

Soviet-East European Survey, 1986–1987

Selected Research and
Analysis from Radio Free
Europe/Radio Liberty

Edited by
Vojtech Mastny



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Survey, 1986-1987**



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Foreword

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is well-known for broadcasting news and information to millions of listeners in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In order to be an effective surrogate home service, RFE/RL has built up over the years a large research capacity, where Western-trained specialists describe and analyze developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union by drawing on radio and television monitoring, Soviet and East European print media, and Western scholarly publications. They also make use of RFE/RL's archives and library, which includes many samizdat publications as well as more than 120,000 volumes in 30 languages.

In short, RFE/RL is not only an international broadcaster, it is also one of the world's major research organizations on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Its regular research reports are considered invaluable by scholars, journalists, and government officials. The work done by RFE/RL's able research staff not only helps to make RFE/RL's broadcasts accurate and incisive, it also provides useful information for those who, like myself, are involved in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

Several years ago, RFE/RL decided to make these reports more accessible to the general reader by having a distinguished scholar select the most important ones to be included in an annual volume. Last year's volume was introduced by my distinguished colleague in the Senate, Claiborne Pell. I am most happy to have been asked to provide a foreword for this volume, which I am certain will be just as helpful to me as the previous three volumes have been. As someone who has closely followed the activities

of RFE/RL in my many years on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I am glad to see that this annual series is making RFE/RL's work more widely known.

Dante B. Fascell
Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Representatives

Editor's Acknowledgments

The preparation of the fourth volume of *Soviet/East European Survey* posed several challenges that had not been present before.

First, as the reform movement under Gorbachev gained momentum, the sheer amount of events deserving close attention has vastly increased; at the same time, the space available in the book has diminished.

Second, a visit to the Soviet Union shortly after the start of the editing provided the editor with a first-hand experience of observing the "restructuring" in action and inaction--an added perspective which necessitated a partial restructuring of the book as well.

Third, the transfer of the publication from Duke University Press to Westview Press, which has resulted in a shortening of the production schedule by half, has meant more work, less time, and additional responsibilities for the editor and his staff.

That these responsibilities were discharged as required has been very much an accomplishment of Clodagh Devlin, an exemplary editor and excellent colleague. At the crucial stage when a complex new word-processing system had to be applied, Clari Kovacs contributed her unmatched three-year experience with the project as a typist while Claude Spiese supplied his special computer expertise; both were indispensable in ensuring a product of high technical quality.

My graduate students Maureen Gay, of Boston University, and Meredith Heiser, of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, helped most efficiently to expedite the proof-reading at very short notice. Evan A. Raynes, the author of the index to volume one, again deserves gratitude for compiling the index to the present volume.

In Munich, RFE's deputy director of research Vladimir Kusin consistently provided the necessary administrative support, as well as expert advice, during the editing

stage. Chris Willcox, special assistant to the President of RFE/RL, and Stephen Miller, the publications director in Washington, played crucial roles in implementing the transition to the new publisher.

An auspicious launching of the volume at Westview Press has been made possible by the personal interest of its director, Frederick A. Praeger, and the careful attention given to the project by Susan McEachern.

Vojtech Mastny
Boston

INTRODUCTION

PROGRESS TOWARD PLURALIZATION

Vojtech Mastny

During his second year in power as supreme Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev proved the fallacy of the facile and seemingly safe assumption made by the majority of Western observers who had been predicting for years that "muddling through" would be the Kremlin's way for the foreseeable future. By mid-1987, only a minority of Western conservatives, who shared with their Soviet counterparts a predilection for the familiar pattern of East-West confrontation, still preferred to believe that Moscow's quest for change was not genuine or sufficiently important.

Legitimate differences of opinion, to be sure, could be entertained about the manner and degree in which the Soviet leadership intended to reform the system to whose revitalization it was so obviously committed. It also remained unclear to what extent the intended changes could actually be implemented given both the subjective limitations in the minds of the reformers and the objective obstacles in the environment that surrounded them. But regardless of these uncertainties, prospects of the system's eventual pluralization appeared brighter than perhaps at any time since its inception. This sudden opening of new perspectives in a country long judged incapable of providing any transcending policies and personalities was enough reason for excitement but also for care in estimating the nature and pace of the prospective pluralization.

The impetus for change emanated almost entirely from above while the great mass of the Soviet people remained largely inert. Such a pattern of reform was in keeping with earlier Russian traditions, and therefore presumably well-suited to the country's needs. By the same token, it stood in contrast with the attempts at reform previously undertaken in Eastern Europe during which the people had typically played a more active role, often forcing the hands of their rulers. Moscow's example could not be readily replicated in its dependencies, and thus added new strains to the already complicated triangular relationship between the Soviet Union, the East European

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regimes, and the East European peoples. At the same time, the absence of a foreign power capable of intervening and quashing the striving for change gave Gorbachev the one crucial advantage that all East European reformers lacked.

During his first year in office, Gorbachev had projected the image of a cautious, reluctant and somewhat disingenuous reformer, concerned with the appearance rather than the substance of change, and with the limits rather than the possibilities of reform. He had not seemed to see, or had not wanted to see, the urgency of truly radical changes that most outside observers agreed the country needed in order to function as a modern society. Although he had displayed impressive skill in consolidating his power, he had not given signs of having a clear concept of what to with it.

The subsequent year proved that the initial impression was incorrect, or at least misleading. It could not be immediately determined whether the General Secretary was being driven to assume more radical positions because of the pressure of circumstances, as his predecessor Nikita S. Khrushchev had often been. The regime understandably took pains to distance itself from this ill-fated reformer whose career had ended in his fall from power. More to the point, Gorbachev's style showed little affinity with Khrushchev's predilection for genial improvisation. And it suggested a greater capacity to keep potential opponents constantly off balance by having everyone guess what the next step would be. But this technique did not preclude a sufficiently clear concept of what was eventually to be accomplished.

Gorbachev's design could be gleaned from his numerous speeches, which cynics at first mistakenly dismissed as a substitute for action, and from what his regime did and allowed to happen. The design was in no sense of the Western liberal variety. It envisaged not less government, but a better government, founded on competence rather than popular will; it aimed at improving the society rather than the individual. It sought to transform the country's ruling establishment from an obstacle to change to an instrument of change, rather than to rely on generating popular enthusiasm for reform, which might initially be in short supply.

The vision implied in the flood of new legislation was not that of a free society but of a well-ordered society, where laws would set clear limits on both authority and individual freedom. In such a society, predictability would foster progress and the need for coercion would

presumably diminish, thus resulting in a greater measure of general happiness. Enlightened legislation without any significant institutional changes was thus to pave the Soviet Union's path to the ranks of modern civilized nations.

Gorbachev's quest for a government based on the rule of law echoed the nineteenth-century German concept of a *Rechtsstaat*, which had been filtered into the Kremlin through Marxism. However, the indispensability of a supreme ruler, rather than reliance on the State as an institution, classified Gorbachev's approach as more specifically Russian. It was reminiscent of the kind of changes that had made late nineteenth-century Czarist Russia a much better place to live than before--even if not quite good enough by contemporary European standards. Nor was that period to be forgotten as one of impressive economic growth and great cultural achievement.

While the implementation of Gorbachev's design remained uneven, it was remarkable how much, not how little, was happening. Although the economic reform might be seen as the part of the program most suited to command the necessary minimum of consensus, the regime shifted its priorities toward the much more divisive area of political reform. It was in this area that the most startling developments occurred, many of them all but inconceivable only a few months before.

In molding the bureaucracy to his purposes, Gorbachev gave substance to the word "radical" which he frequently used to describe the kind of change he sought. His public statements dwelt on the clash of interests and ideas that his push for restructuring (*perestroika*) ignited within the Soviet establishment, particularly during the plenum of the party Central Committee in January 1987. Although the details of what happened were kept from the public, successive postponements of the meeting were as suggestive of the seriousness of the disagreements as Gorbachev's subsequent allusions to the plenum as a watershed were of their resolution on his terms. The cleansing of the government and party apparatus, resulting in dismissals, trials, even executions, may have merely touched the tip of an iceberg. It still served to impress on the officialdom that the abuse of power does not always pay and on the populace that justice could sometimes be done.

Not even the KGB, the notorious Soviet security agency, was exempt from the housecleaning, as exemplified by the publicity given in March 1987 to the punishment of

its officials guilty of muzzling a reporter. This did not necessarily mean that the role of the organization was diminishing. Gorbachev, once a protégé of KGB chief Iurii Andropov, had benefited from its support during his rise to power. He also needed it for the present and the future because of its particular concern with efficiency and the gathering of accurate information--two pillars of successful restructuring. The agency tended to attract to its service some of the best and brightest people indispensable for a reform Gorbachev-style. And there was a special role for the KGB as a guardian of the rule of law--a conversion of the poacher into the gamekeeper indicative of the peculiar paths of progress in the Russian milieu.

The maintenance of instruments of totalitarianism did not preclude a reduction of the regime's totalitarian aspirations, as the Yugoslav party had done after its break with Moscow. Leading Soviet commentator Fedor Burlatskii explained that democratization meant less of the government's direct involvement in different areas of public life. And indeed, the authorities proved willing to tolerate unprecedented manifestations of spontaneity, such as the demonstration of Crimean Tatar activists in downtown Moscow in the summer of 1987. Yet the inability of the demonstrators to obtain the high-level hearing they sought, much less a redress of their grievances, served as a reminder that democratization was not democracy.

The difference underlay also the experiment with contested local elections, first implemented in June 1987. The availability of alternative candidates, who had to defend their records and justify their promises to their constituents, was certainly a striking novelty in the Soviet setting, as was the failure of some of the uncontested candidates to receive enough votes to get elected. Yet for the rank and file of the population, this was one of the less consequential innovations of Gorbachev's program. In a nation unaccustomed to genuine electoral process, the cumbersome and ostensibly haphazard selection of officials by popular vote held less promise of improvement than straightforward co-optation of competent individuals by well-meaning authorities acting on the people's behalf.

If the goal of democratization was not democracy, neither was the goal of liberalization liberty. Gorbachev's *glasnost*, not quite adequately rendered into English as "openness" or "transparency," differed in both concept and practice from the freedom of expression that was part of

the Western political tradition. It was a policy, not a right; it was incremental, not given. It stemmed from the belief that matters affecting the public should proceed sufficiently in the public view to convince the people that the authorities cared. There was to be less secrecy and distortion of what was happening and more open discussion about what should be done. A tool of restructuring, *glasnost* was to revitalize the political process by exposing corruption and incompetence, by identifying problems and their solutions, and by keeping performance in the limelight.

Within the Soviet context, the limitations of *glasnost* were less significant than its potential. By 1987 the changes in what was allowed to be said publicly were the most impressive part of restructuring. And Gorbachev kept exhorting his audiences to be more outspoken rather than to mind the limits. After all, the limits were being tested less by the opponents of the regime--as would have been the case in Eastern Europe--than by its supporters, especially from among the intelligentsia. Applied deliberately rather than impulsively, *glasnost* lacked the explosive potential of Khrushchev's earlier liberalization policies--or so at least it must have seemed to a leadership more safely in power than he had ever been.

Without abandoning censorship, the regime granted editors a measure of discretion in deciding what to publish that they had not experienced since the nineteenth--twenties--the vaunted "golden" years of Soviet rule. Much of what seemed daring probably still appeared on command; on a widening range of topics, however, editors could exercise their own judgment if they wished. Most of them did not, thus keeping the bulk of the Soviet press still excruciatingly boring. But growing numbers of them did, thus making some of it more interesting than anything that was being published in Eastern Europe, with the usual exceptions of Poland and Yugoslavia.

True to tradition, creative writers and artists were in the forefront of exploring the frontiers of *glasnost* in a country accustomed to addressing its big problems through the medium of art and expecting satisfying rather than conclusive answers. The removal of taboos on previously forbidden authors--Nikolai Gumilev, Boris Pasternak, Evgenii Zamiatin, Vladimir Nabokov--was therefore an intensely political event. Novelists and playwrights, rather than academic historians, were also the ones to pioneer the rediscovery of the myth-ridden Soviet history, even of such eminent nonpersons as Nikolai Bukharin and Lev

Trotskii. The result was not necessarily a complete or accurate picture; it was a liberating experience all the same.

In its willingness to air controversial issues, the Soviet leadership sometimes proved more tolerant than the Soviet people. It not only stopped jamming the broadcasts of the Voice of America and the BBC but also allowed unrehearsed television interviews with both ordinary Western citizens and outspoken Western statesmen, including British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US Secretary of State George Shultz. The experiment proved controversial: some of the domestic audiences resented the use of the nation's media to convey Western views, particularly if the Soviet participants in the discussions failed to parry them effectively.

In acknowledging the dark sides of the system under which they lived, national pride and self-respect were much more at stake for the Russians than for most East Europeans; the system, after all, was their own rather than a foreign import. Many an ordinary Soviet citizen therefore tended to regard public admission that such social problems as prostitution, drug addiction, or violent crime existed and were getting worse as gratuitous disservice to the nation rather than the necessary beginning of its rehabilitation. The regime nevertheless proceeded to acknowledge severe deterioration even in such fundamental areas of socialism's alleged superiority over capitalism as free health care or collectivized agriculture--if only to emphasize that the fundamentals must not be abandoned.

While the alleviation of the Soviet Union's social problems depended very much on the progress of the radical economic reform Gorbachev had been enunciating, the economy seemed to be performing less than satisfactorily during his second year, although it was difficult to ascertain just how much. In particular, reliable statistics were still missing, thus suggesting that the previously advertised "acceleration" did not have enough results to show. Nor was the word itself being used so often any more. Some of the crucial reforms, such as decentralization of the state enterprise, could not possibly produce quick results. But others, which could have produced such results, notably the encouragement of private enterprise that had proved so eminently successful in China, simply did not go far enough in the Soviet Union. And there was a lingering suspicion that, in anticipation of the modest results, the targets may not have been set that high in the first place.

In some areas, more visible in Eastern Europe than in the Soviet Union, environmental destruction set an "ecological barrier" to further economic expansion. But the more fundamental obstacles to growth were other than economic--enough reason for Gorbachev to turn his attention to political reform. There was, however, an economic price for political reform, just as there was a political price for economic reform. In particular, the campaign against corruption disturbed the system of personal connection which had kept the economy before an adequate substitute could be provided. Yet political stability could be endangered by such imperative economic measures as the abolition of food subsidies and guaranteed wages. The faster pace of political rather than of economic change made the resulting tensions more dangerous still.

While the future of domestic reform thus remained in doubt, Moscow's "new thinking" in foreign affairs produced some of the most encouraging changes since Stalin's time. The Soviets seemed to have grasped that their massive investment in military power during the previous decade did not give them the security they desired and proved in fact counterproductive in provoking the Western rearmament that had reduced their earlier strategic gains. Dwelling on the importance of international rather than merely national security, Moscow accepted the notion of the interdependence of nations and postulated a growing role of the political rather than military aspects of security. These were risky propositions, considering the West's overwhelming superiority in nonmilitary attributes of power. Yet Gorbachev evidently decided to take the risks by becoming the first Soviet leader to propose radical reductions of the strategic arsenals along lines compatible with the prevalent Western thinking.

So radical and unexpected was Gorbachev's proposal to phase out both superpowers' long-range strategic missiles, submitted in October 1986 during the preliminary summit meeting at Reykjavik, that it caught US President Ronald Reagan unprepared. As if unable to differentiate between the proposal and the abolition of all nuclear weapons, which would have forced the West to abandon its long-established strategy of deterrence, the President inexplicably signaled his approval for the more sweeping option, thus prompting Gorbachev to play for the highest stakes. But by insisting that the United States discard the program of Strategic Defense Initiative, which Washington had made the centerpiece of its security policy, the Soviet leader overplayed his hand, causing the summit

to eventually collapse without any agreement other than to continue negotiations.

By coming so close to, but not achieving, a landmark deal which would have greatly diminished the standing of the Soviet military, Gorbachev made himself vulnerable in a manner similar to that which had precipitated the downfall of Khrushchev two decades before. It was symptomatic of his tactical skill, as well as of the relative insignificance of the Soviet military as an independent political force, that his position nevertheless suffered no perceptible damage. Not only did Moscow continue to negotiate deep reductions of nuclear armaments but it also indicated a willingness to expand the talks to take into account its vastly superior conventional forces--for the West the acid test of Soviet intentions. And when in May 1987 the young West German amateur pilot Matthias Rust humiliated the Soviet professionals by flying his tiny plane through their elaborate air defenses and landing it on Moscow's Red Square, Gorbachev used the embarrassment to assert his authority even more by replacing the Minister of Defense and shaking up other top brass as well.

By that time, the arms control negotiations had slowed down, raising new questions about Soviet willingness to make concessions. But the delays were the result less of the Kremlin's reassessment of the desirability of an agreement than of the dissension within and among the NATO governments that provided it with tempting opportunities to exploit the differences to Soviet advantage. The belief nevertheless prevailed that substantive accords, particularly the total elimination of intermediate nuclear missiles, were well within reach.

With the notable exception of arms control, Gorbachev's foreign policy was so far still lacking the drama inherent in his domestic policies. In his July 1986 Vladivostok speech, the General Secretary re-emphasized his country's role as an Asian power. His conciliatory tone suggested tantalizing possibilities--growing likelihood of Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan, progress toward accommodation with China, settlement of the territorial dispute with Japan--but produced no tangible results. Nor did Moscow's diplomatic penetration into Southeast Asia beyond Indochina and into the Pacific beyond Japan show signs of a major investment in power and prestige.

While the Soviet Union came nowhere near abdicating its superpower pretensions, clinging especially to the overseas client states it had inherited from the Brezhnev era, neither could it be fairly described as the world's

chief troublemaker. The distinction of arrogantly flouting the accepted norms of international behavior passed onto other countries, such as Iran. Using economic incentives, Moscow tried to maintain and even expand its relations with this truly revolutionary nation. However, it was handicapped by being the main supplier of arms to Iran's mortal enemy, Iraq, and by its own dirty war against Iran's coreligionists in Afghanistan. Having also discovered that it was not immune to the dangers of international terrorism, largely manipulated from Teheran, Moscow was being drawn to the side of the forces of order, seeking termination of the Gulf war without a clear victory by either side. Yet despite the coincidence of Soviet and American interests in that regard, the well-founded mistrust of Moscow's intentions in the region so far prevented concerted action by the two superpowers.

In its quest for greater international respectability, Moscow behaved as if it finally understood the connection between its domestic practices and its acceptance as a desirable partner abroad. At the Vienna follow-up meeting of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCÈ), Soviet representatives proved more amenable than before to discuss specific human rights abuses in their country. They even made the startling proposal to hold a special CSCÈ conference on human rights in Moscow. In all these innovations, it was sometimes difficult to ascertain where public relations ended and serious business began. When pressed about safeguards that would ensure free access to the conference even to dissidents and foreign critics, Soviet spokesmen were evasive, pleading for patience lest excessive pressure jeopardize progress.

In view of the release from confinement of growing numbers of Soviet dissidents, most notably Andrei Sakharov, such pleas may not have been totally disingenuous. They suggested that Moscow indeed wished to be rid of the incessant embarrassing publicity brought about by its repressive practices but was reluctant to do so in any other way than its own. And the Soviet way was to dispose of the most scandalous cases by administrative leniency while introducing new legislation that would henceforth set clear limits on both dissidence and its suppression. The new law on foreign travel, which meant less capriciousness but also reduced opportunities for applicants to exact concessions, was a case in point.

Ferment among Soviet nationalities highlighted the desirability, though not necessarily the feasibility, of reforming cautiously. The outbreak of street violence in

the capital of Kazakhstan, Alma Ata, prompted by the replacement of its corrupt party boss by an ethnic Russian, attested to the explosive potential of Central Asia's demographic balance, increasingly unfavorable to the privileged Russian minorities. Although the opposite applied in the Baltic republics, there it was *glasnost* that encouraged the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to reaffirm their Western-oriented national identities, protesting vigorously the Russianization of the public life and restrictions on native culture and religion.

Ostensibly linguistic and literary endeavors, expressed in proposals to institutionalize the primacy of the native languages in schools and public administration, had the deepest implications in Belorussia and the Ukraine, the Soviet Union's large non-Russian Slavic republics. With signs of support in the highest places, the demands for institutions "national in content and socialist in form," rather than vice versa, echoed Lenin's strictures against "Great Russian chauvinism." Any return to his policies, however, was bound to clash with the resurgent Russian nationalism whose occasionally quasi-fascist manifestations attested to the less attractive features of the nascent pluralization. In May 1987, several hundred adherents of "Pamiat," a group dedicated to promoting respect for the Russian past and also to blaming Jews and Freemasons for the country's ills, took to Moscow's streets and even gained a hearing from the city's party boss.

The Soviet Union aside, nowhere was the ambivalence of Gorbachevism more on display than in Czechoslovakia--the country that two decades earlier had pioneered a congenial attempt at a reform from above yet had since been ruled by a Moscow-imposed regime bent on its extirpation. Accustomed to toeing the Soviet line, the Prague leaders were now experiencing acute difficulties in adjusting to the new winds blowing from the East. They even went so far as to occasionally confiscate or censor Soviet press. And at the very time that Moscow was beginning to release its own dissidents, Prague defied international outcry by staging a show trial of nonconformist jazz musicians.

Although very Brezhnevian in other ways, Czechoslovakia was not as extensively ridden with corruption and economically mismanaged as the Soviet Union. Its political stability and relative economic health made it imprudent for Gorbachev to interfere with its affairs too much. This gave the Prague leaders an exceptional opportunity to chart their own course--an opportunity, however, they were too timid to grasp. Having composed the relatively minor

differences that divided them, they instead proceeded to apply the Soviet reform model in a minimalist fashion--by introducing a long-term structural reform of the economy but hardly any *glasnost*.

This clarification of the course paved the way to Gorbachev's visit in April 1987, though not without a last-minute delay. But the delay was the result of his momentary preoccupation with domestic priorities rather than of any disapproval of the ultracautious manner of the Prague reformers. Thus the spontaneous affection that much of the Czechoslovak populace showed the visiting Soviet leader was largely misplaced. It was still embarrassing enough for the country's rulers, putting the adequacy of their kind of reform in doubt.

If the habitually subservient Prague conservatives uttered but timidly the notion that socialism did not require the imitation of the Soviet model, their more assertive East Berlin counterparts said so more vocally. Not only were they presiding over the one country where the economic tenets of Gorbachev's domestic program had largely been accomplished; also some of the main objectives of the GDR's foreign policies that Gorbachev's predecessors had obstructed were now vindicated by being adopted as Moscow's own. This was particularly true about a reduction of both superpowers' nuclear arsenals in Europe as a necessary precondition of *détente*.

While Gorbachev paid tribute to his clients' prowess, he did not go so far as to suggest that their model was applicable to his homeland--and not only because it was German. There was a difference in kind between Soviet *glasnost*--a new, deliberate and positive policy--and the GDR's openness to Western ideas, which its regime had long been compelled reluctantly to tolerate as a deplorable consequence of its geographical location. As a result, *glasnost* did more to promote the spirit of critical inquiry in the USSR than in the GDR. And as far as the relevance of East Germany's economic success was concerned, that was greatly diminished by the extent of its dependence on the country's special relationship with West Germany.

Moreover, the success appeared no longer as impressive as it had been, yet the rapid expansion of the relationship was bound to raise expectations. There was a new restiveness among the young, articulated by the GDR's increasingly outspoken Churches more vigorously than anywhere in Eastern Europe except Poland. And even if the East Germans' mood seldom approximated the *Weltschmerz* of their West German counterparts, it was considerably more

worrisome for a regime styling itself as a guardian of people's minds.

The most peculiar case of malaise in Eastern Europe afflicted Hungary. It surprised observers accustomed to regarding the country as the most liveable in the region because of its unique balance of relative freedom and relative prosperity--an achievement of the supposedly astute leadership of party secretary János Kádár and the reputed brilliance of Hungarian economists. That the aging, capricious, and increasingly ineffectual Kádár had dissipated much of the popular legitimacy he had earned and that the celebrated New Economic Mechanism had engendered expectations that could not be fulfilled, did not suffice to account for the depth of the spreading gloom. Indeed, comparisons were being drawn with the crisis that had preceded Hungary's collapse in 1956, except that this time there was no revolution in the making.

Unlike in 1956, the malaise permeating the nation was less political than social, or sociopathological. The economic downturn, attributable to excesses of both laissez-faire and regimentation characteristic of the hybrid Hungarian system, was conducive to dislocations painfully affecting the everyday lives of large numbers of citizens. The growing visibility of extremes of wealth and poverty in a supposedly socialist country was as demoralizing as was the rapidly rising crime rate in what was still, after all, a police state. Peculiarly Hungarian were also the feelings of outrage and helplessness at the oppression of the millions of compatriots by the contemptible Ceausescu regime in Romania--a plight certain to traumatize a nation that had always regarded itself an embattled island in a sea of ethnically alien neighbors. The effect tended to be multiplied among a people perhaps more susceptible to despair than others, as the Hungarians' exceptionally high suicide rates would seem to indicate.

Meanwhile, Hungary's economic experiments proceeded, more boldly than in the Soviet Union yet evidently with its blessing. They included unorthodox practices that Moscow still shunned, such as the issuance of government bonds to finance budgetary deficit or the bankruptcy of inefficient factories, which made unemployment inevitable. However, since the root causes of the nation's despondency were not solely, or even mainly, economic, not much could be accomplished by economic remedies alone. Indeed, the apparent lack of any effective remedies made the Hungarian crisis different--more elusive

and intractable--from all the previous crises in the region.

In Poland, the perspectives were sharper though hardly brighter. Deadlock in the relations between the rulers and the ruled continued, though not for any lack of maneuvering for positions by the regime, the opposition, and the Church. In this regard, the government of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski did better than any time in its six years in power, but still not well enough. The release of all political prisoners after several partial amnesties was a daring calculation which succeeded in confusing the opposition. The return of its activists enabled the underground Solidarity to regroup but not to appreciably enhance its effectiveness amid an increasingly tired population. The opposition had to prepare for a long struggle.

The creation of a Consultative Council of appointed notables was to create a semblance of wider participation in the government's decisions. The regime's willingness to entertain a greater range of unbinding opinions of its choice defined the extent of pluralization it was ready to tolerate. This sort of "democratization" would have gone a long way to ameliorate what Gorbachev himself described as the "inadequate" Soviet political culture; it could hardly meet the needs of the more advanced Polish polity. Nor could the promotion of the rule of law, so innovative in the Soviet milieu, impress the Poles; it did afford their opposition new opportunities to exploit the legal system for political struggle.

Besides Moscow's dependence on Jaruzelski for keeping Eastern Europe's most profoundly anti-Soviet nation subdued and besides Warsaw's dependence on Soviet economic subsidies, the two regimes' affinity in matters of "democratization" helped to forge their special relationship. The official Polish media exuded particular praise for Gorbachev's reformism, while cooperation extended into previously sensitive areas. Warsaw was allowed to open a consulate in Lvov, the center of the vast territory Poland had lost to the Soviet Union in World War II. And the two governments vowed to fill the many "blank spots" in history that underlay the persistence of Polish-Soviet hostility.

The Jaruzelski regime's limited but real concessions sufficed to break its diplomatic isolation though not to open the flow of badly needed Western credits. The lifting of the American sanctions, on which Warsaw had been trying to blame the nation's economic plight, brought no

significant material relief. The effects were mainly political, particularly in helping to prepare the ground for the Pope's third visit to his native country--an event to which both the government and the Church, not to speak of the people, looked forward with great anticipation even if not for the same reasons.

The government intended to use the visit as a conclusive proof of "normalization" that would convince the opposition of the hopelessness of its case. The Church's intentions were not immediately clear but became more so once the Pope, to the dismay of his official hosts, began to publicly lecture the communist authorities about respect for the people's rights as an indispensable foundation of a truly peaceful society. Such pronouncements served to establish the Church's claim to rule on the propriety of the regime's actions--a position that could enable it to exact from the government concessions without aspiring to power, much as Solidarity had done in its early days.

Eastern Europe's evolving pluralization accentuated the distinctions not only between it and the Soviet Union but also between its northern and its southern parts. Whether in their Byzantine preoccupation with appearances or in their art of dissimulation learned during the Ottoman experience, the Balkan politics were growing more Balkan and less communist. Albania, still the most effectively concealed from the public eye, further accelerated its opening up to the outside world by means of commercial and cultural contacts, without giving up its pretense as the world's sole outpost of true revolutionary purity. While professing abhorrence of the very notion of reform, it quietly began to apply material incentives, rather than merely the appeal to patriotism or crude coercion, to build up its backward economy.

In another triumph of appearance over substance, Bulgaria and Greece in August 1986 concluded an ostensibly sensational treaty of friendship and nonaggression. Unlike with the Romanian-Soviet relations, here the purpose of the dissimulation by the two aspirants to greater regional role was to conceal the divergence rather than the convergence of their interests. On paper, the pact cast doubt on their obligations to their respective alliances--only to state expressly that this was not the case. In fact, no sooner was it signed than the strange bedfellows proceeded to discount its significance.

If much of the Balkan diplomacy was not what it purported to be, the worsening ethnic strife in the area was only too real. At least the Romanian-Hungarian

hostility over Transylvania and the Bulgarian-Yugoslav dispute over Macedonia were susceptible to management by the respective governments; the Serbian-Albanian conflict in Kosovo, however, was getting out of hand. Fueled by the dynamics of democracy and economics, rather than by either Belgrade or Tirana, the clashes between the rising Albanian and declining Serbian communities turned vicious. Although the Yugoslav authorities at last perceived that the Kosovo problem threatened the nation's very integrity, they were yet to develop a concept, let alone a policy, toward its resolution.

Nor did Yugoslavia's vocal opposition, with its social base among the intelligentsia and its regional base in the most advanced republic of Slovenia, provide a coherent program of action beyond often penetrating analyses of the multi-ethnic state's impending crisis. In some ways, Yugoslavia's predicament resembled that of the Soviet Union; there, too, an oversized, incompetent, and largely corrupt bureaucracy obstructed reform while ethnic discord threatened to inhibit its orderly progress. Unlike in the Soviet Union, however, Yugoslavia lacked a central authority powerful enough to institute a reform from above Gorbachev-style. For better or for worse, it ultimately had to rely on the recuperative power of its already pluralized society.

The advent in Moscow of a regime more enlightened than its predecessors disoriented Soviet and East European dissidents, particularly the advocates of true democracy rather than mere democratization. Their disposition to dismiss *glasnost* as window dressing threatened to increase their isolation--whether because of being proven wrong or because of obstructing genuine improvement. Dissension among Soviet dissidents peaked when their hero Andrei Sakharov, freshly returned from exile after Gorbachev's personal intervention, distressed some of his admirers by his readiness to give the leadership the benefit of the doubt.

Nor were East European dissidents necessarily better equipped to judge. The Poles' ingrained mistrust of anything Muscovite was compounded by their resented rulers' newly found intimacy with the Kremlin. The Czechoslovak opposition, with its memories of the country's reform movement of 1968, wondered what the similarities between that false start and Gorbachev's current program presaged for the future. The signatories of Charter 77, proud to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their organization, pondered the need to adjust their strategy to the new

perspectives. This inevitably revived discord between disillusioned former communists and the dissidents free from such a burden of the past.

Ruminations about the future by men deprived of power would have been of little more than academic interest had the re-emergence of the issue of Europe's unity not given them a special pungency. Far from eradicating the East Europeans' identification with Europe as a whole, the forty years of Soviet domination made it even stronger than in Western Europe. There was also a new nostalgia for the narrower concept of "Mitteleuropa," with or without Germany, which cut across the East-West divide by invoking a common past under the defunct central European empires of the nineteenth century. In their own ways, the policies of the communist states and even the Soviet Union now conveyed the notion that Europe was one. To make his disarmament proposals more attractive to Europeans, Gorbachev spoke about "our common European home," while the GDR sought added legitimation of its separate existence by proclaiming its Europeanness. Efforts at a rapprochement between the Common Market and Comecon, its Eastern counterpart, had so far foundered on the asymmetry of the two organizations. But at issue was now less the viability of Europe's partition than the manner and degree of control that Moscow should try to retain over the diverse countries of its Eastern part.

The progressing pluralization of the Soviet orbit belied the fact that Gorbachev's reform program posed many more questions than it answered. Quite apart from the formidable Soviet bureaucracy's resistance to change, his leadership proved so far unable to generate solid popular support--this at a time when such a support was finally beginning to matter. Not surprisingly, the notoriously apolitical Soviet worker remained less than enthusiastic about a regime urging him to work more and drink less. And the perennially abused Soviet peasant was not ready to be won quickly by half-hearted incentives to individual enterprise--if, indeed, anything short of decollectivization could save Soviet agriculture. Thus the intelligentsia and the new office holders that owed their careers to Gorbachev formed the exceedingly narrow base of his reform program.

If the probability of the program's failure exceeded that of its success, after two years in power Gorbachev nevertheless created the impression that the course he was taking was irreversible. If there is any truth in the adage that the status of the Jews is the best indication of the

direction in which a society is moving, the gradual removal of restrictions on Jewish culture, the prominence of Jews among Gorbachev's active supporters, even the greater number of Jews allowed to emigrate, were all harbingers of progress toward pluralization. So was the proliferation of citizens' associations outside the official establishment, but tolerated or even encouraged by it. These were able to pursue at least some specific and ostensibly nonpolitical interests--from the protection of the environment to the promotion of the cultural heritage--which were in broad agreement with the purpose of restructuring but no longer formulated exclusively by its managers.

The contentious plenum of the Soviet party Central Committee in June 1987, which approved a compromise version of the law on state enterprise as the centerpiece of economic reform, accentuated the open-endedness of the transformation that was taking place. As divergent views about its desirable pace persisted, the emphasis was more on the process of change than on its final goal. This was prudent enough, for the extrapolation of the existing trends into a more distant future indeed presaged eventual transition to something different from the familiar Soviet system of power, whether after further acceleration of the reform program or, more likely, after its failure--and this the leadership could hardly be expected to contemplate. Yet often in the past had statesmen been overtaken by unintended consequences of their actions. Winston Churchill vowed that he had not become His Majesty's Prime Minister to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire; he had presided over it all the same, though Britain survived. Warned by Gorbachev that there was no alternative to the course he was taking, the Soviet Union could do worse than to prepare for a similar prospect.



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GORBACHEV TURNS TO POLITICAL REFORM

1

GORBACHEV'S CHANGING PRIORITIES

Elizabeth Teague

On being elected as head of the CPSU on March 11, 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev made it clear that his most urgent priority was to halt and reverse declining rates of economic growth. Unless the economy was made to work efficiently, he warned, the USSR's status as a military superpower could be at risk. The new leader blamed the country's problems on his predecessors' failure to modernize the antiquated system of central planning, or to allow the increasingly well-educated population any say in the running of society.

Gorbachev inherited a bloated bureaucracy and a demoralized work force. "We have forgotten how to work," he told an informal meeting in the summer of 1986. "Not just that, but [we have] forgotten how to work in democratic conditions."¹ The domestic policies of his first two years were aimed at shaking the population out of the inertia of the Brezhnev years and getting the country back to work.

Yet Another Discipline Campaign. As a first step, Gorbachev resorted to the time-honored method of mass mobilization. Immediately after his election, he launched a campaign for tighter discipline and order. A new twist was added by tough measures against alcoholism and, showing he meant business, he began a sweeping round of personnel changes. Officials of the Brezhnev generation were unceremoniously retired, their places going to younger, predominantly technocratic appointees.

Construction of a personal power base of loyal appointees is an essential first step for any Soviet leader. In this respect, Gorbachev's first two years were very successful. Personnel turnover was particularly high

in the Politburo, the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee's Secretariat, the last of which Gorbachev seemed to be turning into his personal staff. Although not all the new appointees could be considered Gorbachev's protégés, the general secretary's political position appeared reasonably secure. For all his complaints about resistance to his policy of *perestroika* (restructuring), no organized opposition appeared, and he had no obvious rival as party leader.

Personnel turnover did not slacken during Gorbachev's second year. At the level of primary party organizations, for example, where only 23 percent of officials had been replaced by the end of Gorbachev's first year,² turnover had reached 33 percent by January 1987.³ Building a power base was not an easy process, however. Gorbachev needed less than four months to oust his rival Grigorii Romanov from the leadership, but it required a dogged campaign of ten months to ease another opponent, Viktor Grishin, out of his post as party boss in Moscow, and it was nearly two years before Gorbachev was able to replace Dinmukhamed Kun-aev as party leader in Kazakhstan. Brezhnev-era appointees remained a significant force in the Central Committee.

The new appointees were not just "Brezhnev clones in smart suits." Unlike their predecessors, they were unburdened by direct experience of the Stalin terror of the nineteen-thirties, and too young to have seen active service in World War II. Thus they seemed to have outgrown at least some of the fear and mistrust of the general population that characterized the Brezhnev leadership. Their career patterns were, however, very similar to those of their predecessors. This, plus the fact that there was almost no difference in institutional allegiance between the members of the Central Committees of the CPSU elected under Brezhnev in 1981 and those under Gorbachev in 1986, indicated that, though the faces had changed, neither the Soviet system nor the distribution of power therein had done so.⁴

Thinking about Economic Reform. Gorbachev understood that it would require more than personnel changes and calls for discipline to achieve sustained economic growth. Early on in his leadership, he pledged to streamline the system of economic management. Central planning, he promised, would be rationalized; the myriad ranks of middle-level bureaucracy would be pruned, and enterprises given greater independence. More effective incentives were to be introduced for workers and managers, while the enterprise work force was promised a greater say in decision-making.

Measures adopted during Gorbachev's first two years included encouragement of the cooperative sector and of small family businesses. In the teeth of strong opposition from ideological die-hards, a new law regulating "individual labor" was finally published in November 1986--preceded in the spring of 1986, however, by tough new restrictions cracking down on "unearned incomes." A new law defining the status of enterprises under state ownership was published in draft form.⁵ It included some provisions that might, in the opinion of Western specialists, pave the way toward Hungarian-style market reform by increasing the independence of the enterprise vis-à-vis the branch ministry. "Customers' orders," for example, were to be part of the basis on which the enterprise would draw up its production plan; enterprises unable to make a profit would be threatened with closure; materials were to be obtained partly through "wholesale trade." The work force was to be consulted on the appointment of an enterprise director, and was also to have the power to recommend the dismissal of a manager whose performance proved unsatisfactory. At the same time, the law contained elements not compatible with a market reform. Thus, enterprises still required the approval of a higher authority--presumably a branch ministry--before making final decisions in such key areas as the setting of prices and production targets.

A common characteristic of all these new regulations was their ambiguity. They bore the hallmarks of a policy shaped by compromise between reform-oriented and conservative forces. Their thrust remained basically conservative, as they aimed to rationalize the centrally administered system, not to discard it. However, though they left existing political structures intact, they ran into formidable resistance.

The Strength of Resistance to Change. Gorbachev was aware, when he came to power in 1985, that even moderate decentralization of the economy would meet opposition. His early speeches indicated that he expected resistance to come from the middle levels of officialdom but that he believed this resistance would be relatively easy to neutralize. His plan was to appeal to the population over the heads of the bureaucrats, who were to be discredited in the public eye by charges of corruption and nepotism within their ranks. "Restructuring," Gorbachev stated on many occasions, "must be carried out from below and from above."⁶

Gorbachev may have underestimated the potential strength of the opposition. Evidence of policy

disagreements within the top leadership began to accumulate in the winter of 1985-86 during the lead-up to the Twenty-seventh Congress of the CPSU. In the course of 1986, Gorbachev became increasingly outspoken about resistance to change, which he admitted existed not only among the middle strata of the bureaucracy but at every level of society, as virtually no group in Soviet society stood only to gain from the changes. On the contrary, almost everyone stood to lose, at least in the short run.⁷

Gorbachev favored a renegotiation of the "social contract" of the Brezhnev era--scornfully described by the workers as "they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work." As an incentive, he envisaged a wage reform based on wider salary differentials. Those who worked hard would be paid well, but there would be sharp salary cuts for those who did not. There was much talk, too, of reducing the huge state subsidies for food and housing and of increasing differentiation in the pricing of consumer goods. Some of Gorbachev's advisers warned that shop-floor workers who worked poorly or who lacked skills could find themselves facing relocation or even temporary unemployment.⁸ If implemented, the changes under discussion would enhance the role of personal incomes and increase the responsibility of the individual to care for himself, while reducing the role of state subventions to that of providing basic protection for members of society unable to take care of themselves.

Such measures were bound to be extremely unpopular with large segments of the population and were approached by the leadership only with the greatest caution. When strikes broke out in the summer of 1986 in the Ukraine and Belorussia in protest against meat price increases in certain areas of these republics, the price hikes were swiftly rescinded.⁹

Many Soviet citizens were skeptical about *perestroika*. For a year at least, Gorbachev seemed to get nowhere at all; people simply failed to respond or responded negatively. From mid-1986 on, his speeches expressed a sense of growing frustration, perhaps even of desperation. He seemed to become convinced that popular apathy was so strong that, until it was overcome, other changes would be impossible. Only when "a restructuring of people's thinking" had been achieved, Gorbachev told a meeting in September 1986, "shall we be able to tackle our tasks."¹⁰ To activate "the human factor," he shifted his emphasis from economic to political reform.

The Switch to Political Reform. Lack of popular enthusiasm for his policies was not the only reason for Gorbachev's change of emphasis. The April 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant also played a role. Attributed to human error and irresponsibility, Chernobyl destroyed the myth of the superiority of socialist society. It demonstrated the deep moral crisis brought about by the leaders' long neglect of the legitimate needs of the population.¹¹ Thereafter, Gorbachev's campaign for greater openness in the media gained momentum.

Early on in his leadership, Gorbachev indicated that he did not have time to deal with the treatment of culture or history--specifically, of the Stalin question--until the economy was sorted out.¹² It turned out, in fact, to be the other way around. By 1987, Gorbachev appeared convinced that the economy would not be restored to health without some relaxation of social and political controls.

In a speech in Krasnodar in September 1986, Gorbachev spoke for the first time of the "democratization" of Soviet society as his main priority.¹³ The means chosen was *glasnost*, or "openness." On the principle that before a disease can be cured, it must be correctly diagnosed, the press was encouraged to focus public attention on the negative aspects of daily life in order to find solutions. Western observers noted that no criticism of the political system itself was tolerated. At the same time, a greater role was allowed to public opinion in certain areas--such as environmental protection--that did not impinge directly on the political sphere. A marked liberalization occurred in cultural life, and there were signs of a tentative reexamination of Stalin's role in Soviet history¹⁴. Some of those imprisoned under Brezhnev's leadership for their political or religious beliefs were freed, though their release fell short of a full amnesty. At a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU in January 1987, Gorbachev made potentially significant proposals regarding the introduction of multiple-candidacy balloting for local government positions and, perhaps even more important, for party posts. Resistance to his proposals from within the party caused the plenum to be postponed three times between October 1986 and January 1987.

How Strong Is Gorbachev? Gorbachev had embarked on a risky endeavor. He had invested personal credibility in economic modernization, but understood that this could not be achieved without a relaxation of political and social controls. He had to maintain the momentum of change in order to prevent society from slipping back into the

inertia of the Brezhnev years. Since no political leader would willingly place his own post in jeopardy, however, he was not prepared to countenance any reduction of the monopoly on power held by the CPSU. Instead he had to be prepared to restrain any social group that began to demand freedom from central party control. This applied to the creative intelligentsia and to certain of the national minorities, whose representatives began to use *glasnost* as a means to express grievances regarding language and culture.¹⁵ The balancing act of within-system reform demanded all Gorbachev's political skills. To foster relaxation in certain areas while tightening controls in others, he required the support of a broad leadership coalition. Evidence of policy disputes within the leadership suggested that he did not command this kind of support. Gorbachev was a strong leader in a weak position.

2

**CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND IDEAS:
THE JANUARY PLENUM**

Elizabeth Teague

The Emerging Ideological Platform. During a visit to the south Russian region of Krasnodar in September 1986, Gorbachev pointed the finger at those who opposed restructuring "because they understand what its consequences will be" and were concerned with retaining their privileges by preserving old and obsolete ways. He asserted that such people were to be found at every level of society "among workers, and peasants, and management workers, and workers in the apparatus, . . . [and] among our intelligentsia."¹

Gorbachev quoted approvingly from an article in the weekly *Literaturnaia gazeta* by the well-known Soviet playwright Aleksandr Gelman.² That article referred to "the newly discontented," those for whom "restructuring" meant the loss of their privileges. These "newly discontented," Gelman said, "oppose every move toward greater independence and freedom" for the rest of the population.

In the same vein, an article in the newspaper *Sovetskaia kultura* reported that restructuring was "running into resistance from those who either 'cannot or will not' discard outworn methods of thought and action."³ The author of the article, Valentin Tolstykh, a senior staff member at

the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences, charged that those who opposed the restructuring did so because it threatened their individual or group interests. Tolstykh wrote that the time had come to construct "a typology" of the supporters and opponents of restructuring and to lay bare "the material interests feeding the resistance of certain specific groups and individuals" to the policies adopted at the 27th Congress of the CPSU. Like Gorbachev, Tolstykh stressed that resistance was not only to be found in the upper ranks of Soviet society; rank-and-file workers, he said, were also unwilling to give up a system under which they received an adequate salary merely by pretending to work, in exchange for a system that would offer them good wages only in return for hard work.

As early as 1983, the sociologist Tatiana Zaslavskaiia warned in what became known as the "Novosibirsk document" of potential resistance to economic reform. This opposition, she wrote, would have its roots in those social interests that would suffer if a reform were carried out. Zaslavskaiia argued that, with its insistence on the harmony of interests of all classes and groups and on the monolithic nature of Socialist society, the orthodox Marxism of the Brezhnev era precluded all possibility of dealing effectively with such opposition.⁴

The influence of Zaslavskaiia's ideas could be seen in an article published in *Pravda* on September 12, 1986. Written by Professor Vsevolod Davidovich, a little-known academic from the University of Rostov, the article was entitled "Soviet Society: Unity in Diversity."⁵ This "unity" refers to the harmony of interests that supposedly existed between all social groups and classes within Soviet society. During the later years of the Brezhnev leadership, this concept came under attack from reform-oriented scholars such as Zaslavskaiia and Anatolii Butenko, who argued that greater account had to be taken of real clashes of interest between different social strata.⁶ These writers stressed that powerful group and individual interests persisted even under socialism; to pretend that they did not was fraught with extremely dangerous consequences. First, neglect of the legitimate material interests of the work force was leading to apathy and alienation, moral decay, and worsening labor discipline among the general population. Second, failure to curb powerful bureaucracies from pursuing their own selfish interests encouraged widespread corruption. During Brezhnev's declining years, certain areas of the

country--the municipality of Moscow, the southern port of Rostov-on-Don, and the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan, for example--escaped almost entirely from the control of the central party and state authorities.

Support for reform-oriented arguments had been given by Gorbachev in a speech to a meeting of propagandists in December 1984. Calling for "a clearer understanding" of the different interests of "individual social, socio-demographic, and professional groups," he stated that, "as long as such differences remain, it is necessary to take them into account."⁷

Davidovich's article focused on the "diversity" of Soviet society. Despite, he claimed, the existence of certain interests common to the whole of Soviet society (such as peace and the maintenance of a strong defense), there were significant differences between the aims and interests of various social groups and strata that, if ignored, could lead to "collisions" and social clashes. Like the authors cited above, Davidovich complained about "departmentalism," "localism," and "egoistic concerns" which, he said, were obstructing the party's strategy of "acceleration."

Davidovich seemed chiefly concerned with the possibility of even greater conflicts of interest if and when, as Gorbachev promised, greater decision-making powers were devolved from the central ministries in Moscow to individual enterprises and work collectives. To guard against the danger of "centrifugal tendencies," Davidovich called for "democratism" at the enterprise and work collective level to be combined with "effective and forceful centralization."

Thus, while Davidovich's appreciation of the existence of competing group and individual interests came as a welcome change from the traditional view of Socialist society as a monolithic unity, the blueprint he proposed was not the introduction of any kind of pluralism, but rather a stricter and more streamlined implementation of the principle of democratic centralism. The Communist party, Davidovich stated, was the unifying force of Soviet society; it was the duty of the party's local organizations to protect the general interest against the selfish interests of society's component parts.

Quest for Truth and Creativity. A two-day conference of social scientists from institutes of higher education opened in the Kremlin on October 1, 1986, and was addressed by Gorbachev and the CPSU's chief ideologist, Egor Ligachev. Both called for innovation in the social sciences, but their underlying message was of the urgent

need for moral renewal. The leadership declared its intention "to restructure" economic and social life, and made no secret of the stubborn resistance this policy was encountering at all levels of society.

Opening the conference, Gorbachev remarked that "an acute, uncompromising struggle of ideas" was under way. He said that this struggle pitted old ways of thinking against the need for profound, revolutionary changes within society. The struggle was not always out in the open, and was one in which old ways "will not give up without a fight." Indeed, he warned, old ways were well capable of finding new forms of adaptation, subsuming new ideas within "outdated dogmas and stereotypes," and "emptying them of their novelty and revolutionary content."⁸

Gorbachev went on to say that "today's processes must not be altered to fit the old formulas." New ideas would have to be developed and this, he asserted, "can only be done in an atmosphere of creativity." The "search for truth" would have to be conducted through free discussion and the clash of different opinions; "dialogue," he said, would have to replace "monologue."

Gorbachev instructed the academics to train young people "to think independently and creatively." Deploring the "dogmatic" and "scholastic" way in which the social sciences were taught in the universities, he called for the preparation of new programs of study, new lectures, and new textbooks. Modern society, he said, did not need narrow specialists capable only of learning by rote, but well-rounded scientists and engineers capable of thinking independently and responsibly and of responding to the fast-changing demands of the modern age.

The state of the social sciences also came under attack from Ligachev.⁹ In the recent past, Ligachev said, neglect of "the link between ideology and life and the unity of words and action" had led to "negative phenomena" in the economy, "flaws" in personnel policy, and an overall deterioration in "the moral atmosphere" in the country. The needs of the population as regards education, science, health care, and culture had all, he declared, been seriously neglected.

Philosophy, Ligachev charged, had departed even further from the real world than the other social sciences. He complained also about the failure of sociologists and economists to provide answers to the problems of the modern age, assailing them for "timidity of thought" and "lack of civic courage."

Like Gorbachev, Ligachev expressed alarm about the training of young specialists in higher education institutes. He accused teachers of being primarily interested in pushing students through, paying little attention to the quality of education provided. Indicating that poor teaching standards were leading to a decline in the prestige of the teaching profession, Ligachev complained of "a weakening of the influx of capable young people" into the profession.

Ligachev's words implied an elitist approach of the "better fewer, but better" variety to higher education for young people. His stress on the deterioration of moral standards in society echoed the words of Gorbachev, who had stated in opening the conference: "We know from experience that, if the spiritual and moral development of the individual and of society is neglected, consumerist attitudes and material greed inevitably grow." The same stark warning about the decline of moral standards was sounded in a program broadcast on October 1 by Radio Moscow. The commentator, Mikhail Antonov, warned of the decline in recent years of what he called "the quality of the individual."¹⁰ "When a person loses his conscience," he said, "he ceases to be a human being, and becomes a living corpse." Antonov asked: "How was it possible to lose the spiritual and moral values that took centuries to build up?" Antonov charged that, because of "a prolonged lagging in the social sciences, people have for some time been deprived of clear moral guidelines."

The call for greater boldness and creativity in the social sciences dated back to the leadership of Iurii Andropov who, shortly after his election as general secretary of the CPSU, made what was a truly extraordinary admission for a Soviet leader: "We have not yet made a proper study of the society in which we live and work and have still not fully revealed the laws governing its development."¹¹ Andropov's call was taken up by Gorbachev even before his own appointment as party leader.¹²

Gorbachev's speech at the conference coincided with the publication of a very unusual resolution in which the Central Committee of the CPSU complained that the restructuring of economic and social life was proceeding too slowly and running into bureaucratic resistance and inertia. "The struggle of the new against the old," the resolution stated, was "facing difficult social, psychological, and organizational obstacles and meeting resistance from those who, in their own egotistical interests, seek to preserve obsolete rules and privileges."¹³

Resistance to Restructuring. The novelist Sergei Zalygin, chief editor of the literary journal *Novyi mir*, described Soviet society as split into "progressives and conservatives."¹⁴ The party first secretary of Turkmenistan alleged that certain officials were practicing "direct political sabotage" of *perestroika*.¹⁵ And a Moscow University economist wrote in *Pravda* that the most significant brake on the pace of "restructuring" was the lack of broad-based public support for change.¹⁶

An analysis of the different forms of resistance to changes was published in the weekly *Moscow News* by party philosopher Anatolii Butenko,¹⁷ who restated many of the ideas for which he had been publicly censured two years earlier. Writing in the journal *Voprosy filosofii* in 1982 and again in 1984, Butenko had used the example of the crisis of 1980-81 in Poland to call for structural reforms in the USSR. The failure of Poland's Soviet-style system to adapt to changing circumstances, Butenko had argued, had led to the alienation of the workers from the political system. Unless Soviet leaders instituted economic and social reforms, the USSR would run the same risk. Butenko rejected the orthodox tenet that internally generated crises could no longer occur in the Soviet Union. Instead, he had concluded, the "nonantagonistic" contradictions inherent in socialist society might, if neglected by the leadership, turn into "antagonistic" ones; into acute social conflicts.¹⁸

In his article in *Moscow News*, Butenko wrote that Soviet society was experiencing "a heightened struggle of the new against the old, of the forces of progress and renewal against those of conservatism and bureaucracy." This conflict would intensify still further, he warned, as there was no one whose interests were not directly affected by *perestroika*.¹⁹

Butenko divided Soviet society into four separate groups. The first consisted of those who wholeheartedly embraced "restructuring" and were doing all they could to ensure its success. Butenko offered no estimate of the size of this group, but did not pretend that it represented a majority of the population. The second group he perceived as being made up of those who understood the necessity of working in a new way but did not know how to go about it in practice. Such people, Butenko said, were redeemable, since they were willing to be taught new ways.

Butenko's third group was made up of skeptics and cynics who believed neither in the good intentions of the party leadership nor in its power to make significant

improvements. They had accordingly adopted a "wait-and-see" position. (This group was described by the editor of *Moscow News*, Egor Iakovlev, in an interview: "There are many people," he said, "who believe in nothing--neither in slogans nor in appeals. They are tired."²⁰)

Finally, Butenko described a fourth group--those actively opposed to the process of "restructuring" and doing everything they could to frustrate it. For such people, Butenko wrote, "reconstruction goes against the grain":

Having learned to grab more from the state by means of "result-padding," as well as by "sitting around looking busy," by "taking a break for a smoke," by holding meetings instead of working, or simply by pilfering and profiteering, they are perfectly well aware of what the consequences of restructuring will be. If it is consistently implemented, they will have to work--and work hard--to earn their incomes honestly. They are not accustomed to this; nor do they want to get accustomed to it.

Butenko stressed that "the struggle between the old and the new" arose from the different and conflicting interests of the various social groups in society. Noting that it had often been said that the economy would have to be restructured so that the mass of the people would find it in their interest to work honestly and well, he continued that it was not usually pointed out that the reason why so many people worked badly and dishonestly was that it was in their interest to do so. It was not, however, in the general interest of society. He warned against the conventional view that this conflict of personal and public interests could be explained away as "a remnant of the tsarist past," blamed on the evil influence of Western imperialism, or viewed in purely personal terms as "a sum total of individual clashes or quarrelsome personalities." It must, he said, be understood as "a social struggle with solid social foundations." Butenko was careful to stress that this social struggle could not be reduced to class antagonism, but he argued that it was none the less real for all that. "Marxism-Leninism has never asserted," he wrote, "that social-class antagonism is the only source of clashes of social interests."

The January Plenum of the CPSU. Speaking at a plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee on January 27, 1987, Gorbachev went a good deal further in his dissection of the

ills of Soviet society than he had previously done. For the first time he used the word "crisis" to describe the Soviet Union's social and economic predicament.²¹

Gorbachev indicated that his decision to speak more openly was prompted by the failure of attempts to stimulate economic growth in the two years that had elapsed since his election as party leader. "We see," he said, "that change for the better is taking place slowly, that the business of reorganization is more difficult, and that the problems that have built up in society are more deeply rooted than we first thought."

"There is still," Gorbachev went on, "some misapprehension in society and in the party of the complexity of the situation in which the country finds itself." He made it clear that party members were among those expressing doubts about the wisdom of the new course and added: "We are often asked if we are not making too sharp a turn."

Gorbachev painted a bleak picture of moral and economic decline. The economy, he said, was stagnant and impervious to innovation: "Most plan targets have not been met since the early nineteen-seventies." Even more seriously, the system had become "deaf to social issues." The need for housing, food, health care, and education had all been neglected. This "social corrosion" had had a profound impact on general morale. People had become, Gorbachev said, cynical, callous and skeptical; they had lost their "enthusiasm for work" and their "Soviet patriotism." The frequency of labor discipline infringements and industrial injuries, he revealed, had been rising since the nineteen-sixties. Alcohol and drug abuse had spread; the crime rate had risen.

Gorbachev stressed that it was essential to make a thorough analysis of the causes of this crisis, and showed himself willing to dig a good deal deeper than at the previous year's party congress. Then, he had seemed content to lay the blame on the "subjective" errors of the Brezhnev leadership. At the January plenum too, Gorbachev stated that the past leadership was guilty of "failing to see the need for change in time and in full," but he also indicated that the evil was rooted in "serious shortcomings in the performance of the institutions of socialist democracy." In a clear reference to the rule of Stalin (though not mentioning him by name), Gorbachev said:

The causes of the situation go back far into the past and are rooted in that specific historical situation where, by virtue of well-known circumstances,

vigorous debates and creative ideas disappeared from theory and the social sciences, while authoritarian evaluations and opinions were turned into unquestionable truths.

The cornerstone of the remedies Gorbachev proposed was an attempt to "democratize" the way in which officials of the CPSU were appointed. He proposed that party secretaries, including first secretaries, should be elected by secret ballot at all levels from raion to republic. He further suggested that "members of a party committee would have the right to put on the voting ticket any number of candidates."

Gorbachev described the failures of the system in depressing detail: its lack of concern for ordinary citizens, the waste it engendered, and the corruption it encouraged. He spoke of "our mistakes," meaning the mistakes of the party and its leadership at all levels. At the grassroots level, he said, primary party organizations had tolerated nationalism, drunkenness, and nepotism. Senior party officials, he went on, had been accomplices or even organizers of criminal activities. They had regarded their high posts as sinecures and themselves as "above criticism." The Central Committee had become a mere rubber-stamp; its meetings brief and formal; many crucial problems were never even discussed and many members of the Central Committee had no opportunity to take part in debates or even to put forward proposals. In a burst of *glasnost*, Gorbachev said the capacity for work even of the Politburo and the Secretariat had been weakened. The CPSU was, in short, part of the problem, not part of the solution.

He listed five "lessons of the past" that the party must note in correcting its personnel policies.

1. There must be a constant influx of fresh blood into the upper echelons of the party, the Politburo and Secretariat.
2. Party bodies at enterprise or ministerial level must not be allowed to identify with the interests of the organization whose work they were supposed to be supervising.
3. There must be a stop to the nepotism within the party which had led to the promotion of inefficient

or dishonest people whose only qualification was that they were related to others in power.

4. There must be greater control over party officials, who should be made accountable for their actions.

5. Most important, Gorbachev declared that the "main cause" of the problems outlined above was neglect of "democratic principles" in the party. It was to correct this situation that he proposed the introduction of multi-candidate, secret balloting for party posts.

To sum up, Gorbachev's speech to the plenum contained several striking features: his grim description of the ills of Soviet society; his acknowledgment that these ills had brought the USSR to a stage of crisis; his admission that the legacy of the Stalin terror was still making its evil influence felt. His proposals, however, did not, nor were they intended to, challenge the fundamental characteristic of the Soviet system: the monopoly of power enjoyed by the Communist party.

3

CURBS ON ARBITRARY BEHAVIOR

*Julia Wishnevsky and Roman Solchanyk**

Corrupt Judiciary. In 1986, the Soviet newspapers began to acknowledge with unprecedented frankness that there had been miscarriages of justice in Soviet courts. Among the matters discussed at the session of the Politburo on October 2, 1986, was the need for "a consistent restructuring of the work of the prosecutor's office, the police, courts, and other law enforcement agencies." In its report on the session, Radio Moscow declared that reforms, the need for which was constantly being reiterated by the Gorbachev leadership, required "strict observance of the laws" to "ensure social justice and the inviolability of the constitutional rights of citizens." The Politburo was

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also said to have underlined "the inadmissibility of any attempts by whatever party to interfere in the investigation and trial of specific cases."¹

On September 24, *Literaturnaia gazeta* published an interview with Aleksandr Iakovlev, a section head at the Institute of State and Law of the USSR Academy of Sciences. In the interview, Iakovlev proposed several reforms to protect the citizens against criminal miscarriages of justice.²

Iakovlev's proposed reforms were in part reminiscent of those introduced in the eighteen-sixties by Tsar Alexander II, and in part approximated models existing in the West. He suggested, for example, that the number of people's assessors should be increased to five or seven. Previously there had been only two, and "frequently their participation in the court proceedings is purely nominal." He also suggested that the Soviet court be turned into "a court of people's assessors": "The primary task of the judge will be to provide a precise legal formulation of the verdict of the people's assessors." Iakovlev's use of the foreign word *verdikt* in this context connoted the idea of trial by jury.³

In the Soviet Union, the measure of restraint applied to the suspect for the duration of the investigation was at the discretion of the investigatory organs themselves. Iakovlev proposed that only a court should decide whether a suspect be remanded in custody or set free on bail. He pointed out that investigators and prosecutors were more inclined to choose custody, as "the suspect is more pliant, and the investigation goes more quickly." Iakovlev further suggested that a lawyer be involved in his client's case from the onset of the investigation.⁴ Such reforms appeared designed to protect citizens against those crimes against justice committed by judicial officials in pursuance of their own career interests.

It seems that the authorities became aware of the vicious nature of the system when they began trying to stamp out the corruption that had assumed quite intolerable proportions during the latter part of the Brezhnev era. An article on this subject by Aleksei Buturlin, prosecutor of the Uzbek SSR, described the case of Uzbekistan, where theft, bribe-taking, and lawlessness had assumed "a most acute form." This involved a large proportion of the local party hierarchy, including republican party First Secretary Sharaf Rashidov. At that time, many prosecutors engaged in illegal practices and accepted bribes. At the same time, Buturlin pointed out, the efforts of other prosecutors in

Uzbekistan to carry out their duties conscientiously as regards both the investigation of crimes and the observance of legality in the courts "were regarded as circumvention of party control, with all the consequences that this entailed," although, according to Article 168 of the Constitution of the USSR, the organs of the Prosecutor's Office were subordinate only to the Prosecutor General.⁵

Similarly, according to Article 155 of the Constitution, "judges . . . are independent and subject only to the law." Yet many judges considered a telephone call from somewhere "at the top" to be more important than the law.⁶ In his interview, Iakovlev related how a certain "raion leader" had arranged the dismissal of the woman chairman of a raion people's court who refused to agree to his demand that she acquit a manager who had permitted a blatant violation of safety regulations, resulting in a death.

In the course of the campaign against corruption, the press began to reveal other aspects of "telephone justice." By exploiting the dependence of judges and prosecutors on the local party leadership, highly placed bribe-takers managed not only to evade accountability for their own crimes but also to imprison people who, on account of their official position or at the behest of their conscience, attempted to expose them.⁷

The influential journalist Fedor Burlatskii explained why provincial authorities exploited the decree on combating nonlabor incomes in order to prosecute an old gardener who sold a rare sort of flower that he had grown, while taking no action against a butcher who earned 150 rubles a day selling meat--a product in short supply--under the counter at an inflated price. According to Burlatskii "the old man is easy to catch--he's a toiler, whereas it's difficult to catch the butcher--he's a thief."⁸

Unpublished Directives. *Izvestiia* broke yet another taboo when it revealed material describing unpublished departmental directives known in legal jargon as "sub-legal acts." This phenomenon was described by two doctors of law from the All-Union Research Institute of Soviet Legislation, Ivan Kazmin and Albert Pigolkin, in an interview with *Izvestiia* correspondent Iurii Feofanov.⁹

According to Pigolkin and Kazmin, there were more than 200,000 sub-legal acts, of which 10,000 were generally binding--i.e., ones that affected not only the employees of a given department but other organizations and private individuals as well. These acts could be issued both by heads of departments holding the rank of minister and by

heads of administrations or sections within these departments. As the interview revealed, in cases where a directive contradicted the law, it was the directive and not the law that was applied in practice.

Feofanov pointed out that many of these directives "are only departmental in form, but in practice limit, not always for good reasons, the rights of citizens." As an example he cited a hotel regulation forbidding guests to receive visitors of the opposite sex in their rooms after ten or eleven o'clock at night.

Further examples of sub-legal acts involved a directive from the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the internal regulations of corrective labor institutions¹⁰ and the Ministry of Health's directive concerning the immediate hospitalization of mentally ill persons who represented a danger to society.¹¹ There was no law at the time governing the departure of Soviet citizens from the USSR for temporary or permanent residence abroad. The procedure for them to leave the country, like the procedure for Soviet citizens residing permanently abroad to enter the Soviet Union, was regulated exclusively by means of secret directives from the Department of Visas and Registration.¹² This was also responsible for the "Basic Rules of Behavior for Soviet Citizens Temporarily Abroad on Private Business."¹³

For Soviet managers, the abundance of unpublished rules carried a hidden danger of another sort. As Feofanov said, "because of these contradictory norms, particularly regarding financial matters, you're never far from landing in prison."

All three participants in the discussion agreed that any "real possibility" of a Soviet citizen obtaining the revocation of an illegal departmental prohibition was not great: "After all, in a dispute with a department, a citizen is, as a rule, powerless. In a legal sense he has no support." None of the participants mentioned the publication in September 1986, of a plan of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to pass a law in the first quarter of 1987, "on the procedure for appealing against unjust actions by senior officials."¹⁴

The Berkhin Affair. The Ukrainian party daily *Radianska Ukraina*, reported in its January 8, 1987, issue that the Central Committee in Kiev had examined the materials relating to the illegal arrest in July 1986 by local authorities in Voroshilovgrad of Viktor B. Berkhin, a correspondent for the Soviet journal *Sovetskii shakhter*.