

A Revolution of Reform

The goal of the August 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union was a return to the status quo and perceived stability of the past — a turning back of the clock on the political and economic reforms introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev.

The coup couldn't have failed more miserably. Not only did its eight reactionary leaders make the Soviet people realize they wanted no part of a return to the old days, the coup leaders also stirred up a tidal wave of change that eroded the foundations of the country they dreamed of controlling.

While its ramifications will continue to be felt for years to come, the attempted coup has already resulted in an exciting acceleration in the process of democratization and the conversion to market-based economies throughout the vast region; rapid changes in the roles of international diplomacy; the redrawing of maps; and a tinkering with the old equation of nuclear balance of power.

Canadian Support for the New States

Canada has been quick to react to the successive waves of change, through both its official recognition of the independence of the new countries and its offers of assistance.

Less than a week after the coup, the Canadian government established diplomatic relations with the three Baltic States, whose annexation by the U.S.S.R. more than five decades ago had never been accepted by Canada. As Secretary of State for External Affairs Barbara McDougall pointed out, "Canada main-

tained *de jure* recognition against the day when Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia would be free to reclaim their independence. That day has come."

The Canadian government was the first major industrialized power to recognize the independence of Ukraine, just one day after its December 1, 1991, independence referendum. In making the announcement, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said the vote testifies to the strong desire of the people of Ukraine for an independent country.

By the end of 1991, Canada had forged new relationships with all 15 of the countries that had emerged from the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. In addition to diplomatic links with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Canada recognized the independence of the other 12 former republics and moved to establish diplomatic relations with two (Russia and Ukraine).

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has sought the same list of assurances from all countries wanting to establish diplomatic relations with Canada — assurance that they plan to comply with existing arms control, disarmament and other international agreements and that they adhere to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) documents, particularly those concerning full respect for human rights and protection of minorities. Canada has also asked that those countries with nuclear weapons on their territories

ensure that those weapons remain under secure control until their disposal.

In early January, the world witnessed the extraordinary phenomenon of the delivery of an emergency shipment of milk powder to Moscow by a Canadian Forces airplane assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), whose original mandate was to stand on guard against the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. That remarkable shipment represents the beginning of an enormous effort by Canada and the rest of the international community to help the region through its first difficult winter.

Humanitarian and Technical Assistance

The Canadian government donated \$5 million to the Canadian Red Cross for humanitarian assistance to countries of the former U.S.S.R. A further \$1 million was given to the Canadian Red Cross for relief work in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The funds were earmarked for medicaments and medical and other supplies for the elderly and children in institutions of care. The Canadian Forces airlifted the goods to cities in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Armenia. Once on the ground, the goods were



A young Edmonton woman wipes her eye during a memorial service for victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.