

prepare laws and the state budget, other laws and offer permanent supervision over the activity of state bodies, over the economic, social and ecological situation in the country.

5 The election and recall of the highest USSR officials, namely:

(a) The chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet . . .

And also:

(a) The chairman of the USSR KGB,

(b) The chairman of the state committee for television and radio,

(c) The chief editor of the newspaper *Izvestiya*,

is the exclusive right of the Congress. The officials named above are subordinate to the Congress and independent of decisions made by the CPSU . . .

7 The functions of the KGB are limited to the task of defending the international security of the USSR.

Note: In future direct elections for the chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet and his deputy on a competitive basis should be held.

Sources: A. D. Sakharov, *Trevoga i nadezhda* (Moscow, Inter-Verso, 1990), pp. 262–3; 'All Power to the Soviets', *XX Century and Peace*, no. 8, 1989, pp. 9–12.

Document 10.20 Russia's Declaration of State Sovereignty

In spring 1990 elections had been held to the RSFSR CPD on a rather more open basis than the USSR elections held a year earlier. At its first convocation in May–June 1990 the features of a distinctively Russian policy in opposition to that of the USSR emerged. The figurehead of the reborn Russia was Yeltsin, who on 29 May was elected chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet after a bitter struggle in which Gorbachev tried to dissuade deputies from voting for Yeltsin. On 12 June 1990 the First Russian Congress of People's Deputies adopted a declaration on 'state sovereignty' that in effect declared Russia's laws superior to those of the USSR, provoking a 'war of the laws' that ended only with the disintegration of the USSR in late 1991. This was in effect the first step towards Russia's independence. An accompanying 'Decree on Power' declared the separation of the party from the state and the intention to govern on the basis of the separation of powers.

The First Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR,

- recognising its historical responsibility for the fate of Russia,
- respecting the sovereign rights of all the peoples making up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,
- expressing the will of the peoples of the RSFSR,

triumphantly declares the state sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Federated

Socialist Republic on its territory and declares its firm intention to create a democratic law-governed state within the framework of a renewed USSR.

1 The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic is a sovereign state, created by the peoples historically united in it.

2 The sovereignty of the RSFSR is the natural and necessary condition for Russian statehood, having a centuries-long history, culture and tradition.

3 The bearer of sovereignty and the source of state power in the RSFSR is its multinational people. The people expresses its state power directly and through representative bodies on the basis of the RSFSR constitution.

4 The state sovereignty of the RSFSR is declared for a higher purpose, to ensure for every person the inalienable right for a worthy life, free development and the use of their native language, and for every people the right to self-determination in national-state and national-cultural forms chosen by them.

5 To secure political, economic and legal guarantees for the sovereignty of the RSFSR it is resolved that:

- the RSFSR should have full power in deciding all questions of state life, except for those voluntarily granted to the management of the USSR;
- the RSFSR constitution and RSFSR laws should be supreme throughout the territory of the RSFSR; USSR acts that contradict the sovereign rights of the RSFSR are abrogated by the republic on its territory. Disagreements between the republic and the Union are to be settled within the framework established by the Union Treaty;
- the people should have the exclusive right to own, use and dispose of the national wealth of Russia; there should be plenipotentiary representation of the RSFSR in other Union republics and foreign countries;
- the republic has the right to participate in the fulfilment of powers transferred to it from the USSR.

6 The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic unites with other republics in a Union on the basis of a treaty. The RSFSR recognises and respects the sovereign rights of the union republics in the USSR.

7 The RSFSR reserves the right freely to secede from the USSR according to the terms established by the Union Treaty and laws based thereon.

8 The territory of the RSFSR cannot be changed without popular approval, expressed through a referendum.

9 The RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies recognises the necessity of substantially extending the rights of autonomous republics, autonomous *oblasts* and autonomous *okrugs*, as well as of *krais* and *oblasts* of the RSFSR. The concrete means of securing these rights are to be defined by RSFSR laws on the national-state and administrative-territorial structure of the Federation.

10 All citizens and those without citizenship living on the territory of the RSFSR are guaranteed rights and freedoms envisioned by the RSFSR constitution, the USSR constitution and the norms of international law . . .

11 RSFSR citizenship is established throughout the territory of the RSFSR. Every RSFSR citizen retains citizenship of the USSR.

A citizen of the RSFSR outside the republic is defended and protected by the RSFSR.

12 The RSFSR guarantees all citizens, political parties, social organisations, mass movements and religious organisations, acting within the RSFSR constitution, equal legal rights to participate in the management of state and social affairs.

13 The separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers is the central principle of the functioning of the RSFSR as a legal state.

Sources: *'Deklaratsiya o gosudarstvennom suverenitete RSFSR'*, Argumenty i fakty, no. 24, 16–22 June 1990, p. 1; Rodina, no. 6, 1990, p. 26.

Document 10.21 Yeltsin's Resignation from the Party

Elected chairman of the Russian parliament, Yeltsin used this position to continue his assault on the rule of the Communist Party. On 12 July 1990, at the Twenty-eighth (and last) Congress of the CPSU Yeltsin resigned from the party.

In connection with my election as chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet and the enormous responsibility before the people of Russia, taking into account the transition of society towards a multi-party system, I cannot fulfil only decisions of the CPSU. As head of the highest legislative power of the republic I must subordinate myself to the will of the people and its plenipotentiaries. Therefore, I, in accordance with my promises made in the electoral campaign, declare my departure from the CPSU to be able more effectively to influence the activity of soviets. I am ready to cooperate with all parties and socio-political organisations in the republic.

Source: Izvestiya, 13 July 1990.

Document 10.22 Yeltsin Becomes Russian President

Yeltsin had become the symbol of the sovereignty of the republics and of the democratic opposition to Gorbachev's attempts to reform socialism. Those associated with Yeltsin were no longer concerned with modernising socialism but now sought to make Russia a 'normal' country, as it was put at the time. In March 1991 Yeltsin managed to convince the Third Congress of People's Deputies to create a Russian executive presidency, and the necessary constitutional amendments were adopted by the Fourth Congress in May of that year. The first popular national elections for the Russian presidency were held on 12 June with six candidates; with Yeltsin receiving over 50 per cent of the vote, there was no need for a second round.

Candidate	Votes cast	Percentage
1 Yeltsin, Boris	45,552,041	57.30
2 Ryzhkov, Nikolai	13,395,335	16.85
3 Zhirinovskii, Vladimir	6,211,007	7.81
4 Tuleev, Aman	5,417,464	6.81
5 Makashov, Al'bert	2,969,511	3.74
6 Bakatin, Vadim	2,719,757	3.42
Invalid votes	3,242,167	4.10
Total votes cast	79,507,282	100.00

Sources: *'Soobshchenie tsentral'noi izbiratel'noi komissii po vyboram Prezidenta RSFSR'*, Izvestiya, 20 June 1991; Pravda, 20 June 1991.

Document 10.23 The Revised Party Programme

At the Twenty-eighth Congress the party adopted the draft of a new programme which in effect returned to the themes of traditional evolutionary social democracy. The draft was subtitled 'Towards a Humane, Democratic Socialism', and its final version was issued a year later.

The CPSU is a party with a socialist option and a communist outlook. We regard this prospect as the natural, historical thrust of the development of civilisation. Its social ideal absorbs the humanist principles of human culture, the age-old striving for a better life and social justice.

In our understanding, humane democratic socialism means a society in which: humankind is the aim of social development; living and working conditions for people are worthy of contemporary civilisation; man's alienation from political power and the material and spiritual values created by him are overcome and his active involvement in social processes is assured; the transformation of working people into the masters of production, the strong motivation of highly productive labour, and the best conditions for the progress of production forces and the rational use of nature are ensured on the basis of diverse forms of ownership and economic management; social justice and the social protection of working people are guaranteed – the sovereign will of the working people is the sole source of power; the state, which is subordinate to society, guarantees the protection of the rights, freedoms, honour and dignity of people regardless of social position, sex, age, national affiliation or religion; there is free competition and cooperation between all socio-political forces operating within the framework of law. This is a society which constantly advocates peaceful and equitable cooperation among the peoples and respect for the rights of every people to determine their own fate.

Source: Pravda, 8 August 1991.

The leading role of the party had gone, as had all mention of Marxism, the aim of building communism, class struggle, consciousness and the like. This was a new model of participatory and popular socialism, using elements of the market and based on genuine popular sovereignty, religious tolerance and social welfare. In short, a liberal agenda was bolted on to socialism. The regime was making peace with its own people, and by the same token this signalled the end of confrontation with the West.

Attempts to Save the Union

National relations were worsening. The final years of the USSR were accompanied by a number of bloody incidents. In Tbilisi on 9 April 1989 attempts to clear the Government House on Rustaveli Prospect of demonstrators demanding harsh measures against Abkhaz separatism led to the immediate deaths of sixteen demonstrators, with three more dying soon afterwards in hospital. After many delays the Central Committee in September 1989 held its long-promised plenum devoted to the renewal of the Union. Its outcome was disappointing, yet the process began to draft a new Union Treaty.

Document 10.24 The Union Treaty Process

A draft was published in late 1990 but already by then its provisions, enormously tolerant with respect for the past, had been superseded by events.

The sovereign republics which are parties to the treaty

Expressing the will of the peoples for the renewal of their Union, proceeding from the similarity of their previous development, determined to live in friendship and concord, and ensuring equitable cooperation,

Mindful of the interests of the material, cultural and emotional welfare of the peoples, mutual enrichment of national cultures, and common security,

Drawing lessons from the past and taking into account the changes taking place in the country and in the world,

Have decided to develop their relationships within the Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics on new principles.

I Basic Principles

First. Each republic which is party to the treaty shall be a sovereign state with full political power on its territory.

The USSR shall be a sovereign federative state formed as a result of voluntary unification of the republics and exercising the degree of political power given to it by the parties to the treaty.

Second. The republics forming the Union of Sovereign Soviet Republics shall recognise the inalienable right of each nation to self-determination and self-government, and independent action on all issues of its development.

They will strongly oppose racism, chauvinism and other extreme forms of nationalism, and any attempt to restrict the rights of the peoples. The parties to the treaty will seek a combination of common human and national values. *Third.* The republics shall recognise the primacy of human rights set out in the UN Universal Declaration and international covenants as the most important principle of their union. The citizens of the USSR shall have guaranteed access to the learning and use of their mother tongue, unrestricted access to information, freedom of religion, and other political and individual liberties.

Fourth. The republics see the formation and further development of civil society as crucial to the freedom and well-being of the peoples. They will seek to supply the needs of the people through the free choice of patterns of ownership and economic management and efforts to translate the principles of social justice and security into practice.

Fifth. It will be up to the republics themselves to determine their political system, administrative and territorial division, and the system of government and public administration. They recognise a democracy based on elected representation to be a common fundamental principle and seek to establish a law-governed state that would be a sure safeguard against any authoritarian practices and arbitrary rule.

Sixth. The republics regard the preservation and development of national traditions and state support for education, science and culture as their major task. They will work to promote intensive exchanges of humanitarian cultural values within the country and throughout the world for mutual benefit.

Seventh. The republics declare that their international priorities shall be lasting peace, abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass annihilation, cooperation between nations, and solidarity of peoples in dealing with all other global challenges facing mankind.

Source: Pravda, 24 November 1990, p. 3.

Document 10.25 The March 1991 Referendum

In early autumn 1990 the '500-days' plan for rapid economic reform was rejected, and over the winter of 1990–1 Gorbachev appeared to ally himself with the hardliners. In January 1991 troops were used to seize objects in Lithuania and Latvia, with some loss of life. The leaders of the republics became increasingly alarmed, fearing that as long as authority resided in Moscow their declarations of sovereignty remained fragile. The Union Treaty process appeared to be going nowhere. Gorbachev tried to strengthen his position by holding a referendum on the preservation of the Union. It was on this matter, in which he detailed how the question would be framed, that Gorbachev addressed the nation on 6 February 1991.

I would like to talk to you on a matter of crucial importance for the whole country – the forthcoming referendum on the future of our Union. The referendum is to be held in accordance with a decision of the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The order of holding the referendum and its date have been set by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Soviet people are to answer one question on 17 March. This is how this question has been worded by the Supreme Soviet:

Do you think that it is necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal and sovereign republics in which the rights and freedoms of each citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, will be fully guaranteed?

The answer should be either yes or no. Each and all of us should make a choice . . .

Although debates on this issue go on, we can pretty surely state right now that the Soviet people are for the preservation of the Union as a common asset of our peoples, and their reliable support. They favour, just as resolutely, the renewal of the Union so that all the people living in it can develop freely and feel that they are the masters of their own fate. A general outline of a renewed federal state, as it should be, is given in the draft Treaty of Union. This draft has been published in the press. What is the most important thing in the concept of renewing the Union? It is first and foremost the sovereignty of the republics, the subjects of the federation, which ensures the right of each people to self-determination and self-government. It is also the joint participation of the republics in the exercise of the federal terms of reference, i.e., all the powers they are delegating to the federal bodies of power and management. Sovereign republics need a viable federation which can really uphold common interests . . .

By virtue of history, a great many peoples, big and small, living on the vast expanse of Siberia, the flatlands and steppes of the Far East and Central Asia, in the valleys of the Caucasus and the Pamirs and on the Baltic, Caspian and Black Sea shores, have united around Russia. A huge Eurasian state with the world's largest territory and a large multilingual population has taken shape over centuries. To a large extent this is the result of complex processes that have taken shape over centuries, arising from the assimilation of new territories and from population shifts. Some of these territories were acquired by conquest, as has happened throughout the world, on all continents. Many peoples voluntarily allied themselves with Russia, seeking protection from outside aggression, or to gain access to a vast market and to one of the world's centres of science and culture. This was largely facilitated by the openness of the Russian nation, its willingness to cooperate on equal terms with various other peoples, its benevolent attitude towards their traditions, and willingness to share its own . . .

There is every justification to say that in this country a unique civilisation

has taken shape, the outcome of many centuries of joint effort by all our peoples. And this also is vital in order to understand what we are now going through. First and foremost, we must take account of the fact that virtually all of our republics are multinational. Millions of people are descended from mixed marriages; 75 million, that is, one in four, live outside of, let us say, 'their own' republics. It would be madness to attempt to destroy this natural result of the flow of history. Yet in a number of republics attempts are being made to turn members of non-indigenous nationalities into second-class citizens, into outcasts, and in the long run to force them to leave. Think, comrades, about this: in peacetime, refugees have appeared in our country. And not in their tens or hundreds, but thousands, blameless victims of ethnic strife, political hot-headedness and uncontrolled emotion. Separatism threatens to tear millions of people away from their historical homelands, from the land where their ancestors are buried, and to disrupt the existing pattern of life . . .

Let us take the economy. It is glaringly obvious that all republics and regions of the country are economically dependent upon each other. This is the result of decades, perhaps even centuries, of sharing and cooperation in labour. It only takes one link within this integral system to break down, a few enterprises to cease work, and in the wake of this tens and hundreds of others also stop and then the entire country comes to a standstill. The Soviet Union possesses a vast scientific and cultural potential. This spiritual achievement is also the result of joint creativity. Those who decide to renounce this cultural power-house, clearly, stand to lose a great deal.

One of the advantages of a large federal state is the ability to ensure full and reliable security for one's country. And in any case, who is going to divide up the nuclear-missile, strategic potential of the Soviet Armed Forces? By virtue of its political weight and prestige, the Soviet Union is now a powerful player on the international stage, justifiably called a superpower. Its policies influence all the processes taking place in the world. Enormous effort was needed to acquire such influence and this can be so quickly squandered, thrown to the winds. Let me add that, with the exception of unreconstructed reactionaries and militarists, nobody in the world wants to weaken the role of the Soviet Union in international affairs.

These conclusions, dear comrades, form the basis of my firm conviction that our Union must be retained and profoundly reinvigorated. A renewed federal state, a federation of sovereign republics, means guaranteed security, a vast market, powerful science and culture. The Soviet Union is a world power, playing one of the key roles in the establishment of a new international order that is being built upon justice and solidarity. The Soviet Union represents a reliable future for all our peoples, for me and you, for our children and grandchildren.

Source: Pravda, 7 February 1991.

In the referendum on 17 March 147 million people took part, of whom 112 million or 76 per cent voted in favour. Yet the fact that six republics refused to take part (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia) indicated how divided the Union had become. In Russia the result was ambiguous; while 71.3 per cent of Russia's 79.4 million turnout (75.1 per cent of the total electorate) voted 'yes' to the proposition, almost exactly the same number (69.6 per cent) voted in favour of a second question added to the ballot in Russia, about the creation of a Russian presidency, which implicitly challenged the postulates of the first. It was on the basis of this vote that the Russian presidency was created and Yeltsin elected in June 1991. From April 1991 Gorbachev brought together the leaders of the Union republics at his dacha at Novo-Ogarevo and together they hammered out a revised version of the Union Treaty that was to have been signed by three of the republics (Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) on 20 August, with the others in principle signing later. The new version granted a significant devolution of powers and would in effect have converted the USSR into a confederation.

The August 1991 Coup

After months of living in the shadow of a coup, the plotters finally struck on the eve of the signing of the Union Treaty. The plotters had travelled to see Gorbachev in his vacation dacha at Foros in the Crimea on 18 August 1991, hoping at least to receive his tacit acquiescence, but Gorbachev ostensibly refused to be implicated in what he insisted was their adventurism. Despite this setback, they struck in the early hours of 19 August, declaring that the vice-president Gennadii Yanaev was taking over as president from Gorbachev 'due to the state of his health' (which they knew to be a blatant lie). They issued a *statement* announcing the creation of a State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE), a *resolution* establishing the administrative regulations governing the emergency, and an *appeal* to the Soviet people outlining the reasons for their action. Armoured columns moved into Moscow but no orders had been issued detailing their specific tasks. It was this sort of farcical incompetence that pervaded the whole coup. The White House, the seat of the Russian parliament, became the symbol of resistance. As the coup unravelled after three days, Yeltsin launched a counter-offensive against the party. Gorbachev himself never recovered his earlier prestige or authority.

Document 10.26 Statement by the Soviet Leadership

A state of emergency was announced for six months in some parts of the country, the priority of Soviet laws over the various 'declarations of state sovereignty' in the republics was asserted, and the membership of the coup committee was announced.

In connection with the inability of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev to perform his duties of president of the USSR on account of the state of his health, and

the transfer of the powers of the president of the USSR to Gennadii Ivanovich Yanaev, vice-president of the USSR, in accordance with Article 127.7 of the USSR Constitution;

with the aim of overcoming the profound and comprehensive crisis, political and civil conflict, the confrontation between nationalities, and the chaos and anarchy that threaten the lives and security of the citizens of the Soviet Union and the sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and independence of our fatherland;

proceeding from the results of the nationwide referendum on the preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

guided by the vitally important interests of the peoples of our homeland and of all Soviet people,

We declare:

1 That, in accordance with Article 127.3 of the USSR Constitution and Article 2 of the USSR law 'On the Legal Conditions Applying in a State of Emergency', and striving to fulfil the demands of broad strata of the population concerning the need to take very decisive measures to prevent society from sliding towards a national catastrophe and to safeguard legality and order, a state of emergency is introduced in certain localities of the USSR for a period of six months, beginning at 4 a.m. Moscow time on 19 August 1991.

2 That it is established that the USSR Constitution and USSR laws have unconditional supremacy throughout the USSR.

3 That, to administer the country and provide effective implementation of the conditions applying in a state of emergency, a State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR (USSR SCSE) is formed, with the following members: O. D. Baklanov, First Vice-Chairman of the USSR Defence Council; V. A. Kryuchkov, Chairman of the USSR Committee for State Security (KGB); V. S. Pavlov, Prime Minister of the USSR; B. K. Pugo, USSR Minister of Internal Affairs; V. A. Starodubtsev, Chairman of the USSR Peasants' Union; A. I. Tizyakov, President of the Association of State Enterprises and Industrial, Construction, Transportation and Communications Facilities; D. T. Yazov, USSR Minister of Defence; and G. I. Yanaev, acting President of the USSR.

4 That unswerving fulfilment of decisions of the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency is mandatory for all bodies of power and administration, officials and citizens throughout the USSR.

G. Yanaev, V. Pavlov, and O. Baklanov

18 August 1991

Sources: Pravda, *Izvestiya*, 20 August 1991, p. 1; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XLIII, no. 33 (18 September 1991), pp. 1-2.

Document 10.27 Resolution No. 1 of the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency

The ban on parties and other organisations, the controls on the media, and the prohibition on rallies and strikes were balanced by a raft of populist measures that the putschists hoped would neutralise opposition to their seizure of power. The resolution sought to ground the acts of the putschists on the Soviet constitution, even as they comprehensively repudiated the changes that Gorbachev had introduced. The very tone of the resolution indicated just how little they understood of the profound processes that had transformed Soviet society, especially during the years of *perestroika*.

For the purpose of protecting the vitally important interests of the peoples and citizens of the USSR and the independence and territorial integrity of the country, restoring legality and law and order, stabilising the situation, overcoming the grave crisis and preventing chaos, anarchy and fratricidal civil war, the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency resolves that:

1 All bodies of power and administration of the USSR, the Union and the autonomous republics, territories, provinces, cities, districts, settlements and villages are to ensure unswerving observance of the conditions applying in a state of emergency in accordance with the USSR law 'On the Legal Conditions Applying in a State of Emergency' and the resolutions of the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency. In cases of inability to ensure fulfilment of these conditions, the powers of the relevant bodies of power and administration are to be suspended, and the performance of their functions is to be assigned to individuals specially empowered by the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency.

2 Structures of power and administration and paramilitary formations acting in defiance of the USSR Constitution and USSR laws are to be immediately disbanded.

3 Laws and decisions of bodies of power and administration that are at variance with the USSR Constitution and USSR laws are henceforth to be considered invalid.

4 Activity by political parties, public organisations and mass movements that impedes the normalisation of the situation is to be suspended.

5 In connection with the fact that the State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR is temporarily assuming the functions of the USSR Security Council, the activity of the latter is suspended.

6 Citizens, institutions and organisations are immediately to surrender all types of firearms, ammunition, explosives and military equipment that are in their possession illegally . . . In cases of refusal, the firearms, etc., are to be taken by force and strict criminal and administrative charges are to be brought against the violators.

7 . . . The holding of rallies, street processions and demonstrations, as well as strikes, is not permitted.

When necessary, a curfew may be introduced, patrolling may be instituted, inspections may be conducted, and measures may be taken to reinforce border and customs regulations.

The most important state and economic facilities, as well as systems providing vital services, are to be taken under control, and, when necessary, put under guard.

The dissemination of inflammatory rumours, actions that provoke violations of law and order and the stirring up of discord between nationalities, and failure to obey officials who are ensuring the observance of the conditions applying in the state of emergency are to be resolutely curbed.

8 Control is to be established over the news media, with the implementation of this control assigned to a specially created agency under the USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency.

9 Organs of power and administration and executives of institutions and enterprises are to take measures to enhance the level of organisation and to establish order and discipline in all spheres of the life of society. The normal functioning of enterprises in all branches of the national economy, the strict fulfilment of measures to preserve and restore – during a period of stabilisation – vertical and horizontal ties among economic-management entities throughout the USSR, and the unswerving fulfilment of established volumes of production and of deliveries of raw and other materials and components are to be ensured.

A policy of strict economising with respect to materials, equipment and currency is to be established and maintained, and concrete measures are to be worked out and implemented to combat the mismanagement and squandering of public property.

A decisive struggle is to be waged against the shadow economy, and inescapable measures of criminal and administrative liability are to be applied in instances of corruption, embezzlement, speculation, the concealment of goods from sale, mismanagement and other law violations in the sphere of the economy.

Favourable conditions are to be created for increasing the real contribution of all types of entrepreneurial activity, carried out in accordance with USSR laws, to the country's economic potential and for providing for the urgent requirements of the population.

10 The holding of a permanent position in the structures of power and administration is to be considered incompatible with participation in entrepreneurial activity.

11 Within one week, the USSR Cabinet of Ministers is to conduct an inventory of all available resources of prime-necessity foodstuffs and industrial commodities, report to the people on what the country has at its

disposal, and put the safekeeping and distribution of these resources under the strictest possible control.

All restrictions impeding the shifting of food and consumer goods from one place to another in the USSR, as well as of material resources for their production, are to be lifted, and observance of this directive is to be strictly monitored.

Special attention is to be given to the top-priority supplying of children's preschool institutions, children's homes, schools, specialised secondary and higher educational institutions and hospitals, as well as of pensioners and disabled persons.

Within one week, proposals are to be submitted on putting in order, freezing and reducing prices for certain types of manufactured goods and foodstuffs, first of all goods for children, services to the population and public catering, and also on increasing wages, pensions, allowances and compensation payments for various categories of citizens.

Within two weeks, measures are to be worked out to put in order the size of salaries for executives at all levels of state, public, co-operative and other institutions, organisations and enterprises.

12 In view of the critical situation regarding harvest operations and the threat of hunger, emergency measures are to be taken to organise the procurement, storage and processing of agricultural output. Rural toilers are to be provided with the greatest possible assistance in the form of equipment, spare parts, fuel and lubricants, etc. The sending of workers and office employees from enterprises and organisations, students and servicemen to the countryside in the numbers needed to save the harvest is to be organised immediately.

13 Within one week, the USSR Cabinet of Ministers is to work out a resolution stipulating the provision, in 1991–1992, of plots of land up to 0.15 hectares in size to all urban residents who wish to use this land to grow fruit and vegetables.

14 Within two weeks, the USSR Cabinet of Ministers is to complete the planning of urgent measures to bring the country's fuel and energy complex out of crisis and to prepare for winter.

15 Within one month, real measures for 1992 aimed at fundamentally improving housing construction and providing housing to the population are to be prepared and reported to the people.

During a six-month period, a concrete five-year programme for accelerated development of state, co-operative and individual housing construction is to be worked out.

16 Central and local bodies of power and administration must devote top priority attention to the social needs of the population. Possibilities for a substantial improvement in free medical services and public education are to be sought out.

Sources: Pravda, Izvestiya, 20 August 1991, p. 1; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XLIII, no. 33 (18 September 1991), pp. 2–4.

Document 10.28 Appeal to the Soviet People

The appeal even more underestimated the changes in public opinion. While there was indeed much concern that *perestroika* had undermined public order and labour discipline, nothing that the putschists stated here offered serious policies to tackle the mounting problems facing the country.

Fellow countrymen! Citizens of the Soviet Union!

At this grave, critical hour for the fate of the fatherland and of our peoples, we appeal to you! A mortal danger threatens our great homeland! For a number of reasons, the policy of reforms begun at the initiative of M. S. Gorbachev and conceived of as a means of ensuring the dynamic development of the country and the democratisation of the life of society has reached an impasse. The initial enthusiasm and hopes have given way to unbelief, apathy and despair. The authorities at all levels have lost the trust of the population. In the life of society, political intrigue has supplanted concern for the fate of the fatherland and the citizen. Malicious mocking of all state institutions is being propagated. In essence, the country has become ungovernable.

Taking advantage of the liberties that have been granted and trampling the shoots of democracy, which have just emerged, extremist forces have come into being and embarked on a course aimed at the liquidation of the Soviet Union, the break-up of the state and the seizure of power at any cost. The results of the nationwide referendum on the unity of the fatherland have been trampled. The cynical exploitation of national feelings is only a screen for satisfying ambitions. These political adventurers are troubled neither by the current misfortunes of their people nor by their future troubles. In creating an atmosphere of psychological and political terror and trying to hide behind the shield of the people's trust, they forget that the ties they are condemning and breaking were established on a basis of far broader popular support – support that, moreover, has undergone the test of history for many centuries. Today those who are essentially working toward the overthrow of the constitutional system should have to answer to mothers and fathers for the deaths of the many hundreds of victims in conflicts between nationalities. The crippled lives of more than half a million refugees are on their conscience. Because of them, tens of millions of Soviet people who only yesterday were living in a united family but today find themselves outcasts in their own homes have lost tranquillity and the joy of life.

The people should decide what the social system should be like, but they are being deprived of this right.

Instead of showing concern for the security and well-being of every citizen and of society as a whole, the people who have acquired power frequently use it for interests that are alien to the people, as a means of unscrupulous self-assertion. The streams of words and mountains of statements and promises only underscore the scanty and wretched nature of their practical deeds. The inflation of power, more frightening than any other kind of inflation, is destroying our state and society. Every citizen feels growing uncertainty about tomorrow and deep concern for the future of his or her children.

The crisis of power has had a catastrophic effect on the economy. The chaotic, ungoverned slide toward a market has caused an explosion of selfishness – regional, departmental, group and personal. The war of laws and the encouragement of centrifugal tendencies have brought about the destruction of a unified national-economic mechanism that took shape over decades. The result is a sharp fall off in the standard of living for the overwhelming majority of Soviet people and the flourishing of speculation and the shadow economy. It is high time to tell the people the truth: unless urgent and resolute measures are taken to stabilise the economy, hunger and a new round of impoverishment are inevitable in the very near future, from which it is only one step to large-scale manifestations of spontaneous discontent, with destructive consequences. Only irresponsible people can set their hopes on some kind of help from abroad. No hand-outs are going to solve our problems; salvation is in our own hands. The time has come to measure the authority of every person or organisation in terms of actual contributions to the restoration and development of the national economy.

For many years, we have heard from all sides incantations about commitment to the interests of the individual, to concern for his rights and social safeguards. But in fact people have been humiliated, their real rights and possibilities have been infringed, and they have been driven to despair. All the democratic institutions created through the expression of the people's will are losing their authority and effectiveness before our very eyes. This is the result of purposeful actions by those who, blatantly flouting the USSR Basic Law, are staging an unconstitutional coup, to all intents and purposes, and longing for unbridled personal dictatorship. Prefectures, mayoralities and other unlawful structures are increasingly supplanting, in an unauthorised way, the Soviets that have been elected by the people.

An offensive against the rights of the working people is under way. The rights to work, education, health care, housing and recreation have been called in question.

Even people's basic personal safety is increasingly under threat. Crime is growing at a rapid rate and is becoming organised and politicised. The country is sinking into an abyss of violence and lawlessness. Never before in the country's history has the propaganda of sex and violence gained such

wide scope, jeopardising the health and lives of future generations. Millions of people are demanding that measures be taken against the octopus of crime and glaring immorality.

The deepening destabilisation of the political and economic situation in the Soviet Union is undermining our position in the world. Revanchist tones have been heard in some places, and demands for the revision of our borders are being put forward. Voices are even being heard calling for the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and for the possible establishment of international trusteeship over certain facilities in regions of the country. Such is the bitter reality. Only yesterday, a Soviet person who found himself abroad felt that he was a worthy citizen of an influential and respected state. Now he is often a second-class foreigner whose treatment bears the imprint of scorn or sympathy.

The pride and honour of Soviet people must be restored in full.

The State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR is fully aware of the depth of the crisis that has struck our country; it is assuming responsibility for the fate of the homeland, and it is fully resolved to take very serious measures to bring the state and society out of crisis as quickly as possible.

We promise to conduct a wide-ranging, nationwide discussion of the draft of a new Union Treaty. Everyone will have the right and opportunity to think about this highly important act in a calm atmosphere and to make up his mind about it, for the fate of the numerous peoples of our great homeland will depend on what the Union will be like.

We intend immediately to restore legality and law and order to put an end to bloodshed, to declare a merciless war against the criminal world, and to eradicate shameful phenomena that discredit our society and degrade Soviet citizens. We will clean the criminal elements from the streets of our cities and put an end to the high-handedness of the plunderers of public property.

We favour truly democratic processes and a consistent policy of reforms leading to the renewal of our homeland and to its economic and social prosperity, which will enable it to take a worthy place in the world community of nations.

The country's development should not be built on a fall-off in the population's living standard. In a healthy society, continual improvement in the well-being of all citizens will become the norm.

Without relaxing concern for strengthening and protecting the rights of the individual, we will focus attention on protecting the interests of the broadest strata of the population, of those who have been hit the hardest by inflation, the disorganisation of production, corruption and crime.

In the process of developing a mixed national economy, we will support private enterprise, providing it with the necessary possibilities for developing production and the service sphere.

Our primary concern will be solving the food and housing problems. All available forces will be mobilised for the satisfaction of these very urgent requirements of the people.

We call on workers, peasants, the working intelligentsia and all Soviet people to restore labour discipline and order in the shortest possible time and to raise the level of production, so as then to move resolutely forward. Our life, the future of our children and grandchildren and the fate of the fatherland will depend on this.

We are a peace-loving country and will unswervingly observe all the commitments we have made. We have no claims against anyone. We want to live in peace and friendship with everyone, but we firmly state that no one will ever be allowed to encroach on our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Any attempts to talk to our country in the language of diktat, no matter where they come from, will be resolutely curbed.

For centuries, our multinational people have been filled with pride in their homeland; we have not been ashamed of our patriotic feelings, and we consider it natural and legitimate to raise present and future generations of citizens of our great power in this spirit.

To do nothing in this critical hour for the fate of the fatherland is to assume a grave responsibility for the tragic, truly unpredictable consequences. Everyone who cherishes our homeland, who wants to live and work in an atmosphere of tranquillity and confidence, who does not accept a continuation of bloody conflicts between nationalities and who sees his fatherland as independent and prosperous in the future must make the only correct choice. We call on all true patriots and people of goodwill to put an end to this time of troubles.

We call on all citizens of the Soviet Union to recognise their duty to the homeland and provide every kind of support to the State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR and to efforts to bring the country out of crisis.

Constructive proposals from public-political organisations, labour collectives and citizens will be gratefully accepted as a manifestation of their patriotic readiness to participate actively in the restoration of a centuries-old friendship in the single family of fraternal peoples and in the revival of the fatherland.

The State Committee for the State of Emergency in the USSR

Sources: Pravda, Izvestiya, 20 August 1991, p. 1; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XLIII, no. 33 (18 September 1991), pp. 4-5.

Document 10.29 Yeltsin's Call for Resistance to the Coup

Yeltsin's response to the attempted coup was swift and unequivocal. The following statement was drafted by Ruslan Khasbulatov, the acting speaker of the Russian parliament, and Anatoly Sobchak, the mayor of Leningrad (soon to be renamed St Petersburg), who happened to be visiting at the time, in the morning of 19 August, at Yeltsin's dacha outside Moscow. Yeltsin then raced into the centre of Moscow and entered the White House without hindrance. There he issued this statement, and organised resistance to the coup. Soon the White House was surrounded by thousands of volunteers, willing to lay down their lives to ensure the continuation of democratic reforms.

To the Citizens of Russia

19 August 1991

On the night of 18 to 19 August 1991 the legally elected president of the country was removed from power. Whatever reasons might be given to justify this removal, we are dealing with a right-wing, reactionary and anti-constitutional coup.

Notwithstanding all the trials and difficulties the people of our country are experiencing, the democratic process in the country is becoming ever deeper and is becoming irreversible. The peoples of Russia are becoming masters of their own fate. The uncontrolled rights of the party and other unconstitutional bodies have been severely curtailed. The Russian leadership has assumed a decisive role in accordance with the Union Treaty, striving to maintain the unity of the Soviet Union and of Russia. Our stand on this question has made it possible substantially to speed up the preparation of the Union Treaty, coordinate it with all the republics, and set the date for its signing – 20 August.

Such a development aroused the animosity of reactionary forces and provoked them to try to solve the most complicated political and economic problems by the use of force. Such actions can only be described as irresponsible and adventuristic. Earlier attempts at a coup had already been made.

We have always considered that the use of force to solve political and economic problems is unacceptable. It discredits the USSR in the eyes of the world and undermines our prestige in the international community, returning us to the Cold War era and the isolation of the Soviet Union from the international community.

We are forced to declare unlawful this so-called committee together with all its decisions and resolutions.

We are convinced that local authorities will unswervingly follow constitutional law and the decrees of the president of the RSFSR.

We call upon the citizens of Russia to give fitting reply to the putschists

and to demand that they immediately return the country to a normal path of constitutional development.

It is of vital importance that President Gorbachev be given the opportunity to address the people. We demand the immediate convocation of an extraordinary session of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR.

We are absolutely convinced that our compatriots will not allow the arbitrary rule and lawlessness of these putschists, men with neither shame nor conscience, to become firmly established. We appeal to the troops to demonstrate a sense of civic duty and not to take part in this reactionary coup.

We call for a general strike until such time as these demands are met. We do not doubt that the international community will correctly evaluate this cynical attempt at a rightist coup.

The President of the RSFSR

B. N. Yeltsin

The Chairman of the Council of Ministers
of the RSFSR

I. S. Silaev

Acting Chair of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR

R. I. Khasbulatov

19 August 1991, 09.00

Read and pass on to others.

Sources: Rossiya, newspaper of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet (special issue), 19 August 1991; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XLIII, no. 33 (18 September 1991), pp. 6-7; a truncated version is reported, with some direct quotations, on p. 2 of Izvestiya, 20 August 1991.

Document 10.30 Yeltsin Decrees the Acts of the SCSE Void

This decree was important because it placed the burden of illegality on to those carrying out the orders of the SCSE, making them liable to prosecution. In another decree issued at the same time, Yeltsin decreed Russia's takeover of all security and military agencies on Russian territory, placing himself temporarily at their head.

In connection with the activities of a group of people, declaring themselves a so-called State Committee for the State of Emergency, decree:

1 The declaration forming the Committee is unconstitutional, the actions of its organisers constitute a coup d'état, being nothing other than an act of treason.

2 All decisions made in the name of the so-called Committee for the State of Emergency to be considered illegal and without force on the territory of the RSFSR. On the territory of the Russian Federation the legally elected authorities in the form of the president, chairman of the Supreme Soviet and

chairman of the Council of Ministers, all state and local organs of power retain their jurisdictions.

3 The activity of responsible persons who fulfil the decisions of the said committee will be judged under the terms of the RSFSR Criminal Code and will be judged according to the law.

The present decree comes into force from the moment of its signing.
President of the RSFSR, B. Yeltsin

Sources: Rossiya, newspaper of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet (emergency issue), 19 August 1991; Kuranty, 19 August 1991 (special edition), p. 1; Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XLIII, no. 33 (18 September 1991), p. 7.

Document 10.31 Yeltsin's Address to the People of 20 August 1991

Only a limited number of republics had agreed to attend the signing ceremony for the Union Treaty on 20 August, yet it would undoubtedly have marked a decisive step in the transformation of the Soviet state into a genuine federal system. It represented not so much social as 'republican' pluralisation of the Soviet Union, enshrining the rights of the republics to conduct their own affairs with only relatively limited rights for the 'centre' in Moscow. Anatoly Lukyanov, Gorbachev's replacement as chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, was not formally a member of the coup committee yet acted as its *éminence grise*. In an article published in *Pravda* on 20 August, he condemned the text of the treaty that was to have been signed that day as failing to establish a single economic space and a unified banking system, and for not having unequivocally asserted the priority of the centre's laws. Yeltsin's view was very different.

The coup took place on 19 August. The date – this is absolutely clear – was chosen not at random: the last day before the signing of the new Union Treaty. The treaty, which, despite all the compromises, would have put an end to the absolute power of the CPSU and the military-industrial complex.

I listen to the speeches of the organisers of the coup and am amazed: what a degree of moral decline. Yesterday they stigmatised the Russian leadership for allegedly not wanting to sign the Union Treaty. Today they try to convince the people that our desire to sign it is directed towards the destruction of the renewal of the Union.

Objectively the new Union Treaty deprived practically every single member of the coup of possibilities. This is the secret of the coup. This is the main motive for the actions of its participants. Their lofty phrases about the fate of the motherland is no more than a game to cover their personal mercenary interests.

I mentioned the CPSU on purpose. We will not close our eyes – it was precisely this party that became the ‘organiser and inspirer’ of the coup. The committee dissolved all parties by decree, except the Communist. All newspapers were banned, except communist ones. Is that not so? I am convinced that the time will come and the leading group in the CPSU will disown any participation in this evil act against the people. But it is unlikely that demagoguery will be able to cover the main essence of its activity – the struggle against the people to preserve its privileges.

I want once again forcefully to declare: all that has passed in the last few days is nothing other than a coup d’état. Its leaders are nothing other than state criminals.

20 August 1991

Boris Yeltsin

President of the Russian Federation

Source: *Obshchaya gazeta*, 21 August 1991.

Document 10.32 The Suspension of the Russian Communist Party

The CPSU had not been directly involved in the coup, yet many of its central bodies were, at the least, acquiescent, and had done nothing to defend their own General Secretary, Gorbachev. The party in Russia was suspended on 23 August, its property was sequestered, and the party was then banned by a presidential decree on 6 November.

Acting on the territory of the RSFSR and not registered in the required way, the Communist Party of the RSFSR supported the so-called USSR State Committee for the State of Emergency, carrying out a coup d’état and forcefully removing from power the president of the USSR. In a number of regions of the RSFSR, with the direct participation of republican, *krai* and *oblast* organs of the RSFSR Communist Party, emergency committees (commissions) were established, which was a crude violation of the USSR law ‘On Social Organisations’.

Organs of the RSFSR Communist Party in republics, *krais* and *oblasts* frequently and against the RSFSR Constitution interfered in the judicial process, and obstructed the fulfilment of the decree of the RSFSR president of 20 July 1991 ‘On the ending of the activity of the organisational structures of political parties and mass social movements in state organs, institutions and organisations of the RSFSR’.

On the basis of the above I resolve:

1 The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR and the RSFSR Procuracy are to investigate the facts of the anti-constitutional activity of organs of the

Communist Party of the RSFSR. The relevant material is to be sent for examination by judicial organs.

2 To suspend the activity of the organs and organisations of the Communist Party of the RSFSR until the conclusive resolution of the issue of the anti-constitutional activity of the RSFSR Communist Party by the courts.

3 The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR is to protect the property and financial resources of the organs and organisations of the Communist Party of the RSFSR up to the adoption of final decisions by the courts . . .

President of RSFSR B. N. Yeltsin

23 August 1991

Source: *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 27 August 1991.

The End of the USSR

Following the coup the USSR Congress of People's Deputies dissolved itself, and the highest body of power became the State Council, composed of the leaders of the republics and chaired by Gorbachev. At its first meeting on 6 September 1991 the USSR State Council recognised the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Despite the results of the March referendum, the unity of the Union never recovered from the blow delivered by the coup, and by the end of the year Russia had taken over many of the functions hitherto fulfilled by the centre. The overwhelming vote in favour of Ukrainian independence on 1 December sounded the death knell for the USSR. By the end of the year the country no longer existed.

Document 10.33 Declaration Establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

On 7–8 December the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus met at a hunting lodge in Belovezhskaya Pushcha in Belarus; an agreement was signed in Minsk on 8 December. They had gathered in the knowledge that with Ukrainian independence the chances of maintaining even a slimmed down USSR no longer appeared viable.

We, leaders of the Republics of Belarus, RSFSR, Ukraine,

- noting that negotiations to prepare a new Union Treaty have entered a dead end, the objective process of republics leaving the USSR and the formation of independent states has become a real fact;
- ascertaining that the short-sighted policies of the centre led to a profound economic and political crisis, to the destruction of output, the catastrophic fall in the standards of living of practically all strata of society;

Relations between members of the Commonwealth will be conducted on the principles of equality through coordinating institutions, formed on a parity basis and operating in a manner defined by agreements between the members of the Commonwealth, which is neither a state nor a supranational body.

To ensure international strategic stability and security a single united command over military-strategic forces will be preserved and a single control over nuclear weapons; the parties will respect their mutual aim to achieve the status of non-nuclear and (or) neutral states.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is open with the agreement of all of its members for other members of the former USSR to join, as well as other states sharing the aims and principles of the Commonwealth.

The commitment to cooperation in the formation and development of a common economic space is affirmed, of the general European and Eurasian markets.

With the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ceases to exist.

The member states of the Commonwealth guarantee in accordance with their constitutions procedures for the fulfilment of international commitments arising from treaties and agreements of the former USSR.

The member states of the Commonwealth commit themselves to the undeviating observance of the principles of this declaration.

For the Republic of Azerbaijan	A. Mutalibov
For the Republic of Armenia	L. Ter-Petrosyan
For the Republic of Belarus	S. Shushkevich
For the Republic of Kazakhstan	N. Nazarbaev
For the Republic of Kyrgyzstan	A. Akaev
For the Republic of Moldova	M. Snegur
For the Russian Federation (RSFSR)	B. Yeltsin
For the Republic of Tajikistan	R. Nabiev
For Turkmenistan	S. Niyazov
For the Republic of Uzbekistan	I. Karimov
For Ukraine	L. Kravchuk

Sources: Pravda, Izvestiya, 23 December 1991; Rossiiskaya gazeta, 24 December 1991.

Document 10.37 Gorbachev's Resignation, 25 December 1991

After six years at the helm Gorbachev had seen the whole mighty power of the Communist Party and the Soviet state evaporate, and now the country itself had disappeared. His evaluation of what he had achieved in those years was fair. This was his last broadcast as leader; on 31 December 1991 the USSR was formally dissolved. His final words are a fitting epitaph for the USSR.

Dear Compatriots, Citizens,

Arising from the developing situation with the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, my work in the post of president of the USSR has come to an end. I am taking this decision on the grounds of principle. I strongly spoke out in favour of the autonomy and independence of peoples, for the sovereignty of republics. But at the same time I defended the preservation of the Union state, for the integrity of the country. Events took a different path. The line favouring the dismemberment of the country and the separation of states, with which I cannot agree, triumphed.

After the Alma Ata meeting and the adoption there of decisions my position on this has not changed. Moreover, I am convinced that decisions of such a scale should be adopted on the basis of a popular plebiscite. Nevertheless, I will do all that I can so that the agreements signed there will lead to real consensus in society, ease the resolution of the crisis and the reform process. Appearing before you for the last time as president of the USSR, I consider it essential to state my evaluation of the path taken since 1985 . . .

- The totalitarian system has been liquidated, which deprived the country of becoming successful and flourishing.
- A breakthrough on the path of democratic transformation has been achieved. Free elections, freedom of the press, religious freedom, representative bodies of power, multi-partyism, have all become real. Human rights have been accepted as the highest principle.
- The movement towards a multi-layered economy has begun, the equality of all forms of property has been affirmed . . .

We are living in a different world:

- We have put an end to the 'Cold War', the arms race has been ended and so too the senseless militarisation of the country, which deformed our economy, popular consciousness and morality. The threat of world war has been lifted . . .
- We have opened the world, rejecting interference in the affairs of others, the use of troops outside the country . . .
- We have become one of the main bulwarks for the restructuring of contemporary civilisation on a peaceful, democratic basis.
- Nations and peoples have gained the real freedom to choose their own path of self-determination . . .

All these changes demanded enormous work and took place in sharp struggle, with growing resistance of the old, redundant and reactionary forces, including the former party-state structures, and the economic apparatus, and indeed our habits, ideological prejudices, levelling and dependency psychology. They played on our lack of tolerance, low level of political culture, fear of changes . . .

It seems to me vital to preserve the democratic gains of recent years. They have been achieved through the suffering of our entire history, our tragic experience . . .

I am leaving my post worried. But also with hope, with faith in you, in your wisdom and spiritual strength. We are the legatees of a great civilisation, and it now depends on each and every one for it to be reborn to the new contemporary and worthy life.

Source: Rossiiskaya gazeta, 27 December 1991.

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