

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 1

Classification:	UNCLASSIFIED	Status:	[STAT]
Document Date:	12 Sep 90	Category:	[CAT]
Report Type:	Daily Report	Report Date:	
Report Number:	FBIS-SOV-90-179	UDC Number:	

Author(s): Vladimir Sokolov, LITERATURNAYA GAZETA editor for socioeconomic issues: ``Reflections on the Variants of Our Immediate Future. To a Market Economy Under the Cover of the Army?'']

Headline: Possibilities of Military Coup Assessed

Source Line: 90SV0054A Moscow LITERATURNAYA GAZETA in Russian 12 Sep 90 pp 11-12

Subslug: [Article by Vladimir Sokolov, LITERATURNAYA GAZETA editor for socioeconomic issues: ``Reflections on the Variants of Our Immediate Future. To a Market Economy Under the Cover of the Army?'']

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

- [Article by Vladimir Sokolov, LITERATURNAYA GAZETA editor for socioeconomic issues: ``Reflections on the Variants of Our Immediate Future. To a Market Economy Under the Cover of the Army?'']
- [Text] Every successive shortage in our country is accompanied by an outbreak of mass belief in something special. At the height of the shortage of detergents, the country agonizingly waited for Gdlyan and Ivanov to arrest the entire Politburo, confiscate the stolen billions, and hand them out to common working people any minute. Later, when drugs began to disappear from drugstores, Chumak and Kashpirovskiy began to perform miracles for us on TV in a wholesale manner. The salt and vegetable oil panic was accompanied by UFO landings everywhere. Now, tobacco products and bread have disappeared. We have come to believe in market programs.
1. This belief began to sprout as early as election time. After all, there was not a candidate people's deputy without his own program of restructuring the economy of the country, republic, city, or rural soviet depending on the level at which the particular comrade was nominated.
- As it were, the similarity of the programs of deputies at all levels became apparent quite soon. Actually these were combinations of generalities from the perestroyka-minded press. We the voters understood that the resounding phrases of ``our'' candidate would not heal the ills of our society and would not even fill the shelves of empty stores. But what if? At any rate, our immortal hope for a

Approved for Release

UNCLASSIFIED

2/2010

5

This document is made available through the declassification efforts
and research of John Greenewald, Jr., creator of:

The Black Vault



The Black Vault is the largest online Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) document clearinghouse in the world. The research efforts here are responsible for the declassification of hundreds of thousands of pages released by the U.S. Government & Military.

Discover the Truth at: <http://www.theblackvault.com>

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 2

miracle helped us justify our choice.

5. Compiling programs--once again consisting of generalities, though refreshed ones--has become our national sport during the tenure of soviets of the new term. As the situation deteriorates the debate on the programs becomes increasingly entrancing, and the belief in their magic and self-sufficient power becomes increasingly metaphysical. Last year, we criticized Ryzhkov for a poor program; this year we berate him once again for a very poor program. However, by September we expect to have a nongovernmental and therefore good program, mystically calling it "500 Days" ahead of time. We also know ahead of time that Abalkin's team will come up with a so-so program as if we were sitting at horse races and discussing the virtues of trotters ever more passionately. Fervor is easy to understand to a degree for the stakes are much too high. However fervor is also mysterious because, regardless of who is released by the starting shot, there is no track in front of the programs! Instead there is rough terrain full of potholes, swamps, and obstructions, and this impassable landscape keeps changing all the time; little local volcanoes swell, and in some places it is already burning.

6. Switching back from metaphors to plain language, I would like to state my conviction that under our current conditions no program--even if prepared by the best economists of our country and the world, run as a model on the most powerful computers, bolstered by the involvement of monetary funds, and so on--can be implemented as a logical and coordinated succession of actions by the government and the people. I am afraid that it will not be possible to even initiate it in the manner conceived by the authors because only God himself knows where and when miners may strike or an interethnic conflict erupt, where refugees may flood from, whether yet another republic may decide to secede with Union enterprises or merely with a piece of its neighbor's land, or when yet another chemical combine or reactor may blow up; this is to say nothing about political hysteria of the kind of railway blockades. After all, any such event will easily undermine more than just one point of the program and will turn the 500 days into 700, 1,000, and so on, in keeping with the painfully familiar calendar of five-year plans.

7. Undoubtedly both reformers and the immediate authors of the programs--future scapegoats--understand this very well. For example, after a report by the A. Aganbegyan commission to the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers, many speakers emphasized that stability as well as the rule of law and order in the country are key conditions for a transition to a market economy. However nobody said how these conditions are to be ensured, at least not in the 18 August TV broadcast.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 3

8. 2. At present the sociopolitical situation in our country is the focal issue rather than the program. Peasants will not take land free of charge--to say nothing of taking it for a fee--until they come to believe firmly that nobody will ever again take away their lots, their crop, and their belongings. City dwellers will not invest their savings in their own businesses--to say nothing of investing their entire lives--until they make sure that racketeers will not stick sawed-off shotguns between their ribs and laws will not change "just like that." Foreigners will not come to us with their technology until their investments are 100 percent safe from revolutionary expropriations. Neither domestic nor foreign capital will finance all of them in the absence of certainty that debts will be repaid, and with interest at that. This means that the STABILITY of laws and economic contacts, the CONTINUITY of obligations of changing authorities, and PROTECTION against crime and social disturbances are more important than all other conditions for these main players in a market economy--peasants, industrialists, financiers, and foreign businessmen.

9. For now everything is the other way around in our country. If laws are not repealed they are not used; new soviet chairmen cancel the instructions of the previous leadership; crime is rampant; and by now the explosions of discontent of the working people frequently cannot be distinguished from it. However, the main trouble is that economic contacts are being severed by the mounting waves of separatism, the barbaric strikes of monopolistic producers, and the blockage of transportation arteries. The results of this are now already apparent, however in the future they will threaten our economy with outright paralysis. Whatever the adherents of "sovereignty" say about direct contracts, the disintegration of the USSR as a united state means the disintegration of a Union market. A power struggle inside "sovereignty" will interfere with the execution of most of these contracts; others are going to be frustrated as soon as the first hard-currency buyer appears. From the economic point of view this turn of events will set "sovereign" republics far back, including the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic], even under a peaceful scenario. If on top of this quarrels break out--as well as the division of land, water, and enterprises--and if on top of this the division begins to be accomplished by force... God save from this our children and all the rest of humanity who are not at fault!

10. However, what forces are capable of opposing the disintegration of the national-economic complex of the USSR at present?

11. There was a time when the administrative-command system was the most powerful force of this nature. Its remnants continue to manage the economy of the country. However, republic echelons intercept the

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 4

management of property from the center vigorously and in full view of everyone while retaining this property as state-bureaucratic at their republic level. In the course of its decay, the administrative-command system turns from a unifying force into almost the main destructive force pulling the economic complex apart into regions and republics with a view to maintaining previous arrangements "in the field."

12. The feeling of commonality of the people, of common goals, common threats and challenges, common pride in accomplishments, and common history and culture should apparently be a unifying force. This is the case with other states. In our country, common fear of the camps was the main part of the "common" for too long. It appears that when this fear disappeared the Soviet people's main category of commonality collapsed. The Soviet people dispersed with unimaginable ease into nations, strata, and groups which turn into mobs at the first opportunity.

13. Concern about the efficiency of the economy has also ceased to unify us. First, we have impressed on ourselves that the economy is inefficient anyway, otherwise why restructure it? Second, at present the leaders of the periphery, from prime ministers to strike committee chairmen, could not care less about the problems of the recipients of their products in other republics to say nothing of the hated center. Third, the center itself has already shown a good number of examples of reckless bravado in its economic decisions, from the anti-alcohol campaign to writing off the debts of collective and state farms. Fourth... actually, the fingers will not be enough in this case. It is significant that apparently the only people who are concerned about the crisis of the USSR economy are those who by virtue of their positions are responsible for it to the Supreme Soviet and the president. Besides, given our liberal times it is not clear what kind of responsibility this is....

14. However, nature abhors a vacuum; if old centripetal forces are weakening, this does not yet amount to a sentence. New forces may appear with the same center-bound vector; the forces nobody reckoned with yesterday may grow stronger. Thus the interests of the world community are becoming a new "center-bound" force. The developed countries have a vital interest in the integrity of the "Soviet empire" regardless of their attitude toward the Union's past and the personalities of our leaders. We see that they are cool toward our separatists and prepared to aid reforms issuing from Moscow. We will yet see that these countries are prepared to pay increasingly more as they grasp their dependence on the outcome of our trials.

15. "Aliens" are a force we did not notice before. At issue is a tremendous number of people who, as it turned out when nationalism

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 5

mounted, reside in republics other than "their own." Tens of millions of Russians live outside the RSFSR and an equal number of people hailing from other Union republics are present in Russia. "The ancestral lands" of non-Russian peoples are suddenly becoming distinct inside Russia, and here we have Russians fleeing Tuva. Territorial claims made by "sovereign" republics against each other are in store for us, and even inside the republics there is much sorting out of the purity of blood lines to be done. Our country has tens of millions of obvious half-breeds--where is their land?

16. "Aliens" are merely maturing into a political force, but the lot of hundreds of thousands of refugees speeds up this process. "Aliens" are the most reliable social base for anyone who will engage in a struggle for the unity of the country. I will observe that separatists understand this and will not reconcile themselves to the presence of "aliens" in "their" republics regardless of the ethnic harmony they promise after secession.

17. Finally there is a third force--third in terms of the free flow of my reflections but not at all in terms of significance. The most venturesome of the secessionists seem to fail to notice this force, which of course does not cancel the fact of its existence. Go and try canceling this force; being one of the mightiest in the world, well-organized and equipped, possessing its own infrastructure and tremendous material resources, under the same command from Brest to Chukotka, from Novaya Zemlya to Kushka, and finally armed, it may itself cancel anybody. Of course it is clear to you that I mean not only the Army but also the entire military-industrial complex of the USSR.

18. 3. So far the position of the military-industrial complex is not very distinct. However, reality is already infringing on the vital interests of this complex, and quite painfully on occasion. At issue is not conversion or the stock of weapons; incredible stocks have been accumulated and we can spend a lot of time disarming. But here we are withdrawing our troops from East Europe, and we immediately run into not just a problem but a fire-breathing dragon: housing. Tens of thousands of career officers are without apartments, and one-third of them are pilots, the elite of any army! Now they are saying in the republics as well that alien troops--that is, those of the Union-- should leave the sovereign territory. Where are they to go to? Who is waiting for still more homeless lieutenants and colonels? Would you have them fight their way into the blocks of Russian cities and use tanks to pack in peaceful residents?

19. Military installations are another sensitive problem of any military-industrial complex. What is to be done about defense industry plants and their suppliers dispersed over one-sixth of the

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 6

globe without anticipating ``sovereignty?'' What is to be done about, say, air defense complexes somewhere in a southern republic? Where are billions of rubles to be found for building new complexes, and on what border are they to be built--that of Moscow Oblast? What is to be done about existing complexes? Are they to be left to the sovereign republic? This may turn out to be sovereignty that bites. Are they to be dismantled, destroyed? This costs a lot of money. Should a treaty be signed for them to remain with the status of a foreign military base? However this very southern republic will form its own armed forces which after a while will develop their own point of view on this treaty....

20. In a word, the military-industrial complex will calculate all variants using its computers and may determine that the most inexpensive and reliable way is to stage the very military coup that politicians and journalists have been scaring each other with for about two years now, making the populace shiver. It is surprising how much we like tweaking a genie's nose and imagining that we can stuff it back into the bottle at any time!

21. At this point many readers holding democratic beliefs will shrug it off: ``Oh really! A coup is impossible, a civil war will begin!''

22. I maintain that no civil war will begin in our country. Not a single rayon soviet in the country is capable of organizing potato harvesting on its territory. The Communists are fiercely dividing up party assets. People's fronts are not in a position to disarm bandits in their republics. Who is going to rally the people to fight the Army? What people? In the name of what will neighboring nations that hate each other face automatic weapons fire? ``Equality, fraternity, and happiness?'' Also take into account the fact that no foreign country will censure this mode of action by the military or aid the eventual resistance because for the outside world this scenario will mean first of all a step toward the desired stability in this indefatigable USSR and regaining at least some control over nuclear weapons, nuclear power stations, and other sources of a global threat.

23. However, such a coup will signify the end of perestroika, will it not? To my mind, it will. In this case generals will be able to lean on only the most conservative strata of the population, and they will have to crack down on the reformers. Otherwise they will not be able to explain their coming to power to the people. Naturally, glasnost will be replaced with propaganda, and parliaments will be ``temporarily'' dissolved forever. Parties will be ``suspended'' and so on in keeping with the routine of many military regimes.

24. Rationed sales, combating crime, production losses, and

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 7

speculation under martial law will improve the life of the common people perceptibly and win back the sympathy of the masses for state property, leveling, and the communist perspective. "The defense sector" will once again be able to skim off the cream of the best resources of society and rival the imperialist Strategic Defense Initiative. There will be more generals with dachas and without troops than we have now. The military-industrial complex will begin to bite off even larger slices of the budget of the country. This is how we will smoothly return to stagnation for generations to come.

25. 4. If we do not desire the above we should not pretend that only politicians and economists act in the course of perestroyka and that the military exists in order to have somebody to disarm and reeducate. It is time for us, together with servicemen of all ranks, to figure out the actual mood and political objectives of the gigantic organism called the Soviet Army.

26. I do not doubt that specialists will do it better; they may have already done it. Yet I would like to outline for the readers my judgment about the attitudes of various echelons and generations in the Army.

27. Most of the generals, while having formal power are hardly moral authorities for their subordinates because they have served to advance to their positions in a time of peace and stagnation. Many of them have been persecuted by the press and are as angry as can be. The best means to hold on to their positions for these people is to restore the treasured past in keeping with the above scenario. As we see, separatists in the republics are their best helpers in this instance.

28. Senior officers, and together with them a number of young generals, are not just the next generation but also a different formation; these are different people. Most of them have experienced Afghanistan, have been under fire, lost friends, and gained real combat experience for which servicemen have no substitute. They have a feeling of frontline camaraderie. Their authority in the units and among the people is equally high, but many are profoundly disappointed by the fact that, as it turns out, they were not fighting a righteous war--incidentally, on orders from the military commanders of the time of stagnation. They carry out the orders of the latter at present as well. However, they are aware of their right to advance to key positions in the Army. But for what purpose? In order to move into dachas themselves and carry on the "invincible and legendary" traditions of Stalin? Or in order to create a modern, well-equipped, and well-trained Army of professionals that is capable of carrying out any mission in combat rather than in patriotic songs?

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 8

29. If the latter is correct--speeches in the Supreme Soviets by deputies who are servicemen of this generation leave no doubt as to this--this formation of officers and generals desperately needs a market economy. They need economic reform. They already know, for example, what the U.S. Army is about. They clearly understand that only a market economy will provide enough funds and domestic technologies for a leap ahead. They do not need a military dictatorship because they do not need an economic impasse; they do not want to languish in humiliating and dangerous poverty compared to a rival who is pulling further ahead and higher.

30. However, they will likewise hardly agree to the disintegration of the Union which will destroy the integrity of the Soviet Army, split the officer corps by nationality, and in some cases force them to fire on former comrades in arms. This is why this generation may obey the fateful order at a dramatic moment of perestroika when it seems that the motherland is indeed in mortal danger.

31. Still, the interests of this generation in the main cannot coincide with the interests of stagnation-time generals. They are coming to contradict the separatists in the most serious manner, and they are more and more clearly drawing closer to the political interests of the adherents of a renewed federation.

32. 5. Of course, only our readers in uniform may confirm or refute these reflections. However, if I am right, the leaders of our country should have started thinking long ago about who to bet on in the Army, what to promise, and what tasks to assign to whom. So far the public has seen no signs of that. Well in this case it is all the more useful to recall something that the world knows well: A transition from a socialized--or destroyed, or just poor--economy to an efficient market economy is quite frequently carried out under a state of emergency or even war. Successful examples such as Greece, South Korea, and Chile come to mind. These countries, which have been under the much-abused "black colonels" and which our newspapers have mourned and grieved for, have long surpassed us in affluence. Even such brilliant examples of prosperity as the FRG and Japan laid the foundations of their success when occupied rather than as democracies. In these countries the U.S. Army was a guarantor of stability and of the practicability of the Marshall Plan and other programs to restore these semidestroyed states. We denounced the occupiers in every way possible; meanwhile they were hard at work forming parliaments, preventing parliament members from fighting, organizing local business, teaching business to the population which had grown dull due to what it had gone through, apprehending bandits, and making all people without distinction comply with the norms of civilized coexistence.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 9

33. Of course nobody is going to occupy us, even if we pay them for it. However, with every passing day we are becoming convinced that we need a guarantor as well, and much more than the ethnically homogeneous Germans, Japanese, or Koreans. Who may and should become such a guarantor in our country?

34. The reader will expose me: "Here it is! After all, he is calling for a coup!"

35. No, I am not calling for it. I am researching some of the variants of our immediate future and trying to understand what we are prepared for, what evil may be awaiting us, and if it is unavoidable how to turn it into the necessary benefit and transform it into good.

36. I see a possibility that does not run counter to either our peculiarities and conditions or the experience of other states.

37. Nobody should interfere with the development of democratization in regions where it proceeds peacefully, even if through arguments and mistakes. We will become wiser and more civilized, work better, and live better; thank God for that. However government will inevitably be taken over by representatives of the USSR president and performed by military authorities in areas where bloody conflicts and mass disturbances erupt and where the infrastructure of the country, its vitally important organs, are endangered--railways, ports, air routes, communications systems, power industry facilities (especially nuclear), large monopolistic enterprises, sources of the most important raw materials, and so on. So the military authorities should guarantee the application of the key laws of the economic reform by order of the president, unlike their current narrow role--in Karabakh, Frunze, Baku, Dushanbe, and so on small forces of the Internal Troops merely ensure a minimum of order. These are first of all the laws on land, ownership, enterprises, taxation, and entrepreneurs.

38. Yes, this is exactly what I want to say--new economic relations, new estates and classes may begin to emerge not only in the thus far prosperous areas but also here (perhaps first of all here) in territories driven to desperation and mutiny. Without wasting precious time we may embark on creating new owners here by protecting their property against the ups and downs of the period of transition by means of military force. After all, civil administration, even if it has been elected democratically many times over, still does not control the situation in places where it has come to pogroms and it will not be able to oppose the class hatred of mobs reduced to lumpens. The Army may be able to.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 10

39. Presidential rule supported by the military may cut one more Gordian knot which is too tough for democracy-- the problem of ownership and ethnicity. Who will be able to become a full-fledged owner of land in, say, Nagorno-Karabakh? Armenians only? Azeris only? Will one of the feuding republics rebel? Can both rebel?

Nationalists in both republics will not go along with this. Only an armed force of different ethnicity will be able to shelter the residents of Karabakh from the ambitions of their neighbors, defend their work on their own land, and allow them to perceive themselves as the people of Karabakh regardless of language and culture.

40. In regions such as the Fergana Valley, the release of property by the state is hardly conceivable except under military protection. They tried to transfer several hectares of land in Osh Oblast which were farmed by the Uzbeks to the Kirghiz in an administrative manner, and look what happened! What kind of a flareup will there be if you sell regardless of ethnicity?

41. This form of government will make it possible to accomplish several tasks at the same time: to unerringly marshal the resources of the state to where they are needed the most--the territory itself sends a signal to the center that things are unbearably bad here already!--using them with the best return by setting in motion the market mechanism of self-development; to weaken "the dissatisfaction of a transition" to market arrangements because people stand to lose nothing in places where the civilian administration has failed; to implement, in places where the civilian administration is coping, the reforms at a slower pace and naturally with smaller losses. It is easier to monitor and guarantee the rationality of foreign aid on territories under presidential rule; this is where they may begin to solve the problems of the Army as well since market mechanisms take years to emerge, units should be set up rapidly and formidably, including quality housing for officers which will later be sold to the local populace. Professional units may be formed here and the territorial militia principle may be tested. Finally, along with new owners--farmers, merchants, industrialists, shareholders, and so on--genuinely new parties will begin to emerge that will unite people speaking different languages and lay the foundation of new civilian democratic authorities.

42. 6. Indeed, I would like very much to see us make a transition to a new condition of our society in a civilized and noble manner, making intelligent decisions in parliaments and executing them precisely at our work stations. I would very much like the force of reason to be the only driving force of perestroyka, and the calculations of economists and wisdom of leaders to be the only arguments. I dream about the struggle of ideas remaining as the only type of struggle in our long-suffering motherland, and platforms and

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990

Document 6 of 12

Page 11

newspaper pages being the arena for it.

43. However, here I am writing it as still new abscesses continue swelling on the political map of our country. Here the Lithuanians declare Soviet border guards dismissed, there the Abkhaz declare their republic sovereign, and in response the Georgians block a railway. In Chelyabinsk the Russians ransack their own city due to the lack of vodka. Armenian commandos shoot an Armenian people's deputy calling for peace. The country, inflamed with shortages and speculation, boils and rocks. People have begun murdering for clothing. In Moscow retirees are drying out bread to make rusks, and the harvest is of no use; the output of the most needed items is falling. The resources of society are more tightly controlled by the new national-officialdom tighter than before, and talk of a market economy remains just that--talk. We are waiting for a program. However nobody in the country has enough power to improve the situation of the people even a little. Meanwhile even the small groups of fools in the apparatus, politicians, and terrorists are now capable of making this situation worse, which occurs on a daily basis. Academician Shatalin was right when he softly made his remark: 'We are proceeding toward the sovereignty of oblasts, settlements, and streets, but we do not have the main one--the sovereignty of individuals.'

44. Perhaps some people like living in a sovereign oblast in keeping with the instructions of the oblast chief. However, I hope that a considerably greater number of my fellow citizens would prefer to become sovereign individuals in a modern, rich, and strong state capable of defending their rights on its entire territory and everywhere in the world. It is possible that in our case this is only attainable through a period of emergency measures.

45. How can we walk along the blade of democratization without falling into either a military dictatorship or the chaos of disintegration? We will have to ponder this no matter how unpleasant such reflections are for us. We will not find the right way if we squint blissfully, or if we are blinded by the blood of fury and ambition.

UNCLASSIFIED