On Monday, Ukraine will celebrate 35th anniversary of its Declaration of Independence on August 24, 1991

Members of Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada bringing the flag into the chamber on August 24, 1991.

On August 24, 1991, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, meeting unusually on a Saturday after the attempted coup in Moscow earlier in the week against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, resolved that "Ukraine shall be declared an independent democratic state on August 24, 1991. Upon declaration of its independence, only its Constitution, laws, orders of the Government, and other legislative acts of the republic are valid on the territory of Ukraine. A republican referendum shall be organized on Dec. 1, 1991 to confirm the act of declaration of independence."

The Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine stated: "In view of the mortal danger surrounding Ukraine in connection with the state coup in the USSR on August 19, 1991, Continuing the thousand-year tradition of state development in Ukraine, Proceeding from the right of a nation to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal documents, and Implementing the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic solemnly declares **Independence of Ukraine and creation of the independent Ukrainian state - UKRAINE.** The territory of Ukraine is indivisible and inviolable. From this day forward, the Constitution and laws of Ukraine only are valid on the territory of Ukraine. This act comes into force upon its approval."

The Act was approved by the Verkhovna Rada by a vote of 321 in favor, 2 against, and 6 abstentions. On Dec. 1, 1991, the Act of Declaration of Independence was approved in a referendum in which 84.18 percent of the registered voters participated by 92.26 percent of those who voted. 7.74 percent voted against the Act and 2.1 percent abstained or cast an invalid ballot. On the same day, a presidential election took place and Leonid Kravchuk, the chairman of the Rada running as an independent, was elected with 61.59 percent of the vote over five other candidates. Soon after the results were announced, USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev sent Kravchuk a telegram expressing his hope that Ukraine with Kravchuk as president would assist in implementing Gorbachev's ambition to form "a union of sovereign states." But Kravchuk subsequently cooperated instead with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in bringing about the end of the Gorbachev presidency and the demise of the USSR on Dec. 25, 1991.

In a video recorded in Sumy and posted on August 24 two years ago, President Zelenskyy said, "Independence is the silence we experience when we lose our people. Independence descends into the shelter during an air raid, only to endure and rise again and again to tell the enemy 'You will achieve nothing'. Those who seek to sow evil on our land will reap its fruits on their own soil…. This is how independence responds." Those words still apply today.

David R. Cameron
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