American Media Reaction to the Soviet Coup Attempt of 1991

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The Cold War

The Cold War in American Media had taken many forms over the duration of the conflict. Earlier on it would often take the direct form of coverage of proxy wars, like the Korean war, the Vietnam war, amongst others. Hollywood motion pictures that drew parallels to real life events, Stanley Kubrick's "Doctor Strangelove" dramatized the Cuban Missile Crisis. As the danger of imminent conflict lessened during the later 1960s and 1970s media attention turned to things like summits between the leaders of the two superpowers to reduce nuclear arms. But the sense of competition was always there, sometimes it would take more unusual forms like the "Kitchen Debate" in 1959 between Nixon and Khruschev. This debate took place at a display of a model kitchen and in reality was not about kitchen appliances at all but was ultimately over which superpower provided the better standard of living. Another prominent event would be the most famous chess match ever played when chess champion Bobby Fischer beat his Soviet counter part, Boris Spassky, at a series of matches in Iceland. Ordinarily chess matches, even at the highest levels would not get much attention but when they are a proxy for Cold War conflict that clearly changes everything. Then of course there are the Olympic games, throughout the Cold War these were competition through sport. Each superpower vying to show the supremacy of it's system through the superior abilities of the athletes they produced. Usually competition at the Olympics was friendly enough but not always, friendly competition seemed to have faltered a bit when the United States boycotted the 1980 summer games held in Moscow. The reason was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the prior year, but still the Soviets were upset by this

unprecedented action. In retaliation the Soviets boycotted the 1984 summer games held in Los Angeles. In many ways the 1980s were a heightening of Cold War tensions, with the emphasis on mutual distrust. In 1983 the Soviets shot down a passenger airliner, Korean Airlines flight 007, due to it having breached Soviet airspace without authorization. Distrust was emphasized further yet in the search operations, the Soviets and Americans each conducting their own effort. In 1986 a Soviet nuclear reactor at Chernobyl malfunctioned and exploded, spreading radioactive particles over a wide area, including areas of Western Europe. The Soviets were slow in acknowledging the danger and informing Western governments. While Chernobyl occurred during Gorbachev's tenure as General Secretary (the leadership title in the Soviet political system, indicating as simultaneously head of party and head of government) he had only been in office a little over a year and his reforms were only just beginning to take shape. This broad recounting of Cold War highlights shows how prominent the conflict has been in American media, whether in newspapers and magazines or in movies or on television these events are something the average American was well aware of. It also establishes the American interest in Cold War events, that American Media would not devote much coverage or any at all to events that the public has no interest in.

Soon after the selection of Gorbachev in 1985 began implementing policies of Perestroika, restructuring, and Glasnost, openness. A great deal of meaning is lost in a mere literal translation so some context is beneficial with both terms, 'Perestroika' refers to a very broad restructuring of the Soviet system of governance which included more lower level decision making, capitalist-style incentives and just a general easing of centralized control. 'Glasnost' means openness of several kinds, mostly as greater freedom of expression, greater ability to

criticize the government. But it also included criticism of economic policies like centralized planning. Glasnost was even broad enough to include environmentalism, which prior to Gorbachecv's reforms was virtually non-existent and allowed Soviet citizens to confront government abuse of the environment, not just the Chernobyl incident but also dumping of heavy metals and chemicals into the environment by industry and agriculture. By 1987 this had resulted in significant loosening of restrictions on the press and individual speech in the Soviet Union. This combination of significant changes occurring for America's Cold War rival coupled with a greater ability and access was the perfect environment for Western journalists. During Gorbachev's tenure there was a great deal happening in the Soviet present, as well as more frank discussions of the Soviet past which was ample material for Western journalists. So it is in this environment that the Soviet coup attempt had occurred, in a nation that for many years was a closed society, much as North Korea is today, that was in the process of fundamental reforms, amongst which was increased freedom of speech and freedom of the press. These reforms had also attracted a great deal of attention from the media, both in the Soviet Union and internationally. In this senior project I argue that the American media reaction to the Soviet coup attempt of 1991 was a continuation of American Media coverage throughout the Cold War which was magnified by high media interest in the Gorbachev reforms that were in progress. So that when the Soviet Coup Attempt happened this was a widely anticipated move in a part of the world that American Media was watching very closely and had high levels of interest from the American public as the final act of the Cold War conflict.

Having happened nearly thirty years ago and with the Cold War having concluded with a decisive American victory, the Soviet Coup Attempt can get lost in the stream of events as a

minor footnote. The other aim of this senior project is to explain how the Soviet coup attempt is the definitive final act or conclusion of the Cold War. Once the coup attempt failed the Soviet Union began to rapidly disintegrate, with the collapse of the rival superpower I argue there is no way that the Cold War continues without redefining what the Cold War is. After having read extensively on the Soviet coup attempt and the circumstances surrounding it that there is no other single event that one can point to and say 'this is when the Soviet Union was no longer a threat'. Even during the reforms Gorbachev was implementing the Soviet Union, while viewed more favorably than recently was still a potential threat. Mostly due to the fact that at any time there was always the possibility that Communist Party hard-liners could push Gorbachev out and resume a more hostile stance. The hard-liners were conservative communist party leaders, which is entirely different then a conservative in the Western sense. At the time of the Soviet coup attempt the two political poles were hard-liner or reformer with Gorbachev in the middle trying to reconcile the two divergent views. The coup committee members were conservative hard-liners who sought to a reversion to a Stalinist style command economy while on the other end were liberal reformers who wanted to implement free-market capitalist policies to the greatest degree possible. Once the coup attempt failed the hard-liners were out of power, the Soviet Union no longer posed a credible threat to The United States and with the basis of the Cold War being implacable hostility between America and the Soviets, the end of that threat is also the de facto end of the conflict.

But what precisely is the "Soviet Coup Attempt"? It was a sequence of events that began with the State Committee for the State of Emergency seizing power from Gorbachev, the three days it exercised authority over the Soviet Union and concluded with the arrest of the committee

members and Gorbachev's return to Moscow on August 22nd 1991. The Soviet Coup Attempt began in the early morning hours of August 19th 1991, declarations of a state of emergency were broadcast through most Soviet media outlets such state television stations and state radio stations, others that either hesitated or couldn't be trusted were simply shut down. Newspapers for that day bore the committee's lengthy declarations on the front page. Gorbachev had suddenly fallen gravely ill, no longer able to fulfill the duties of first secretary and a committee headed by vice president Yanayev had assumed power. The declaration was not at all out of place, through the year of 1991 and 1990 as well, the Soviet Union was in greater and greater disarray politically but also economically and socially. The official declarations cited these as amongst other reasons for taking power.

The committee members however were not chosen at random, nor were they necessarily the most senior or influential members of the Soviet government. They constituted a group known as "hard-liners", communist party members who believed that Gorbachev's reforms, which he began implementing soon after being selected first secretary in March 1985 had gone too far and were in fact undermining rather than strengthening the Soviet state. It is really more of a Western term, "hard-liner" was not something they called each other or a formal group. They saw themselves as good communists defending socialism and the party, not as ideological extremists. However the political climate in which the hard-liners had declared a state of emergency and seized power was a very tumultuous one. By August 1991 the Soviet Union was not doing well in numerous ways and in fact much political authority had been assumed by the individual Soviet republics rather than from the federal center, Moscow. Some of the republics like Kazakhstan and other central Asian republics fell in line with the hard-liners, others like

Latvia instead used the chaotic moment to instead declare their own sovereignty and break away from the Soviet Union. This sort of ambivalence was repeated in just about area of state authority, whether republics should obey Soviet authority or make their own decisions, whether police or armed forces should obey either republic leaders or Soviet leaders and whether news outlets should obey Soviet leaders or make their own choices.

Into this uncertain chaos stepped Boris Yeltsin, who was a prominent party politician and president of the Russian republic (the largest Soviet Republic) but had a falling out with Gorbachev. Where the hard-liners were ambivalent and indecisive, Yeltsin immediately declared the coup illegal and that no one should obey the state of emergency committee. Yeltsin gave speeches in public and also made his position known to Western media outlets, making him the heroic leader of the resistance to the authority of the coup committee. With a combination of Western pressure, protests and demonstrations by the general public and divisions among the various Soviet and republic government entities the coup leaders on August 22nd abandoned their attempt to seize power and instead went to the Crimea where Gorbachev was being held incommunicado, to plea for mercy. The coup plotters were arrested and Gorbachev returns to Moscow.

When Gorbachev returned to Moscow it is not the same one he left just a few days prior. In that short time span the little remaining credibility and authority of the Soviet state and the Communist party were destroyed. Yeltsin the heroic resistance leader was much stronger now, political strength which shortly resulted in Yeltsin being elected the post-soviet leader of Russia. Contemporaries and scholars refer to this sequence of events over the span of several days in late August 1991 as "The Soviet Coup Attempt" and sometimes as the "Soviet Putsch" or "August

Putsch". My preference and the term used in this paper is of course "The Soviet Coup Attempt", which I believe is most accurate. "The Soviet Coup Attempt" with the inclusion of "attempt", emphasizes that the coup plotters at no point were actually fully in control of the Soviet state as well as the haphazard manner in which the coup was initiated, ruled and fell apart. Once the coup had run its course and Gorbachev returned to Moscow the Soviet Union began to disintegrate and collapse. True, this was a process that had already been in progress and had been in the making even longer than that, but this is the point in time at which it became irreversible. The greatest irony of the Soviet Coup Attempt was that it was initiated by those who had the most to lose, the hard-liners, in a desperate last ditch effort to save the Soviet Union and instead assured its destruction.

This rough overview of the Soviet Coup Attempt is essentially what was presented in American media outlets and what the average American citizen would have known at that time. Overall in my examination of media coverage of the Soviet Coup attempt, the coverage is phenomenal in its detail. Reading archived copies of The New York Times and Washington Post the pages are filled with descriptions of the protests, the text of the speech read out by Yeltsin, reactions from world leaders and such essential information as the text of the declaration of the state of emergency and transcripts of the bulk of the 5pm press conference held by the committee. I argue this is no accident and would ascribe the high level of detail to the coverage to the simple fact that the Soviet Union was already an area of interest. As I had mentioned earlier there were significant political developments throughout Gorbachev's time as first secretary and thus media outlets for several years prior been following these developments.

Prior to the selection of Gorbachev the Soviet Union was not an open country to American media outlets, much as how North Korea is today. Yes, there was some American media presence but where they could go and what they could report on was very closely controlled. Gorbachev changed all of that with reforms he had initiated, Perestroika - meaning restructuring and Glasnost - meaning openness. Now American media suddenly had a much wider range in Gorbachev's Soviet Union, of course not anything like in the United States but very wide ranging in comparison to before. With Western interest in Soviet political developments at a high level there was in turn ample media coverage of the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev years.

An interesting comparison I think would be to American media coverage of the Vietnam war. The war in Vietnam was also a subject of great interest to Americans at the time and of course war creates a tremendous amount of news material. War however can be difficult to cover objectively for the media as it is dependant on those involved in the conflict to allow access, which is not necessarily a given. A good recent example would be American involvement in Afghanistan beginning in 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, while there was no censorship per se, there was oversight of what was reported on the grounds of national security concerns. In the case of the Vietnam War, the government of South Vietnam allowed journalists free access, as in the press could go anywhere and report on anything without prior approval, in retrospect not a very prudent decision, but for whatever reasons the American government did not seek to curtail. The result was a wealth of coverage, both written and visual. The Soviet Union from about 1987 to 1991 was much the same situation, in the interests of

Perestroika and Glasnost, the emphasis was openness. It was in this atmosphere of high interest that the coup occurred and so when the story broke, a heavy media presence was already on site.

Newspapers are the source I most heavily relied upon in assessing the media of coverage of the time period. Being both widespread and the immediacy of their content allows newspapers to be good approximations of the media environment overall. True, in the present day newspapers are declining in both profitability and importance, an aspect of American Media that I will explore later in this paper, but in 1991 the media environment was not that of 2020. In 1991 the newspaper industry in the United States was still relatively healthy with many newspapers in circulation. In turn it is a logically sound assumption that newspaper readership was far greater in proportion as well, after all someone has to buy all those newspapers and people don't buy newspapers just to line a birdcage or wrap a fish without reading it first. In the selection of newspapers I have sought out prominent papers in large metropolitan markets since these would have the resources required to provide robust coverage of international events and have examined primarily national newspapers and a selection of regional newspapers. There is of course The New York Times, which to this very day remains a phenomenal resource for news, both in the quality and breadth of its coverage. If one were to look at only The Times today, one could be lulled into false sense of complacency, that if The Times remains a robust newspaper than surely all the others are just as good as they were in the past, which is sadly not the case. I have also examined coverage in The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times. The Post I think is essential because of its specialization in coverage of Washington D.C. and the federal government overall, that and being a prominent newspaper in the capital of the American superpower. I am less familiar with The Los Angeles Times and selected it mostly on the basis

of it being a large and respectable west coast newspaper and it is comparable to the other two east coast papers, to geographically balance against the two east coast papers.

American media obviously consists of far more than just newspapers, I have also looked at mass circulation magazines like Time and Newsweek as well as more specialized publications like Foreign Affairs and National Geographic. Broadcast television was also examined, tracking down the actual broadcasts can be difficult, even now with so much content available online. What I have found are for the most part compilations of highlights and similar such things, luckily television coverage was also written about in newspapers and books so between those I can get a sense of the television coverage.

On August 19th 1991, the day that the emergency committee declared a state of emergency and initiated the coup attempt in Moscow many American newspapers had the coup attempt as a front page headline. At a glance this seems a little strange, after all articles need to be written and the papers have to be printed and that all takes time. So before getting into the details of the coverage for August 19th I thought I'd address this first. There is a seven hour time difference between Moscow time and Eastern Time on the American east coast and both the United States and the Soviet Union observed daylight savings time in 1991, when the declarations of a state of emergency were broadcast at 7 A.M. Moscow time it was midnight in New York and Washington, 9 P.M. in Los Angeles. Generally, including The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times, newspapers are printed overnight and distributed in the early morning hours and are on the newsstand by 5 or 6 A.M. or so. The news of the coup broke with just enough time to spare to write a couple of articles and hastily add them to the front page just before the paper went to press. While the newspaper coverage seems

a bit skimpy on the 19th, it's important to keep in mind the time constraints involved in newspaper publication.

Looking at The New York Times front page for August 19th 1991, the coup is the top story, "Gorbachev is Ousted in an Apparent Coup..." at the top of the page. However for the aforementioned reasons there is actually very little about the coup in that day's paper. One article written by a New York Times writer summarizes what had occurred that morning in Moscow, the only article written by a Times writer. A second article directly below photographs of Soviet leaders is actually the text of the declaration of the state of emergency from Tass, the official Soviet government press agency. Two smaller articles toward the bottom of the front page are from the Reuters news wire service, the first about the reaction from the Bush White House - total surprise at the Gorbachev ouster. The second is a brief paragraph about the disruption in currency markets caused by the coup and that central banks are ready to intervene in currency markets as needed. The article and declaration were continued on page 6 and accompanied by two more statements put out by the state of emergency committee, one from the head of the committee - President Yanayev, to heads of state and the United Nations, assuring the world of the peaceful intentions of the committee as they seek to rescue the Soviet Union from imminent catastrophe. The second item from the state of emergency committee is the official declaration of the removal of Gorbachev from office. This second statement reads like a legal justification for the coup, citing specific sections of the Soviet constitution amongst other things to frame the coup as a legitimate action in accordance with existing laws. The final item is a collection of brief profiles of some of the committee members, this is very brief information, a few biographical details and some information on their service in government. No other

articles regarding the coup appear in the August 19th New York Times, nor were there any editorial or opinion pieces regarding the coup. It must have been a slow news day that August as the international section included a rather lengthy article about a street performer in India upset that his dancing bear was seized by local authorities. Considering this was put together a few hours before the papers were printed I'd say this is good coverage considering the tight deadline.

The Washington Post archived copy for August 19th is a study in the art of newspaper layouts. There are four separate front pages for August 19th, the final edition which provides much the same information as The New York Times with additional analysis from David Remnick in Moscow, who by 1991 had been a reporter for The Washington Post for several years. An early edition that uses a Reuters wire service article for the above the fold headline on the coup attempt. A third intermediate edition labeled as "early final" which included a pair of articles on the coup from Washington Post writers, the Remnick analysis was absent and there was an odd reference to a "partial state of emergency". This may have been due to incomplete information, as I have not seen the coup attempt characterized that way anywhere else. Finally there is a fourth front page stamped "Capital Edition" where news on the coup is totally absent and instead replaced by several stories that would be relevant to residents of the District of Columbia (Washington D.C.). The highlight of The Washington Post coverage for August 19th is the analysis by David Remnick, though not particularly lengthy it is exceedingly prescient in essentially predicting the outcome of the coup attempt - namely that it would fail due to popular resistance. Remnick quotes a recent interview with the mayor of Leningrad (present day Saint Petersburg) Anatoli Sobchak, "...although the danger always exists that the conservative forces would take power in the Soviet Union, a coup is 'doomed' because 'people will take to the

streets'"[Remnick,wapo,aug19] Aside from the accurate prediction the analysis neatly sums up where the Soviet Union is politically at that moment, a chaotic nation just beginning to experiment with democracy, making the article both informed and informative. The only part of the analysis that I thought was sensationalist was the headline "Reforms Prove Fatal", which at a glance would lead some to think that Gorbachev had in fact been killed. Most likely this headline was equal parts attention grabbing ploy and clever word play, with the meaning that the coup had been "fatal" to Gorbachev politically. Ultimately it was, in less than 6 months Gorbachev would go from being the leader of the Soviet superpower to an ordinary citizen clearing out his office to make way for Yeltsin. The two articles written by Washington Post writers were informative though unremarkable, which again much like The New York Times articles were written on short notice. There was an interesting piece of information in the article regarding the U.S. government reaction, "Announcement Takes U.S. Officials by Surprise" David Hoffman, it noted that the Defense Secretary Richard Cheney (yes, the very same Dick Cheney that served in the George W. Bush administration) and the Secretary of State James A. Baker III would cut short their vacations in Wyoming and return to Washington. This aligned with the one other article in the August 19th Washington Post on the coup attempt, discussing the reaction of financial markets and world leaders. In that article is stated that several world leaders cut their vacations short and returned to their respective capitals in the event the crisis intensifies. For example Helmut Kohl, chancellor of the newly reunited Germany was vacationing in Austria and having received word of the coup that morning convened his staff to decide whether or not to return to Bonn. Overall the coverage was very good and the analysis by

Remnick was excellent, the only problem is that it looks like the Washington Post was a little slow in putting it together, with the Remnick analysis only appearing in the final edition.

The Los Angeles Times boasts five separate front pages for August 19th but sadly it's not an indicator of many revisions and updates but rather the regional nature of the publication, much like how some Tri-State area newspapers will publish a city edition, one for Long Island, Hudson Valley and perhaps others. The content across editions would be almost identical save for the much smaller portion that is tailored to that region and this is the case here with The Los Angeles Times. The five front pages all contain the same above the fold headline "Gorbachev Replaced, Vice President Takes Over, Tass Says", all five editions contain the exact same stories, placed in exactly the same layout. The lone exception being the short article describing Yanayev as a conservative hard-liner did not appear in the San Diego County edition, it was instead swapped out for a story describing a recent poll that a firm majority of San Diego County residents trust their local police force. There were no editorials or expert analysis on the Soviet crisis and these four articles mentioned, the banner headline story summarizing the events that morning, an article speculating on the fate of Gorbachev's reforms, an article concerning the reaction of the Bush White House and a biographical article about the new leader of the Soviet Union - Yanayev, were the only ones appearing in The Los Angeles Times concerning the coup. Also conspicuously absent were any texts of the official announcements, bits and pieces of the declaration of the state of emergency were quoted in the articles but nothing complete or even abbreviated, unlike The New York Times which published official English translations of the declaration of the state of emergency and several other statements from the committee. I found The Los Angles Times coverage to be adequate, but no more than that. Since the west coast is

three hours behind the east coast this gave west coast papers a time advantage over their east coast counterparts, three more hours to prepare articles and yet the coverage is no better than that found in The Washington Post or The New York Times.

The timing of the coup also has the advantage that it gives a glimpse into how newspapers work in a practical manner. As mentioned above the coup declarations went out in Moscow in the early morning hours while it was late at night here in the United States and the newspapers had to scramble to write these articles on a tight deadline. How each of these newspapers handled the news of the coup shows how each of these media outlets prioritizes news and are reflections of their audiences. While The New York Times is based in New York City its audience is far wider, both nationally and globally. This is also coupled with the international reputation of New York City itself, the self styled "capital of the world". As pretentious as it sounds that claim is not without merit, the United Nations is headquartered here in New York City and along with that just about every country in the world has a diplomatic presence in the form of embassies and consulates. Some of these are modest like the Manhattan townhouse that the government of Venezuela put up for sale recently others are much more substantial like the former Soviet (currently Russian) embassy in Riverdale - an enormous residential tower situated on a sizeable plot of land in the north west Bronx. Then there is the ethnic make up of the city's population at large, immigrants from around the world live in New York City and there are a great many enclaves of various nationalities. Overall this makes the city internationally oriented and this is reflected in The New York Times coverage. Washington D.C. is also an internationally oriented city but for a very different reason, it is the political center of the American superpower. For over a century the United States has had considerable

involvement in international affairs and in turn events around the world are followed closely in Washington. There are some of the same qualities as in New York City, many foreign governments maintain a presence in Washington, there are diplomats and other foreign nationals representing their respective governments in dealings with the United States government. There are many policy oriented organizations that inevitably draw on talent from around the world. Naturally a development as large as a potential hard-line shift in the Soviet Union would be of interest to many in Washington. Los Angeles is somewhat internationally oriented though much less so than either New York or Washington. This is primarily through Los Angeles being the American entertainment capital, films and television shows produced here are seen around the world and in many ways are the image that the rest of the world sees of The United States. The coverage in each of the respective papers reflects the cities their based, New York being both a national and international center and reflected in the superb coverage of The New York Times, Washington being the political center of the United States and having interests around the globe with the very good coverage from The Washington Post and then finally Los Angeles being a large American city keen on keeping up with global events but not having any particular stake and reflected in rather mediocre, almost provincial coverage.

The following day, August 20th, and subsequent days have far more coverage of the coup attempt, the trickle of information becomes a veritable cascade of articles. To go over the remaining coverage in the same manner as for August 19th would require several hundred pages and instead I will summarize the information presented and compare the quantity and quality of coverage in each publication. The coup makes the front page of The New York Times yet again on August 20th with the banner headline "K.G.B.-MILITARY RULERS TIGHTEN GRIP;

GORBACHEV ABSENT, YELTSIN DEFIANT; WEST VOICES ANGER AND WARNS ON AID". In just a couple lines the reader is given an accurate assessment of a complex and ongoing situation. Aside from a small part of the lower left hand corner, the entire front page is devoted to coverage of the coup and now with a full day of receiving news from the Soviet Union the coverage is thorough. Starting just below the banner headline "Troops Moving Into Moscow; Russian Leader Urges a Strike", essentially summarizing the situation on the ground in Moscow. Immediately to the left "Restore Gorbachev, Bush Urges Moscow", detailing the latest stance of the Bush administration from 'wait and see' to not accepting the coup leaders as legitimate and demanding the return of Gorbachev. To the left of that is "Gorbachev and His Fateful Step" which explains what most likely prompted the coup in the first place, the imminent signing of the Union Treaty, which would have devolved significant powers from the center at Moscow to individual republics. The coup committee seized power on August 19th and Gorbachev was scheduled to return to Moscow and sign the treaty on the 20th. This article is continued on page ten where Gorbachev's attempt to strike a balance between hard-liners and radical reformers is detailed and how this played a role in the formation of the coup. Placed inside the article text on page ten is a box summarizing some of the highlights of the Union Treaty and what these proposed changes would have been, a popular vote for Soviet President, taxing powers for the individual republics and the right to secede, among others. The article also states how the factions that have aligned in the coup are all of those who stand to lose the most if this treaty were signed. This is one of the more informative articles because it gives readers answers as to why the coup came about and what was at stake. The coverage is continued on page ten where a couple of the front page articles are continued. There is also a short article comparing

Gorbachev's removal with Khrushchev's removal in 1964. Unlike the same comparison made in The Washington Post on the 19th it relied more on the parallel on how both were the odd man out. Khrushchev being too erratic and unpredictable for the other senior party members and Gorbachev likewise found himself without allies as he tried to both safeguard the current communist system while simultaneously reforming it and thus finding himself without allies amongst either the reformers or the hard-liners. The following page is mostly on Yeltsin, the main article "Coup Sets Yeltsin at Center Stage" describes the now much higher profile Yeltsin. At that time Yeltsin was the first elected President of the Russian republic, a former communist who then did not join any party. He denounced the coup and its leaders, declared the coup illegitimate, called for a general strike and for the population at large to not obey any orders from the coup leaders. Alongside this article is a text of Yeltsin's remarks translated by the U.S. State department. Below that are three short articles, the longest gave details on how the committee immediately restricted Soviet media, banning newspapers, radio stations and television stations that were not approved by the committee. To the right of this article is an excerpt of the declaration shutting down these media outlets, which included a list of media outlets that the committee allowed to continue operations. Below that was an article on the reaction from Soviet troops stationed in Eastern Europe, at the time of the coup several hundred thousand were stationed all across the former Eastern Bloc countries. On the next page, page twelve, is the highlight of that day's coverage, excerpts from the 5 P.M. news conference. This is essentially the high water mark of the coup attempt, where the committee members sat before assembled media organizations as the erstwhile leaders of the Soviet Union. This is a unique moment too in the coup attempt as this is the one and only time the committee members speak in public. The

next day August 20th they did not appear in public nor on the 21st and in the early morning hours of Thursday the 22nd Gorbachev was back in Moscow and the coup had collapsed. A more thorough analysis of the 5 P.M. news conference will be done later in this paper, combining the coverage from the three newspapers examined along with David Remnick's recounting of the conference in his book, "Lenin's Tomb". On page thirteen is a continuation of the front page article describing Muscovites' reactions to the coup attempt and the deployment of armed forces in Moscow, which was met with fear, uncertainty and defiance, as shown in a large photo accompanying the article of a young woman arguing with a tank driver. Below that on the same page is a reprinting of the text of the announcement from the committee declaring a state of emergency. This declaration is the opening statement of the committee and was the intended rallying point, so reprinting it for anyone who may have missed it yesterday is valuable. Between these two is a small box with an abbreviated text of the legal justifications for declaring the state of emergency, issued by the committee on the 19th as well. On page fourteen is a collection of short biographies of the committee members, information is so scant on the last two- Starodubstev and Tizyakov that we don't even have their ages, much less who they are and what their views are. Immediately to the right of the biographies is the text of the committee's resolution officially removing Gorbachev from office. The bottom half of the page is an assessment of Gorbachev's tenure to date, under four headings, democratization, foreign policy, demilitarization and economics. This assessment is done with the not too subtle sub-text that this might be the end of Gorbachev's tenure, while it took a few months the coup ultimately led to the permanent removal of Gorbachev - though not in quite the manner intended. After the coup his political power was greatly diminished and Yeltsin grew far more powerful. On page fifteen we

have a pair of articles on the U.S. and international reaction to the coup. At the top of the page "Bush Condemns Soviet Coup And Calls For Its Reversal" describes how the Bush administration views the coup as illegitimate and will withhold any official recognition. Western European countries like the United Kingdom and Germany also stated they would withhold aid, as well as the European Economic Community- forerunner to the present day European Union also declared that they would withhold aid to the Soviets. Below that is an Associated Press article containing highlights from President Bush's press conference on the morning of August 19th at Kennebunkport, Maine - Bush's vacation residence. The conference being held Monday morning, just a few hours after the coup took power, it reflected President Bush's initial caution coupled with Western cooperation and coordination. Placed within the conference excerpts is a official statement by the Bush Administration expressing the same views as at the press conference. On page sixteen the domestic perspective continues, the top half is taken up by "What Bush is Facing" with the subtitle "Prospects for a 'New World Order' Are Precarious, and Critics Line Up". The subtitle is a reference to a prominent speech President Bush made that contained a line referring to the new cooperative relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union as a "new world political order". With the coup throwing international relations into disarray the new found cooperation was also cast into doubt. The article underlined how in Washington there was a consensus on not recognizing the new government, not just the Bush White House but members of congress as well and that numerous initiatives to aid the Soviets, which required congressional approval, would be on hold for the time being. The bottom half of page sixteen is split into three items, on the left a text box detailing the aforementioned aid to the Soviets, now in doubt because of the coup. This included mutually beneficial agreements like

reductions in conventional and nuclear forces as well as agreements that are beneficial to the Soviets like trade agreements, grain sales (to the Soviet Union), American joint ventures and investments, etc. In the lower right hand corner a short article on the U.S. State department warning Americans against travelling to the Soviet Union due to "...the declaration of the state of emergency there and 'the possibility of civil disruption for an indeterminate period.'". It also states that there about 4500 Americans in the Soviet Union at the time, no violence has been reported against them and helpfully adds a State Department telephone number to call if you have a relative visiting there and need more information. The remainder of the article detailed the reaction of the travel industry, airline refund policies, rebooking policies, waivers being made, etc. The larger article of the three "Defense Chief Saw Gorbachev Hours Before Coup" is mostly about the reaction from the U.S. intelligence community, which had already begun speculating on what role the Soviet Defense Minister - Gen. Dimitri T. Yazov had played in the initiation of the coup. In the article it says the Bush Administration was aware that Yazov met with Gorbachev at his vacation home on Sunday, August 18th. What is uncertain is whether Yazov traveled to ensure Gorbachev would be properly confined as the coup committee wanted or if Yazov was warning Gorbachev that a coup was imminent. The article then states that American intelligence agencies were well aware of the high probability of a coup for well over a year, the only surprise was the timing. The article then concludes with the assessment that this is primarily a political coup, not a military one and that for now there is no threat from the 300,000 Soviet troops still stationed in central Europe or from the formidable Soviet nuclear arsenal. On page seventeen about three-fourths of the page is taken up by a collection of short articles about international reactions to the coup, with each of the articles offering a different perspective. The

first of the six was filed from Bonn and gauged German and former eastern bloc reactions. The Germans were in unity with other Western nations in denouncing the coup and warning that aid will be withheld. Reaction from former Soviet satellite states emphasized that their recent independence from the Soviets was paramount and that returning to domination by Moscow was untenable. The second was filed from Paris and detailed Western European reactions, which all condemned the coup. The notable exception was France's President Francois Mitterand who while expressing concern for Gorbachev's personal safety was also simultaneously ready to accept the coup committee as the new leaders of the Soviet Union. The third was filed from SanSalvador and detailed the impact on Latin America, which was primarily the peace negotiations going on to put an end to the recent conflict in El Salvador as well on Cuba- a longtime Soviet ally. The fourth was filed from Beijing, even though China is a communist country the Sino-Soviet split still cast a pall on Soviet-Chinese relations. This was reflected in the Chinese response which was essentially neutral, neither supporting the coup committee nor demanding the return of Gorbachev and instead deeming the situation an internal Russian affair. The fifth was filed from Cyprus but actually covered the reaction from Iraq's Saddam Hussein, who predictably welcomed the rise of the coup and fall of Gorbachev. The sixth and final article was filed from Jerusalem and gauged Israeli reactions, which were primarily concern for Jews still in the Soviet Union and have not yet been able emigrate and the potential for the new Soviet leaders to upset the delicate balance of the middle east peace process. The remaining quarter on the lower left hand side of page seventeen gauged the reactions of Russian émigrés here in New York City. The article mentions the Russian community in New York City is of the largest if not the largest in the United States. Reactions were uniformly negative, though each had their own

reasons, the brutality of the KGB, fascist leadership, devastated economy, etc. There was also particular concern for Soviet Jews being a handy scapegoat amidst the difficult situation, highlighted by anti-Semitism in the present day Soviet Union and in Russia historically. Gorbachev was praised for his reforms but there were fears that his reforms could be undone and that he may be pushed out of power. That is the final page of news articles on the coup but there are still some more related items. On page twenty-six are a pair of editorials, the first "Gorbachev's Loss and Ours" with the subtitle "The Lunge for Legitimacy" summarizes the current situation well, that Gorbachev had initiated much needed reforms and that this process will be hard to reverse because there is much popular support for reforms both in the Soviet Union and abroad. The editorial then questions the coup committee's legitimacy and then says that even if the committee somehow hangs on to power that is has tremendous challenges to address. Following on page twenty-seven is the opinion page with three items, the longest is an analysis of the current politics by a historian, the second a more general reaction to the coup and the third a very short but informative piece on who exactly is Gennadi Yanayev, the coup leader and new president of the Soviet Union. The longest of the three, "Under the Heel- for Now", is written by Richard Pipes who is identified in the piece as being a professor of history at Harvard and director of Soviet Affairs in the National Security Council during the Reagan administration. Pipes begins with the proximate cause of the coup, the imminent signing of the Union Treaty, which had angered conservative elements in the Communist Party leadership as well as the KGB and military leadership. He ties together the liberation of Eastern Europe and domestic reforms in the Soviet Union as another source of conservative anger. Essentially that Gorbachev had continually been making moves that communist hard-liners found to be not just objectionable but

as detrimental to the Soviet state. Pipes than recalls a previous piece he had written last year predicting this coup, which aligns with other articles that stated that American intelligence was well aware of the heightened threat of a coup. Pipes than assesses the current situation in the Soviet Union, that it is in difficult circumstances, those who have seized power are not especially capable and that Western nations have allied together in not recognizing and not working with the new government. The take away from this piece is that most likely the coup will fail for the simple reason that the rather mediocre leaders are simply not up to the challenge of managing the Soviet Union's many domestic issues and simultaneous international opposition. Among many well written articles that covered the coup it's hard to pick a favorite, the "best" article, however if I needed to put together a short list of articles that were the most relevant and informative Pipes article would definitely be on the short list. Pipes identifies what triggered the coup, who was behind it and why. He then weighs the current situation, those who are now in charge and what challenges they face, all in a piece that takes up about a quarter of a page. The second item is "The Last Act" and the column is titled "On My Mind", A.M. Rosenthal. I have no idea who Rosenthal is and why he has a column so I did a little research. The New York Times published his obituary, Rosenthal had died in 2006 at the age of 84. He has a column because he was a long time writer for the paper who had worked his way up over the years, culminating in being executive editor of The Times from 1977 to 1986. After his retirement he continued to write a twice weekly column called "On My Mind". The column on the Soviet coup is reflective of someone who spent a lifetime as a writer and later editor for a large metropolitan newspaper. Rosenthal focuses on what he calls the "party-K.G.B. complex", a variant on our own "military-industrial complex", as the main force behind the coup. He also

points out the over-dependence on Gorbachev personally as America's as ally for Soviet reforms. The final piece is very short but also very different, even as far as opinion pieces go in an overall sense. The sarcastic title "Gennadi Yanayev, Overachiever" sets the tone, written by Vladamir Kvint a lecturer at Fordham University and advisor to Western companies doing business in the Soviet Union. The piece is notable in that the writer had met and worked with Yanayev, in contrast to much of the news coverage where writers are relying on the little information made public. Kvint is of course very harsh in his assessment of Yanayev, describing him as the stereotypical Communist Party bureaucrat, "gray, cynical and pragmatic" in his words. Kvint is also familiar with Yanayev's career and rise to power, describing it as "...he [Yanayev] rose from one meaningless job to another." Kvint also gives a succinct analogy of what the coup was "...Gorbachev was trying to sit on two chairs - democracy and reaction - simultaneously. But President Gorbachev fell from both chairs. He abandoned democratic goals and surrounded himself with men of the old breed like Gennadi Yanayev, and they finally crushed him". On page forty-one in the sports section are three short items on how the coup affected the world of sports, the longest "Soviets Expected To Appear In Tokyo" is about how the world track and field championships were affected. The coup caused delays in the arrival of the Soviet team and several star athletes were unable to depart Moscow due to the airports being closed. Other Soviet teams like Ice Hockey and Cycling were competing as usual. Generally the coup had created confusion in international Soviet sports as their was no information available on what if anything the coup committee intended to do regarding international sport competition. The second item is on the three Baltic republics and their negotiations with both the International Olympic Committee and the organizing committee for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. The

negotiations are on the Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, fielding their own national teams rather than being on the Soviet team. The article states that these were negotiations that have been going on well before the coup and will continue. This situation I think highlights how even though the Baltic republics may politically be joined to the Soviet Union as three of the fifteen republics that culturally they are more like Eastern Europe, that there is little if any desire to be part of the Soviet Union and that much like the former Eastern Bloc states that they would seek independence at the very first opportunity. Finally in the bottom right hand corner a short paragraph from the AP wire service, the American soccer team had been playing against the Soviets over the weekend (before news of the coup broke) and had already departed on schedule. The team was safely in Austria when the state of emergency was declared. On page forty-seven the coup is mentioned in passing in the article "Pentagon Considering Reactors For Missiles". The article which is continued on page fifty-five explains how a private group of scientists, Federation of American Scientists, disclosed that the U.S. Defense Department had been studying the usage of nuclear powered missiles rather than the current conventionally fueled missiles. News of the coup is cited as a reason in favor of the nuclear missiles while critics say the Pentagon is seeking to undermine East-West cooperation. This is another example of how far reaching the consequences of the coup are and how influential the Soviet Union was up to the very end even in 1991. On page sixty-one is a media critic's assessment of television coverage, "TV Leaps to Cover Soviet Coup", which along with the Pipes opinion piece I believe is a highlight of the day's articles. Since the writer, Walter Goodman, is writing what is essentially a television review the writing is much breezier and more informal than what is found in a typical "hard news" article. However the approachable

writing should not be taken to indicate an inconsequential article. Goodman essentially gives his assessment on yesterday's television coverage, the day the coup was declared. He begins by comparing it to the various independence movements in Eastern Europe in the prior years and how the events in Moscow were similar, tanks and soldiers in the streets and civilians confronting them. While the major news networks did have correspondents and cameras on site the television coverage reflects the confusion in Moscow, that while television journalists reported news of the coup they had few details and thus not a whole lot to report on, "Lacking hard information, they indulged in what Ted Koppel called 'constructive speculation'". The broad picture of the situation did make it into the broadcasts "In an exchange with Dan Rather, Jonathan Sanders, the CBS correspondent, came through with the most coherent account of a confused situation. He said that despite the emergency committee's control of Soviet television and its crackdown on an independent station, Mr. Yeltsin's call for a general strike was getting out. Assisted by some incisive questioning from Mr. Gumbel, Jim Maceda of NBC reflected the general spirit of the coverage when he described the demonstrators, with more hope than evidence, as courageous people who 'will not be intimidated'". CNN was also praised for the sheer quantity of coverage as well as broadcasting the 5 P.M. press conference in its entirety. CNN, like some other media outlets, stylized this story as the end of Gorbachev's tenure, "the fall of Gorbachev" as CNN put it. The final couple paragraphs describe the 5 P.M. press conference, Goodman writes how his reaction to it is mixed, "...at once disheartening and hopeful". Disheartening because at a glance it looks like the usual communist party leaders ordering in the troops to consolidate their power but also hopeful because unlike their predecessors that these new Soviet leaders were not able to command fear and obedience in quite the same way. "...the

irreverence of many of the questions and the fact that the new bosses had decided it was necessary to subject themselves to reporters in camera range left the hope that too much had changed in the Soviet Union for even hard-liners to go back quickly or completely to the bad old days". In other coverage of the 5 P.M. press conference it is handled in a more matter of fact way and there is no hint that those present are being "irreverent". In his book David Remnick describes his impressions of the press conference and it leans far more towards the atmosphere Goodman describes here rather than the serious tone of media events for all other Soviet leaders. A bit later in this paper I will make a comparison of materials written on the 5 P.M. press conference. On page sixty-five Soviet coup related articles dominate the business section with four items and an overall headline of "Kremlin Shake-Up Jars the Financial World". In the upper left hand corner is a box with a quick summary of the impact on various financial indicators, with the reaction to the Soviet coup being much the same as to any political crisis of significance, the Dow Jones stock index was down - as much as 9% at one point, the dollar was up as well as the price of oil and grain prices were down on account of the possibility that the Soviet Union - which had been a big buyer of American grain- would not be able to pay for grain it had already ordered nor place any new orders. To the right of that article is " Ambitions for Soviet Deals Are Suddenly Placed on Ice" describing the impact on foreign investment in the Soviet Union, at the time of the coup there were ongoing negotiations to privatize the Soviet auto industry and this was immediately put on hold due to the coup. The article lists several Western companies that invested in the Soviet Union and that currently none of them are alarmed over the situation and that again much like the Bush Administration has taken a 'wait and see' attitude towards the coup. This is partially because in an absolute sense that Western investment in the

Soviet Union had been quite low thus far and so even if the coup results in changes that result in a total loss of these investments that Western companies would be easily be able to weather such losses. The coup had also confirmed the cautious attitude towards investing in the Soviet Union and concerns with its opaque legal system and ambiguous property rights. Towards the end of the article it also mentions how the upcoming Union Treaty (which was the proximate cause of the coup) was viewed favorably by investors as it would have clarified the scope of government authority and property rights thus making investment in the Soviet Union more attractive. For investors not only did the coup stall the anticipated Union Treaty it made an already uncertain environment even more so. To the right is an item describing more detail the impact of the coup on financial markets, "Stock Prices Drop In Global Sell off; Dollar, Bonds Up". Focused mostly on the mechanics of financial markets the article compared the current market turmoil to that which occurred after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait a year earlier, though it was noted that it likely won't be as severe. A few pages later the heading used was "Moscow and the Markets: Biggest Battering Since Kuwait". The comparison of Asian and European markets was interesting in how it was counter-intuitive, that while Asian markets fell a greater amount than European markets, that according to market analysts it is in fact European countries that are more vulnerable to political and economic instability in the Soviet Union. Below the first three items is "Glancing Blow Seen in U.S., With Little Lasting Damage", concerning the Soviet coup impact on the U.S. economy. The main take away being that aside from some price swings in financial markets that the impact on the American economy would be minimal. There were some immediate concerns with grain prices which dropped sharply, cutting interest rates in order to stabilize currency markets and concerns over a potential rise in military spending due to the

uncertainty of the new government's potential to resume cold war hostilities. But again the emphasis was on the Soviet coup only having a short-term impact on the U.S. domestic economy. On page seventy a pair of articles further examines the Soviet coup's impact on the West's financial markets. On the left "Oil Up $1.17 on Concern Over Coup", which examines the crude oil market reaction to the Soviet Coup, while prices were up overall the U.S. immediate impact is small since direct imports from the Soviet Union are low. However Europe depends on Soviet imports and if they are interrupted for any significant period of time eventually European buyers will have to buy oil elsewhere pushing prices higher. Unexpectedly this article shed some light on both the motivation behind Yeltsin's call for a general strike and the coup committee's decision to hold the 5 P.M. press conference. The article states that one of the main sources of hard currency (freely convertible Western currencies such as the U.S. Dollar, the German Deutsche Mark and Japanese Yen, etc) for the Soviet Union are oil exports and that an easily foreseen result of a general strike would be the shut down of Soviet oil fields, cutting off a source of hard currency earnings that would make things that much more difficult for the coup committee. This would be in addition to the chaos and disruption that would be caused by a general strike regardless of circumstances. Further in the article a financial market analyst states that oil markets were calmed after the broadcast of the 5 P.M. news conference. I think this is an indication that the committee leaders were weighing not just Soviet domestic reaction but also international reaction as well and that what they sought was to present an image of rational leaders in control of a stable government and that at least to some degree they had succeeded, if only temporarily. To the right is "West Is Uneasy at Possible Default" which goes into further detail on the pull back in Western investment and aid caused by the Soviet coup.

The situation is summarized succinctly, "Corporations have only just begun in recent years to invest in the Soviet Union and now find themselves with little to lose and little reason to invest further, said Jay K. Mitchell, an economist at PlanEcon Inc., a Washington consulting firm. 'What these events really have done is to squash the beginnings of foreign investment,' he said". The charts accompanying the article bear this out, foreign investment was only about 100 million USD in 1987 when Gorbachev began implementing his reforms and reached a high of 1.5 Billion USD in 1989. Another chart shows the origin of foreign investment in the Soviet Union and it shows how diverse and evenly divided it is, while the U.S. is the single largest source, not far behind are Finland, Germany and Italy. Other Western and European countries invested in the Soviet Union as well, which even included former satellite states like Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. The same dynamic that upset stock markets and commodity markets like oil had the effect on credit and investment markets, that stability and predictability is what markets desire and the coup committee while promising stability in the long term had in the immediate term rattled financial markets. On page seventy-one "Dow Drops By 69.99, To 2,898.03 - Military Equipment And Oil Stocks Strong Amid Broad Decline" details the reaction of the stock market in New York. There are more comparisons to market reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the drop was large enough to trigger market stabilizing controls. With the Dow over 25,000 at present a 70 point drop seems miniscule but it's important to keep in mind that the entire index was not quite 3,000. Also notable that this steep decline was at least partly blamed on computerized trading, where computer programs begin automatically buying or selling when a certain threshold is met, thus showing the issues behind the "flash crash" in the 21st century had been brewing for some time. On page seventy-two "A Flight to Safety That

Slowed by Day's End" gauges individual investor's reactions as well as recounting hour by hour the movements of the stock markets in New York. The article states as soon as news of the coup reached New York that selling had already begun and so by the time markets opened at 8 A.M. in New York indexes were already down and heavy selling continued throughout the morning. However as the day progressed markets stabilized, no doubt aided by the broadcast of the 5 P.M. news conference- which accounting for the time difference would have been broadcast mid-day in New York. By the close of business the mood shifted more towards this being a good buying opportunity "Many individual investors recalled stocks' sharp falls in October 1987 and again two years later, and the drop last August after Iraq invaded Kuwait. In each case, those who brought eventually profited. 'I feel like today is the opportune day, with the market down the way it is' said Michael Hudson...Similarly, Jeffrey Wenger...said he and his wife, Donna, had decided to move some money from municipal bonds to a stock fund...adding that he thought the market might rebound quickly". On page eighty-three is a collection of brief items on the advertising industry and the Soviet coup has had its impact on advertising as well. Many companies such as PepsiCo, McDonald's, Nestle and General Electric that had invested in the Soviet Union directly had also capitalized on the popularity of Gorbachev and his reforms, Glasnost in particular, by using it in their advertising. Now with the Soviet coup throwing that all into question, the Gorbachev and Glasnost thumbed advertising would have to be, at least temporarily, halted. However advertising built around the fall of communism in the former Eastern Bloc satellite states would continue, for example General Electric's commercial titled "Hungarian Rhapsody", "The spot compares the newly bright lights of Budapest to the return of democracy to Hungary". A couple examples are provided in addition to the General Electric ad,

Absolut Vodka had a print ad called "Absolut Glasnost". There was also mention of an ad for Drixoral cold medicine which referred to the end of the "cold war" and referenced a Bush-Gorbachev handshake, the ad was withdrawn prior to the coup due to complaints from the White House.

Earlier in this paper I had described the coverage in The New York Times as "phenomenal", which after reading the preceding paragraphs I believe most reasonable individuals would agree is not mere hyperbole, but a justly earned acknowledgement of the tremendous effort required to make such coverage possible. Furthermore there are also the tight time constraints of newspaper publishing that I had touched on earlier. Since the papers are printed overnight for early morning distribution these items would have been written during the day on Monday, August 19th and be ready for final publication in the very early hours of August 20th, in just a single day all of this output had to be written, edited and vetted for accuracy. True it is not the work of any one individual, but rather the aggregate product of a large news organization but it is all the same impressive. Not only was there a large quantity of articles, these articles were from a wide range of perspectives. There are of course the general articles that summarize events but others which gauge reactions from specific areas, one lengthy article described the reaction of Muscovites to the tanks in the streets and the declarations of a state of emergency, another got reactions from Russians living in New York City, who interestingly were even more bleak about the Soviet coup than Russians actually on-site in Moscow. There was also a short item getting reactions from Soviet troops stationed in Germany, which still had several hundred thousand, surprisingly these were varied as well, some did not support the coup at all and others voiced concerns about "becoming another Yugoslavia", which had its central

government collapse resulting in inter-ethnic civil war. What I liked most of all was the publishing of direct statements and transcripts which allows readers an unmediated perspective and allows them to form their own opinions and reactions independently. These direct items were found in abundance in The New York Times, the most important and lengthiest item by far being a transcript of the 5 P.M. news conference, which as I've mentioned prior was the sole public appearance of the coup committee. Even though at the top of the page it specifies these are "excerpts" it takes up the entirety of page twelve and all the most pressing issues are covered, why was the coup declared?, where is Gorbachev?, what are your plans for the ailing economy?, what of the Union Treaty?, etc. Another important item was the coup committee's statement accompanying the declaration of a state of emergency, published in its entirety on the bottom half of page thirteen. Along with statements from Yeltsin, the Bush Administration, excerpts from the White House press conference and several other statements put out by the coup committee a reader could put together a pretty good picture of what each side is saying. In total for August 20th there were forty-six items that dealt with the Soviet Coup, eighteen international news items, ten domestic news items, five opinions and editorials (op-ed), three sports items and ten business items for a grand total of forty-six. A couple things about these totals were surprising to me, firstly I didn't expect Soviet sports to be important enough to write about when such substantial events as the Soviet coup were going or that there was even any competitions going on, but it looks like that was a misapprehension on my part. The second is the substantial amount of business section articles on the coup. While it's true that several items were focused more on the domestic impact of the Soviet coup rather than focusing on the coup itself, the remainder described how Gorbachev's reforms had begun to integrate the Soviet Union into

worldwide financial systems. This is an often overlooked aspect of Gorbachev's reforms, the focus usually being on his signature Glasnost and Perestroika reforms, his arms control meetings with Reagan and for the average Russian being able to speak a bit more freely as well as partake in Russian Pepsi and Russian McDonalds. The business section articles highlight how much progress Gorbachev had made in promoting foreign investment and in promoting deal making with Western business interests. I think it also gives an interesting comparison with the Soviet economy of that time and Russia today. That much as how the Soviet economy and Western economies did not have much interaction, it is for this same reason that U.S. sanctions imposed on Russia recently due to the invasion of the Crimea did not have a catastrophic effect on the Russian economy. That even though in the 21st century Russia had more economic links to the West than the Soviets did in the 20th century, that much as the Western investment in the Soviet Union that was essentially "written-off" once the coup occurred so the same situation with the sanctions imposed on Russia. That while there was some economic integration between Russia and Western nations that these were small enough that these links can be severed and the Russian economy can continue, worse off to be sure, but a perfectly viable economy on its own.

Broadcast journalism: American media in transition

While newspaper coverage of the Soviet coup was aggressive and through not quite the same can be said of the broadcast television coverage. As was hinted at in the television review article in The New York Times the initial coverage that first day was haphazard. On one hand this is understandable, even intelligence experts whose job is to monitor the political situation in the Soviet Union - the so called "kremlinologists" - were blindsided by the timing of the coup. However one of the duties of media outlets, whether these be newspapers, magazines or

television news broadcasts is public service. Especially for broadcast mediums like radio and television there is the tradeoff of having access to public property, the airwaves to broadcast your medium, which allows these companies to have very profitable businesses and in exchange these media companies must provide a public good along with their more profitable entertainment shows.

In the 1980's CBS News, the news division of CBS, was going through some difficult times. So difficult in fact that by the end of the 1980s it was an entirely different organization than at the beginning of that decade. The upheaval at CBS News was of such magnitude that it spawned a great deal of media coverage and several "tell-all" style books recounting that period. Here I will examine two books, "Prime Times, Bad Times: a Personal Drama of Network Television" by Ed Joyce and "Who Killed CBS?: The Undoing of America's Number One News Network" by Peter J Boyer. Each book is tremendously informative for anyone interested in how the media business operates, particularly that of television news broadcasting. Where they diverge is the perspective, Joyce is the insider and long-time CBS employee who concludes his book with his retirement from CBS. Boyer is a media writer who has worked for The Los Angeles Times, NPR, CBS and The New York Times, so while technically an "outsider", as he did not currently work for CBS at the time of the publication of his book, he still very much gives an insider's perspective as well, no doubt aided by both contacts he has made while at CBS as well as the various media outlets he has worked for.

Ed Joyce was president of CBS News from 1983 to 1986 but had worked for CBS in varying roles since 1955. This included running the New York CBS owned television station, WCBS and serving as Vice President of CBS News under Van Gordon Sauter beginning in

October 1981. Van Gordon Sauter also had a long career in broadcasting, prior to being appointed President of CBS News he was President of CBS Sports. Joyce and Sauter had known each other for some time and were good friends, much of Joyce's book recounts how he worked with Sauter. While Joyce's book is auto-biographical it is not typical of the genre, Joyce only briefly describes his early years and career at CBS until becoming Vice President of CBS News, well over ninety percent of the book is devoted to that time period between October 1981 and the fall of 1986 when he is forced out and Van Gordon Sauter succeeds him as CBS News President. It was a tumultuous time period and thus there is more than enough to talk about, the book is about five hundred fifty pages in length. CBS is an incredibly complex organization as Joyce explains "When Wyman [appointed CEO of CBS Inc May 1980] came to CBS he assumed operational control of a corporation with businesses ranging from broadcasting, records, and publishing to children's toys and Steinway pianos. But it was broadcasting, not CBS records or Holt, Rinehart & Winston, the book publisher, which shaped the identity of CBS. And this was more than public perception. The CBS Broadcast Group in 1981 contributed 41 percent of the total revenues of CBS Inc. As Wyman would learn, the Broadcast Group was lucrative and complex. It was divided into separate divisions which included CBS News, the five owned and operated television stations, Radio, and the various components of the television network, Entertainment, Sports, along with Sales, Operations and Affiliate Relations" [Joyce, p.68-69]. Joyce then goes on to describe Wyman's attitude towards money losing public service benefit type broadcasts, like gavel to gavel coverage of each party's nomination conventions. "...[he was] obsessed by the convention [1980 Republican Party convention] he just attended. He couldn't believe the amount of money CBS had invested in its coverage or the amount it lost

because it preempted regular prime-time programming. It was as though he had personally encountered the Bermuda Triangle of corporate profits [i.e. money disappears without a trace never to be seen again]. [Joyce, p69]. While in other works Joyce is recalled as the consummate manager, always dutifully fulfilling the orders of his superiors here we see that at least on some level, Joyce shared the opinion of many employees at CBS News, that they had an important duty of public service in their broadcasting that was more important than profits "As I listened to him [Wyman] instructing Jankowski [CBS Broadcast Group President, the executive to whom the CBS News President reports to, who was essentially Van Gordon Sauter's and later Ed Joyce's boss] on the writing off of gavel-to-gavel coverage and discussing the need to find a proper forum for the announcement, I was depressed that a decision of this significance was being mandated by someone who only a few months earlier was measuring the volume of frozen peas being moved off of supermarket shelves [prior to CBS Wyman was an executive at Pillsbury- the packaged foods company- where he was the executive who oversaw the "Jolly Green Giant" line of frozen vegetables]. Now here he was. By the time he actually made that speech to the IRTS [International Radio and Television Society] over a year later, I was beginning to identify the audience he was really trying to reach. It certainly wasn't the group of broadcast executives...Wyman was using that forum to speak past those broadcasters to a body called 'the financial community'....It had been possible to hold an executive position at CBS for years...without spending a great deal of time thinking about 'the shareholders'. Wyman changed all of that. CBS was in a state of transition from the personal fiefdom of a great entrepreneur [William S. Paley who in the late 1920s gained control of CBS and built it up first as a radio broadcaster to promote the family cigar business and later by the mid-20th century into one of

the big three television networks] to an American corporation under the new leadership of a modern CEO. Wyman was using the podium of the IRTS to tell the analysts, the financial community, the shareholders, and his own executives that CBS stock would become more valuable because of a new management which understood the need to reduce costs [Joyce, p70].

Ironically Wyman's turn towards cost-cutting was not sufficient nor was his leadership universally admired. To summarize from both the Joyce and Boyer books that Wyman had become CEO of CBS Inc. at the behest of Paley. Paley however who was in his 80s in this time period and had grown accustomed to still having a say in day to day operations, as well as having retained for himself the title of Chairman of the Board. In the Joyce book he describes how executives prior to Wyman have come and gone as Paley tires of them and replaces them. Most likely Wyman was able to get the backing of the board with his new cost-cutting plans and thus stop Paley from removing him as CEO. Further Wyman no longer paid any attention to Paley's advice and ran the company as he saw fit, angering Paley. Towards the end of the Boyer book, Boyer describes how Paley teamed up with Laurence Tisch who by 1986 had acquired a 25% stake in CBS Inc. With this new leverage Paley was able to oust Wyman and regain control of CBS Inc, as part of this change Joyce is forced out as CBS News President. In the final pages of his book Joyce describes how after consulting with his lawyer he was able to strike a very generous deal with CBS to stay on a few more months and then retire with a pay out of about one million dollars in exchange for leaving quietly and not causing further bad publicity for CBS.

By the time the Soviet coup occurred in 1991 American media was heading in this direction of greater efficiency and cost-effective management, very much a product of the 1980s cultural focus on business. The two preceding books that I had mentioned were so closely linked

together that they have been reviewed as a pair, at least twice that I'm aware of. A review in the Journal of Broadcast & Electronic Media addresses the underlying issue in these changes to American Media "...both authors [Boyer and Joyce] miss a central point. It wasn't Sauter, Wyman, Jankowski, Joyce, Tisch or any other *individual* [reviewer's emphasis] who changed CBS. Forces from beyond CBS triggered its transformation. During the 1980s, the broadcast media, with their high profit margins, became highly desirable investments. Eventually, investors began to demand more accountability from the corporate officers at those companies. 'Lean and mean' became the watchword on Wall Street. If news costs too much, then cut back those costs. If the news isn't attracting enough viewers, which means advertisers are paying less money, make the news attract more viewers. Like ABC and NBC, CBS had to respond to those economic forces. All areas of CBS operations, *including CBS News* [reviewer's emphasis], had to become more efficient. The mission for CBS News is no longer whether to adhere to a traditional standard of news presentation. Its mission now is to survive in an era of dwindling audiences, cable competition, and a tougher advertising market". Furthermore these attitudes towards cost cutting are generalizable to all three major new outlets, mostly as stated in the review that these changes are across the industry and are very difficult, if not impossible, for any company to resist. In addition to that is the lateral movement of executives between news organizations, that if one started their career at NBC for example there is no reason that you can not take a position at CBS if a lucrative offer is tendered. There are a couple examples mentioned in both the Joyce and Boyer books, Andrew Lack for example was at that time a producer for CBS News's documentary division, CBS Reports. Lack has a had a varied career between then and now, he only just recently in 2019 stepped down as President of NBC News.

Another example would be Howard Stringer who was appointed President of CBS News as part of the Tisch takeover. Stringer then advanced in the CBS corporate hierarchy and later made the leap to Sony as CEO, a position which he held for over a decade and gave him tremendous influence over all of its media properties.

Once again an article analyzing television coverage is helpful. In the August 20th issue of The Los Angeles Times, the first full day media outlets had to work on coverage of the coup, there was a short article "Network News Test Over Gorbachev" anticipating the coup coverage and summarizing the state of American media in that moment. The coverage of the coup attempt will indicate what the new cost conscious news coverage will look like "The networks' ongoing coverage of Mikhail Gorbachev's ouster-beyond the initial breaking story- may provide clues to the future of the NBC and CBS news departments. With NBC, CBS-and even the strong ABC News division- slashing their staffs, the long-term depth and consistency of the Big Three's coverage of the Soviet upheaval will be studied carefully by the TV industry and many viewers....News coverage of major stories can be hugely expensive. CBS, NBC and ABC already are planning to sharply curtail their on-air presence at the 1992 Democratic and Republican conventions- while cable's CNN and C-Span will air blanket coverage....The Big Three still have brilliant staffs that want to compete, but the question will be the commitment to all-out, continual coverage by the tightfisted corporate leaders who now run the networks-General Electric, owner of NBC; Laurence Tisch, head of CBS; and Capital Cities, the conglomerate that brought ABC. With networks such as NBC and CBS closing bureaus around the world, they now, more than ever, have to show they are there all the way on stories if the magnitude of the Gorbachev shocker-and not just for the initial few days or major highlights.

When they are there all the way, the Big Three are usually superb. But any letdown in TV's new fiercely competitive climate could harm them irreparably..." [Los Angeles Times, Rick Du Brow, AUG 20 1991, page F9]. The first thing I'd like to point out in this article is its mention of political party convention coverage and to compare it with the earlier quote from the Joyce book. Joyce mentions how one of Wyman's earliest initiatives as CEO of CBS Inc. is to end gavel-to-gavel (i.e. broadcasting the convention in its entirety) coverage of the political party conventions. Here in the Los Angles Times article written eleven years later the networks are likely to reduce further still the already reduced coverage, leaving us where we are today with these political party conventions being covered like any other event, selectively and with an eye towards ratings and profits. The bulk of the article is essentially asking the question can broadcast news deliver the same quality news people have expected but do so profitably. Looking back thirty years after the fact the answer is no, television news and related programming continue to decline in quality and quantity. Public television continues to make a good effort in terms of daily new broadcasts, documentaries and investigative reporting but continue to be constrained by limited resources.

The comparison then becomes even more vital when one considers the changes that have been occurring in the newspaper business in America. Much like broadcast journalism thirty years ago, newspapers are increasingly under pressure to reduce costs and increase profits. The origins of the pressure are different, broadcast news divisions were on their own running at a loss but were components of larger media enterprises that were very profitable, thus if there was a will on the part of media corporations to continue subsidizing news gathering operations they could have done so. Newspapers on the other hand have to make a profit on their news gathering

operation, thirty years ago this was still not easy but doable, today in an environment of declining advertising revenue and declines in paid circulation that is a much more difficult. Some newspapers are able to survive in their own unique circumstances, The New York Times for example has been controlled by the Sulzberger family for over a century and they have been able maintain the quality of their publication. The New York Post has run at a loss for many years but since it is a part of Ruepert Murdoch's News Corp that has not had much effect on their coverage. The New York Daily News is an example of when these relationships falter, the Daily News was owned by Mortimer Zuckerman since the 1990s and while not particularly profitable he held onto it until just a couple years ago when the Daily News was sold to Tribune Media which has brought up many newspapers across the country. After the sale many Daily News employees were laid off and it became a much smaller newspaper.

Conclusions

The Soviet coup attempt is an important historical event worthy of study and consideration because as I had stated initially that it was the definitive moment when the Cold War ended. Once the sequence of events touched off by the initiation of the coup had run their course the Soviet Union began to be rapidly dismantled. This was the culmination of changes that began once Gorbachev was selected as General Secretary by senior communist party leaders in 1985, initially gradually as Gorbachev began domestic reforms but then the pace quickened as he eased the Soviet Union's foreign policy posture as well and the Eastern Bloc satellite states began to break away. By the time the coup attempt had actually occurred in 1991 the Soviet Union itself internally began to change, a factor that the hard-liners had failed to give adequate consideration to when they had tried to revert to prior forms of governance. The coup tends to

get overlooked historically for a number of reasons, the first and foremost is that it failed. Just a week after the coup had run its course a New York Times headline was fitting "The Most Soviet of Coups", referring to how it was poorly planned, hastily implemented, did not function properly (i.e. to actually and fully seize power which is the aim of any coup) and soon after it was implemented had fallen apart, that the coup resembled Soviet governance during the Brezhnev stagnation of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. Another reason I think the coup is important is because it allowed the Cold War to end relatively peacefully. With the vast quantities of arms, both conventional and nuclear, being amassed by both sides for nearly fifty years and numerous proxy conflicts fought during that time a peaceful resolution looked to be the least likely outcome.

The coup attempt is also a useful example in the study of American media, particularly in a comparison of broadcast versus print journalism. This was a time period of transition for broadcast journalism, the bridge between the mid twentieth-century notions of public service and a duty to inform the public of events to ensure a robust democracy to where we are in the twenty-first century. Increasingly media of all types, television, print, radio and internet are assessed first and foremost as an enterprise, how profitable is this entity? Today there is a clear bifurcation of public and private media, private media is a business that exists to make money first and foremost while the duties of public service for media have been pushed off onto public media only. Even public media is not entirely 'public', for example several years ago due to funding issues the production company behind "Sesame Street", a prominent children's educational television show that originated on public television, had reached an agreement with

HBO to have new episodes of the series be available first and only on HBO during an initial run before being released for broadcast on public television stations.

Finally the most important reason to study the Soviet Coup Attempt of 1991 is understanding. Like any historical event it did not occur in isolation, the coup attempt is a consequence of Soviet and Cold War histories and once it had occurred it has influenced world history. For understanding American-Russian political relations today it is essential to be aware of the coup attempt and its circumstances. Russia today is very much a product of the consequences of the coup attempt and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. Studying the coup and its circumstances gives a more subtle understanding of American foreign policy, encapsulated by George H.W. Bush's speech proclaiming 'a new world order', as in one in which communism is no longer a threat. Unfortunately for Americans and the entire world that elements of the American political establishment have interpreted this as America having 'won' the Cold War and that now American power spans the globe supreme and unchallenged. This is a study in being careful of what you wish for, after all what country wouldn't want to be in the position of the United States in 1991? This question also emphasizes that understanding the circumstances surrounding the coup attempt also leads to a more through understanding of America's place in the world in the twenty-first century and particularly its foreign policy posture. In the immediate years after the coup attempt and resulting collapse of the Soviet Union the 1990s were defined by what is characterized as 'triumphalism', a victorious America reveling in its status as sole remaining superpower after vanquishing its longtime foe. Going into the twenty-first century this was a factor in a foreign policy defined by unilateralism, America

going it alone, 'You're either with us or against us' as President George W Bush was assembling his 'coalition of the willing' with The United States leading the new world political order.

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