

Dubna is a small town situated where the Moscow Canal meets the Volga, a two-hour train ride north of Moscow. Lushly pastoral in summer and bleakly beautiful in winter, it is world famous as the home of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research. The citizens of Dubna are a warm and welcoming lot. Their interests include music and folk dancing, the arts, ice fishing, and wild mushroom hunting. Several new elements have been created there, including dubnium, which is named after the town.

It is also the birthplace of George W. Bush, the forty-third president of the United States.

Not many people know this story, but it's true. George H. W. Bush, a Navy pilot in WWII and later the forty-first president, was recruited into the OSS (the precursor organization to the CIA, of which he was later to become director) while still in the service and then, when that organization was canceled, handed off to an ad hoc intelligence group headed by one of William Donovan's proteges. As a covert operative, Bush was sent to Dubna, then a handful of dachas and an enormous construction site, to negotiate with Stalin's representatives over matters that remain classified to this day. With George went his young?and very pregnant?wife, Barbara.

Why would anybody send a pregnant woman into the chaos of postwar Russia?

It helps to remember that Donovan's people had the reputation of being "cowboys," more interested in playing spy than in serious analysis.

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Michael Swanwick's Periodic Table of Science Fiction

105

Db

Dubnium

(262)

George "Dubna" Bush

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"cowboys," more interested in playing spy than in serious analysis. Apparently it was felt that Barbara Bush's presence would help disguise the nature of the operation. But while in Dubna, Barbara went into labor prematurely and, assisted only by a hastily summoned midwife, who spoke not one word of English, gave birth to her first son.

Anxious to secure for his child all the benefits of his birthright as an American, including the possibility of someday becoming president, George H. W. Bush hushed up the incident. Later, as director of the CIA, he had his people forge unimpeachable documentation that George W. had been born in Connecticut.

Which makes George W. Bush the only president ever born behind the Iron Curtain. So what if the Constitution says the president has to be American-born? It's just a piece of paper! A technicality! Anyway, he's president now, and there's nothing you can do about it.

You say you don't like it? What are you? some kind of Communist?

The End

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