

Volume 3

Number 049

The Abortive Soviet Coup of 1991 - II

Lead: Frustrated as reality and the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev dismantled their system of control, hard-line Communists led by the KGB attempted to hold back the march of events with a coup d'etat in the summer of 1991.

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

Content: Since 1985 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had pressed the nation away from totalitarianism toward openness and democracy. He had been less successful in reforming

the economy. Gorbachev had come to power through the ranks of the Communist Party and was reluctant to jettison the main outlines of the old regime. He was a temporizer who rejected the command economy and the Stalinism that was required to keep it operating but as it crumbled, he was unable or unwilling to create a free market to take its place.

In the meantime, those who had a lasting stake in the survival of the Communist system were doing a slow burn. Its power and prestige ebbing, in 1990 the Communist Party had its guaranteed monopoly on political power taken away by the Congress of People's Deputies. Gorbachev had allowed non-communist governments

to take power in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. The constituent republics that made up the Soviet Union were agitating for more freedom and some were seeking independence.

Gorbachev, faced with mounting ethnic violence in several of the southern republics, a deteriorating economy at home, and rising public frustration with his half-way measures, abruptly changed directions in the fall of 1990 and brought a number of hard-line conservatives into his government. This may have signaled weakness and lack of resolve on his part. The following summer his new allies turned against him. On August 18, 1991, just two days before

**he was to sign a treaty giving the republics more power, they struck.
Next time: The failed coup.**

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

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.