a little later, waiting for Lil's physical therapy to be over, it occurred to me that it presents a narrow interpretation of what intelligence analysis is and what at least in my experience in it 50 years ago was done.

There is always awareness that there can be government changes and that they can be violent. The analyst also considers all that can follow any government changes, coup or not. It is normal, there is nothing arcane about it, it is plain common sense, but it is always in a political environment and thus the analyst knows that impartial analysis might

not be what is wanted of the higher levels, where political considerations intrude.

What may be in as reasonable impartial analysis may be ignored or altered to suit political considerations.

In any event, it would have been standard procedure for USSR-area analysts to have on paper not only what might indicate a coming coup, and there should have been a multitude of these items, but who could be involved, why and what the ramifications could likely be, internal and foreign.

These are not merely intellectual exercises. Absent political intrusions they are essential in informing policy-level officials and ultimately the president.

Bush did later his comments as the day wore on but not enough and he made mistakes.

What impressed me of what I caught on evening TV news is his National Security Advisor's embarrassment on the plane back to Washington when questioned about being caught by surprise is his answer: wasn't Gorby also surprised? His words, his attitude, his appearance and his annoyance at being asked the obvious question indicates that despite all the turmoil inside the USSR and all the ominous statements from the reactionaries the possibility of a coup was not in his mind.

So, what does this advisor do?

The sickening spectacle is of an administration that is stupid, unprepared for the world's actualities, dominated by internal political considerations related to re-election, with no grasp at all of the real world yet persistent in efforts to dominate and police it.

The incompetence is what I'm addressing as well as the domination of perceived domestic political considerations where the security of the nation if not the world requires that they not intrude.

Also, all ^{foreign} professionals know and should be alert to the interpretations of all reactions, non-reactions and public statements and acts. This performance is recorded by them as poor. They'll spot the unawareness of the possibility and give it wider application.

This is true of the first act, ~~Rushing~~ ^W Strauss' confirmation as the new ambassador. The last thing to be done if asserting any influence on the coup-makes is sending a new ambassador. This also means the new regime is recognized and recognition can't be pressure on it. He wasn't needed diplomatically. Rushing him there involves the Democrats, though.

My friends Sam and Joe may recall that as soon as Yeltsin started pressure on Gorby from the left I said that this had the effect of helping the right opposition to Gorby's reforms. I think I said this about supporting the Baltic states, Georgia, etc., in efforts to succeed. Together all such things endangered the survival of the USSR and that, among many other things, involved the military in opposition. It reinforced the reactionaries, too. It also meant that for him and the state to survive Gorby had to make what alliances he could at any cost. So it is a mess all around but for this country and incredible fiasco and still another exposure of the failures of the involved agencies to meet their basic responsibilities. This is always a danger to the nation.