


# The creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

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Gorbachev, still President of the USSR — having been elected on 1 March 1990 by the Soviet deputies after obtaining the necessary amendment to the Constitution — tried, in vain, to have a treaty of economic union adopted. On 3 December he issued a dramatic appeal to prevent disintegration of the Union. On 8 December, however, the Presidents of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, meeting in Minsk, decided that ‘the Soviet Union as a geopolitical reality and a subject of international law has ceased to exist’. They signed an accord establishing a Commonwealth of Sovereign States open to all the States of the former USSR. Gorbachev had no option but to endorse this solution. On 21 December, at a meeting in Alma-Ata, eight other republics joined the initial three. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) thus came to be established. It comprised 11 republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan (formal membership in 1993), Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova (formal membership in 1994), Uzbekistan (formal membership in 1992), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Georgia refused to sign the Declaration of Alma-Ata. The same day, the 11 signatories informed Gorbachev that the USSR and his role as President had ceased to exist. Gorbachev resigned on 25 December.