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Taxi Drivers Know Everything

9-11 minutes



It so happened that yesterday I was coming home in a taxi. The taxi driver, who looked like Bill Murray, turned out to be very talkative: during the trip, as often happens, we touched on all subjects, from the weather to blondes behind the wheel.

At some point, as background noise, there was some news read out on the radio. After the segment about the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, NordStream 2 and possible EU sanctions the taxi driver shook his head and said thoughtfully: “Yeah, mommy is stuck...”

“What mommy?” I inquired.

“What mommy?” asked the taxi driver. “That same one, Angela Merkel. You know why Navalny was surrendered to Germany? Let me explain.” And then, for a quarter of an hour, the taxi driver presented a coherent theory of what happened, worthy of study at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which answered all the questions that had been bothering me.

This is how it all came down.

At the beginning of August everybody was preparing for the elections in Belarus—Belarus itself, as well as Russia and countries in the EU. It was an exciting game in which everybody placed bets on their own candidate. But I must immediately warn you that what we were observing was just the visible part of the iceberg, while the underwater currents were known only to a few.

Moscow and Minsk were demonstratively smashing dishes, shouting at each other and pulling each other by the hair, creating the illusion of a complete break in relations. This was as intended!

Europe, content and relaxed, was rubbing its hands and already seeing how it will very soon kick out “Europe’s last dictator” and install a Belorussian Juan Guaido clone in Minsk, grabbing this delectable piece for itself.

The elections were held. Everybody froze. Not bothering to wait for the election results to come in, on orders from the Polish provocateur [Telegraph channel] Nexta the Belorussian white-red-white [Nazi occupation flag] opposition marched into battle.

At first everything was going to plan. Excited white-red-white crowds flooded the streets and started threatening the police, officials and journalists, starting skirmishes and strikes. Slovak and Spanish ambassadors in Belarus spoke out in support of the protesters and “came over to the side of the people.” This was also as intended. It looked like just a bit more of this and [“Europe’s last dictator”] Lukashenko would fall.

But then Moscow entered into the game. It recognized the outcome of the elections [which Lukashenko won] and started to support him organizationally, informationally and financially. Europe had to ramp up pressure. But how?

Nexta was crapping bricks and exhorting the white-red-white activists to get more active, but they just couldn't get any traction in their attempts to seize power. They turned out to be too weak compared to their own people.

And then, luckily, Navalny was poisoned. In any case, that's what some people imagined.

Operatives at the German Ministry of International Affairs, who sympathized with Schröder's SPD, got in touch with Yulia Navalny (his wife) and offered to hospitalize him in a clinic in Germany. Yulia agreed, and appealed to Putin.

Then the German minister of foreign affairs walked into Bundeskanzlerin's office and laid his joker on the table: "We can take away Navalny for treatment. If Moscow tries to prevent this, we will cause a loud scandal. We'll get his body and then decide how to play this." Merkel found this proposal attractive and, not thinking too long, agreed. Moscow did not object to Navalny's transfer.

After Navalny was brought to Germany and delivered to the Charité clinic in a cortège consisting of 12 cars, mommy Angela called Moscow and demanded: Russia must stop supporting Lukashenko, otherwise we will announce that Navalny had been poisoned with "Novichok." Moscow refused and increased support of Lukashenko, declaring that it has created a reserve of special forces to be sent into Belarus and take control—just in case anyone makes a sudden move.

The next day Berlin announced that analysis results showed poisoning with a cholinesterase inhibitor. This was its last warning shot. Then there was another phone call, to warn that the next time

“Novichok” will be found. Moscow refused, and promised Minsk a billion dollars on that very day.

At that point, Berlin’s patience ran out. Navalny was immediately transferred to a military hospital, where it was immediately “discovered” that he had been poisoned with “Novichok.” It was not possible to find “Novichok” while he was at Charité because journalists and officials could demand to see the test results, while at a military hospital such requests would be denied: the information is secret. But not even “Novichok” could force Moscow to stop supporting Minsk. Russia’s prime minister Mikhail Mishustin was dispatched to Minsk with a briefcase bulging with papers to sign.

There followed an attempt by Fritz Merz, Angela Merkel’s deputy in the DCU, to lean on Merkel to shut down NordStream 2, but he swiftly got his ears boxed by the business lobby of German companies that invested in this pipeline and, whining and whimpering, crawled back into his hole.

Then Lukashenko, being a tough nut to crack, presented an intentionally amateurish intercept of secret diplomatic communications between Poland and Germany in which they discussed their plans for poisoning Navalny. Now they are sitting in Warsaw and Berlin and have no idea how to respond to this movie—to deny or to pretend that they didn’t notice it. What a dilemma!

The interim result is thus as follows: Navalny is alive and well, sitting quietly in a German military hospital and inquiring periodically when he will be allowed to go home. But he won’t be allowed to go home any time soon.

Now, a hair ahead of elections, parliamentary electoral campaign is starting in Germany. Merkel's DCU/CSU coalition doesn't have a lot of popular support as it is. Some people are even now ready to take the Reichstag with their bare hands and put their own flag on top of it. And then we have this toxic story with "Novichok"!

If Merkel announces that it is the crime of the century in which a great Russian opposition figure has been fiendishly poisoned with "Novichok," then she would be obligated to sever all relations with the bloody regime and present evidence. But there won't be any evidence to present. And nobody will allow her to freeze the completion of the pipeline. Otherwise German companies, which invested in NordStream 2 will take the Reichstag even ahead of the irate German citizens. In either case, DCU/CSU will face a defeat.

But if she slams the transmission into reverse, apologizes and returns Navalny to Russia, claiming that what happened was an unfortunate series of errors, and punishes everybody who had put her in this situation to the full extent of German law, this won't save the situation either. German voter's won't forgive Merkel over the loss of Germany's international authority, loss of influence in Europe and total incompetence in handling foreign affairs, and will still punish her at the polls.

Therefore, her only choice is to bide her time, sitting with one buttock on each of two chairs—blaming Russia for deploying "Novichok" and simultaneously supporting the completion of NordStream 2. But we are about to see a flood of eyewitness reports, photographs and documents from the various hospitals where the VIP patient has been treated, knocking out one of the two chairs. And so the possibility that Merkel's retirement will occur

before her term it up should not be dismissed. In that case, she will have been unable to beat Helmut's Kohl's 16-year record as Bundeskanzler.

But what about Russia's friend Gehrhard Schröder? Being the chairman of the board of the NordStream 2 company and head of the SPD, he looks into the future with confidence and optimism. In any case, CDU/CSU will be deflated and SPD will reinforce its position in the Bundestag and either independently or in coalition with other parties will install its own leader as Bundeskanzler. NordStream 2, which has been in political limbo for a few years, will be completed and enter into service at full rated capacity very quickly.

When we rolled up to my house, the taxi driver asked: "Do you play chess?"

"Sometimes," I nodded.

In chess, there is a variation called "poisoned pawn." Your opponent, trying to gain material advantage, takes this pawn, ends up trapped and inevitably loses.

As I was getting out of the taxi, somewhat perplexed, I asked the taxi driver where he got all this information. He smiled a sad Bill Murray smile and answered: "From my brother. He lives in Germany and also works as a taxi driver." It was at this moment that I realized that taxi drivers know everything.

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