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**The Abortive Soviet Coup of 1991 - IV**

**Lead: With the world holding its breath, hard-line Communists led by the KGB, in late summer 1991 arrested Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, and tried to take over the government. A man of courage climbed onto an armored vehicle and stopped them dead.**

**Intro. *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: As Muscovites headed to work on Monday August 19th, they had to deal with troops and tanks lining the streets. The coup leaders**

**who called themselves the Extraordinary Commission had banned all demonstrations, political parties, and newspapers not associated with their movement, but did not have in custody all their opponents. The President of the Russian Republic, Boris Yeltsin, a former ally of Gorbachev who broke with him because his reforms did not go far enough, after initial hesitation, went to the Russian Parliament Building to oppose the coup. Finally, assured that at least some of the military units in the Moscow region would back him, just after noon he climbed onto an armored vehicle, pronounced the coup illegal and unconstitutional, and called for a general strike and for the return of Gorbachev. By the next morning**

**150,000 Russians stood outside the Parliament Building and several army units had joined the countercoup. By Tuesday evening it was clear that to succeed the Extraordinary Commission would need to use deadly force and this the leaders hesitated to do. That night, a small scuffle between protesters and a tank produced the only three deaths in their attempt to seize power. On Wednesday the coup collapsed. That night Gorbachev was back in Moscow.**

**The 1991 Revolution sputtered out because it was poorly planned, military and KGB leaders were divided, and Russian troops were reluctant to open fire on Russian civilians, but above all the plotters**

**failed to realize the radical political and social transformation that had occurred in the Soviet Union since Gorbachev took power in 1985. The world had passed them by. The courageous stand of Yeltsin and his allies had saved Russia, at least for the time being, for democracy and economic reform.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Black, Joseph Laurence. *Into the Dustbin of History: The USSR from Coup to Commonwealth, August-December 1991: A Documentary Narrative*. Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1993.**

**Durgo, A.S. *Russia Changes: The Events of August 1991 and the Russia Constitution.* Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishing Company, 1992.**

**Gorbachev, Mikhail Sergeevich. *The August Coup: The Truth and the Lessons.* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.**

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