

**DEMOCRATISATION IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE :  
A STUDY IN RECENT TRENDS UNDER  
MIKHAIL GORBACHEV**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the M.Phil dissertation entitled, "DEMOCRATISATION IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE : A STUDY IN RECENT TRENDS UNDER MIKHAIL GORBACHEV" submitted by Mr. RAJEEV KUMAR of the Centre is his own work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or of any other University.



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## P\_R\_E\_F\_A\_C\_E

The emphasis on inseparable relationship between socialism and democracy has been a common theme in Soviet writings since the time of the October Revolution in the Soviet Union. In his days the need for elimination of bureaucratism and the deeper involvement of broad masses in the process of governance through a network of Soviets was underscored by Lenin. Soviet publicists continued to wax eloquent on the connection between socialism and democracy even during the worst days of suppression of individual liberty under Stalin. It was stated that socialism alone could lead to real democracy. The brief interlude when democracy was at least equally emphasized during the period of de-Stalinization came to an end with the fall of Khrushchev in 1964. Under his neo-Stalinist successor, Brezhnev, the conscious march towards restoration of socialist legality slowed down considerably. Even then from the rostrum of the Party Congresses Brezhnev kept on harping on the need to expand socialist democracy.

(With the advent of Gorbachev to power a qualitatively new trend appeared in the political life of the USSR. If previously it was the case of socialism leading to democracy, the trend was reversed with a new stress on democracy. It was felt that the goal of socialism could not be realized without ensuring real democracy in all walks of life - social,

political and economic. The April Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in 1985 critically analysed the state of affairs in society and elaborated the concept of acceleration to overcome the stagnation which the country was undergoing during the last years of Brezhnev's regime. It was not just a fortuitous development for the April Plenum only expressed what was being generally thought in the country. It was followed by another Plenum in June 1985 devoted to a discussion on ways to achieve scientific and technological progress. It worked out important programme for machine building and a number of other branches of national economy. It also dwelt on the necessity of refining the economic management. The 27th Congress further developed the strategic line of the Party whose essence lay in reorganization. It was realized that there could be no acceleration if the country did not start reorganizing societal life in order to make the entire atmosphere more democratic. Perestroika (reorganization) and Glasnost (openness) became the twin catchwords of the new efforts under Gorbachev to consolidate and further deepen socialist democracy.

The culmination point of the efforts towards democratization was reached at the January 1987 Plenum which put forward several bold ideas and measures. The task was not quite simple. As Gorbachev revealed later in his speech at

the 18th Congress of Soviet Trade Unions on 25 February 1987, the January Plenum had to be postponed thrice as there was no point in holding it without having a clear idea of the main issues. A sea-change has come in the political life of the Soviet Union during the recent period. The utmost development of socialist democracy and promotion of the people's self-government were described in the resolution passed by the January Plenum as the condition for the nation's faster social and economic development. The Plenum called for a thorough reform of the Soviet electoral system, giving voters a real opportunity to express their attitude not only to one candidate but to several candidates. The February 1988 Plenum further carried forward the process of democratization by working out an integral and comprehensive approach towards it. The Theses proposed to be discussed at the 19th Party Conference in June 1988 mark another important landmark in the direction of democratization by carrying perestroika into the Party.

The main thrust of the current democratization campaign under Gorbachev is three-fold, namely, election of Party officials by secret ballot, limiting the tenure of all elected offices up to the General Secretary to two Five-Year terms, and restricting the power of the Party and expanding that of the elected Soviets and promoting a law-based socialist State.

The present study is an attempt to identify and analyse the recent trends in the Soviet Union towards democratization of the country's polity since the advent of a new leadership to power under Mikhail Gorbachev. The focus of the study is the developments in the political sphere in the period beginning from the April 1985 Plenum of the Party Central Committee to the forthcoming 19th All-Union Party Conference scheduled to be held in June 1988. The researcher has scanned and scrutinized materials of the April 1985 Central Committee Plenum, proceedings of the Central Committee All-Union Conference on Acceleration of Scientific and Technical Progress held in June 1985, the Report of the Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress held in February-March 1986 by General Secretary Gorbachev, New Edition of the Party Programme, Resolutions, New Party Rules, and Guidelines for Economic Development adopted by the 27th Party Congress as well as the Reports by General Secretary Gorbachev at the January 1987, June 1987 and February 1988 Plenums of the Central Committee together with the Resolutions adopted at the said Plenums. The Draft Theses for consideration by the June 1988 Party Conference have also been consulted. No detailed materials about the July and October 1985 Plenums of the Central Committee as also of the October 1987 Plenum

have been published. In any case these Plenums did not discuss or adopt any important documents on changes in the political system and economic management. The important speeches of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, his published work "Perestroika", important editorials and write-ups in the Soviet press on democratization have also been used to reconstruct both the main parameters of formulation of the concept of democratization by the new leadership and to provide a coherent account of the ongoing struggle around glasnost and perestroika.

Beginning with a dim realization of the futility of the old approach and the need to switch over to an intensified economic development, the new Soviet leadership after Brezhnev decided to induct openness and publicity in discussions about the malaise of stagnation to suggest a way out of an already insufferable situation. What began as a reform "from the above" soon developed into an all-pervasive "revolution from below". Learning from the failure of the past experiments to democratize the polity and reorganize the economy separately and independently of each other, the new leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev struck upon the course of working out an integral approach linking both the political and economic spheres. Definite progress even though slow and at times halting can be noticed



in carrying perestroika right inside the Party as the culmination of the current drive for democratization. All through these crucial developments of historic importance for the future of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev has stood his ground as a resourceful leader trying to carry the entire Party with himself in his great endeavour to impart a humane face to socialism.

I remain deeply indebted to my research supervisor Professor Devendra Kaushik, for his invaluable guidance in completing the work. He has helped me a lot in understanding the complex current developments in the USSR with his deep knowledge and insight about that country. I am thankful to the staff and the Librarian of the JNU Central Library, for their help in collecting material for the study.

New Delhi,  
June 22, 1988.

Rajeev Kumar  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE SEED-TIME FOR REFORM : THE LAST DAYS OF BREZHNEV AND THE ANDROPOV-CHERNENKO INTERREGNUM

Although a new period of domestic renewal began with the assumption of leadership by Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1985, it is often forgotten in the glare of publicity for the new leadership's policies of glasnost and perestroika that the period preceding the succession of Gorbachev was not as completely devoid of an urge for renovation and reform as it is generally supposed to be. In fact, the impulse for reform which became quite obvious during the brief period of Andropov's rule and which could not be suppressed even during the succeeding Chernenko period had started surfacing towards the close of the Brezhnev period. Beginning with the late seventies even the generally complacent Soviet leadership began to realize serious shortcomings in the domestic policies of the country. Soviet growth rates had started declining and the targets of the tenth plan had not been realized. This forced Brezhnev into talking critically of the existing methods of planning and management as also of the performance of certain vital sectors of Soviet economy in the later years of his regime.

The July 1979 decree and the measures adopted at the October 1980 Party Central Committee Plenum indicated

Brezhnev's concern over a declining Soviet economy. The realization of the need to deepen socialist democracy can be traced back to the 25th Party Congress in 1976. In his report to this Congress Leonid Brezhnev declared: "Today we know ... that genuine democracy is impossible without socialism and that socialism is impossible without a steady development of democracy. We see the improvement of our socialist democracy as consisting above all in a steady effort to ensure ever fuller participation by the working people in running all the affairs of society, in further developing the democratic principles of our state system, and in creating the conditions for the all-round flourishing of the individual."<sup>1</sup>

Brezhnev's report to the 26th CPSU Congress in 1981 contained a frank and forthright criticism of deficiencies in Soviet polity and society. Brezhnev was critical of violation of socialist criterion of distribution according to the quantity and quality of work. He referred to the harmful effects of "all sorts of levelling and instances of paying wages solely for appearing at work and not for its results and the granting of undeserved bonuses".<sup>2</sup> The evil consequences

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1 Documents and Resolutions - XXVth Congress of the CPSU (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1976), p. 103.

2 Documents and Resolutions - XXVIth Congress of the CPSU (Sovietland Booklets, 1981).

of alcoholism were also highlighted by Brezhnev at the 26th Party Congress. He said: "Drinking inflicts considerable damage on society and painfully hurts the family, and, speaking frankly, it is still a serious problem. All work collectives, all public organisations, and all Communists should do everything to combat this ugly phenomenon".<sup>3</sup>

Brezhnev's report to the 26th Party Congress also highlighted the induction of many specialists working in the economy into higher party positions in accordance with the instructions of the 25th Party Congress. He informed the 26th Congress that three out of every four secretaries of the Central Committees of the Communist parties of the Union Republics and of territorial and regional committees and two out of every three secretaries of City and District Party Committees had a technical, economic or agricultural education.<sup>4</sup> Questions of inner-party life and improvement of methods of party leadership prominently figured in Brezhnev's report to the 26th Party Congress. Brezhnev adopted a fresh approach to the principle of democratic centralism, emphasizing the "closest possible link between the Centre and the localities, between the party's leading organs and its rank and file".<sup>5</sup> "It is a two-way link",

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3 Ibid., p. 70.

4 Ibid., p. 79.

5 Ibid., p. 81.

declared Brezhnev. The importance of letters and suggestions from citizens was duly underscored by Brezhnev who also emphasized the need for "frank and principled criticism and self-criticism", and "promoting the socio-political activity of every citizen".<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that Brezhnev in his report to the 26th Party Congress also spoke about glasnost. He said: "A very important matter is to keep all Soviet citizens informed of party affairs. Publicity (glasnost) in the work of party organizations is an effective means of strengthening the party's ties with the masses."<sup>7</sup> Brezhnev further urged that the party should not fight shy of dealing with "difficult questions". "Our party's policy is clear. We are prepared to answer any questions that the Soviet people want to ask. This must be done with more initiative, bearing in mind that if we do not answer them, the enemies of our country will try to take advantage of this to smear socialism" - added Brezhnev. Nor is acceleration of socio-economic progress by harnessing the latest scientific and technological development and by switching over to the path of intensive development an entirely new concept. Tikhonov's

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6 Ibid., p. 71.

7 Ibid., p. 82.

report to the 26th Party Congress and the Guidelines for the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and for the period ending in 1990 highlighted the task of acceleration through intensive development of economy.

Tikhonov said: "Everything - accelerating scientific and technological progress, perfecting the structure of social production, improving planning and management, and raising the standards of economic activity - must be subordinated to the aim of making the economy more intensive and achieving higher production outputs with smaller inputs and less resources. Such an approach to the matter by the Party Central Committee has met with the whole hearted approval of our Congress. It has the support of entire Party and the entire Soviet people."<sup>8</sup> Tikhonov's Report clearly stated that the Soviet Party and Government had set before themselves the task of completing the switchover of the economy to intensification during the 80s. The Guidelines stressed among others the need to better the style and methods of running the economy by enhancing the role of financial and credit levers in intensifying production, strengthening the management - accounting system and tightening the economic regime.<sup>9</sup> Improving the organizational structure of management and promoting the initiative and creative endeavour of the

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8 Ibid., p. 101.

9 Ibid., p. 203.

working people in managing the economy were emphasized as important task before the Party.

However, Brezhnev's talk about transition from extensive to intensive growth and greater efficiency and higher quality could not take off from the ground. The long ailing leader died in 1982 leaving for his successors numerous domestic problems largely resulting from inaction that was characteristic of a period widely hailed for its stability. Brezhnev may not have succeeded in extricating Soviet economy from stagnation, yet it cannot be denied that during his last years he felt seriously concerned over the accumulation of unsolved problems. Some of the measures introduced by him did lead to a considerable expansion of the functions and powers of the Soviets at all levels, particularly at the level of local Soviets which acquired much greater powers of coordination and supervision in respect of enterprises, institutions and organizations subordinate to higher authorities but located in their area. He introduced the practice of approval of territorial plans for economic and social development by the local Soviets. The USSR Supreme Soviet and the Supreme Soviets of the Republics also became more active in the field of law-making and no longer confined their role to merely law-ratifying agencies. The role of public organizations, the Trade Unions and the YCL also increased. At some places experiments began to be made in

the direction of elective and competitive selection of top industrial executives. The trade unions acquired a greater say in the appointment of factory and plant directors and their continuation in office. An improvement albeit slow was taking place in the political ethos of the country and some steps had been taken towards further democratization of the Soviet political system. After the adoption of new constitution of USSR in 1977, the links of the Deputies and the Soviets in general with the people grew noticeably stronger. Nationwide discussions of major draft laws became firmly established in practice.

The trend received a shot in the arm after Andropov took over the reins of power in November 1982. The short period of Andropov saw the country launched on a new course. A drive to tone up work discipline and remove corruption in high places was launched. Andropov approved an economic experiment aimed at decentralized planning in the plants of five industrial ministries, giving their managers autonomy to take decisions normally taken at a higher level. A new law on work collectives giving industrial workers a say in management decisions affecting them by making it obligatory on such matters as housing allocation, and shop-floor managers' appointments was adopted. In April 1983, section head of the Novosibirsk Institute of Economics and Industrial



Organization, the sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya, delivered a report on the economy at a closed seminar. Zaslavskaya attributed the weaknesses of Soviet economy to the continuation of the politico-economic culture that arose in the 1930s to run a rather primitive economy. The essence of this culture lay in predominance of administrative over economic methods. The report concluded that the present day complex economy could no longer be regulated from a single centre and greater initiative and freedom must be given to the working people. The Novosibirsk report was far from a plea for hasty action. Andropov confined himself to a limited reform experiment in five industrial ministries.

At the June 1983 Central Committee Plenum Andropov emphasized the need to raise the standard of ideological and theoretical work of the Party. He pleaded for a change of style in the performance of the Soviet system of political education by putting an end to "formalism...mechanical memorising (or reading from a prepared text), divorce from life, of particular general theses".<sup>10</sup> In his speech at the Plenum Andropov described the cardinal improvement of labour productivity as the key task in the economic sphere. This

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<sup>10</sup> Y.V. Andropov, Speeches, Articles, Interviews, A Selection, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 5-6.

task was to be achieved mainly through "transition to intensive development, the merging in reality of the advantages of our socialist system with the achievements of scientific and technological revolution".<sup>11</sup> Andropov called for introduction of automation in production with the widest use of computers and robots. In order to encourage the introduction of new technology Andropov urged the Party "to work out such a system of organizational, economic and moral measures which will make both managers and workers, and of course, scientists and designers, interested in renewal of equipment, and will make it unprofitable to work in the old fashion".<sup>12</sup>

Andropov also highlighted the possibilities for further democratizing the existing procedure for taking decisions on major matters of State and social life. He suggested "ever broader discussion of drafts of such decisions in work collectives; the obligatory heeding, in relevant cases, of the conclusions of Trade Unions, Komsomol and women's organizations; a maximally attentive approach to the proposals of working people". Andropov posed the following question: "And cannot greater publicity (glasnost) in work and the regular reporting-back of leading executives to the population also help bring the activities of the Party and

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11 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

12 Ibid., p. 10.

State bodies closer to the needs and interests of the people?"<sup>13</sup>

Andropov stressed the need to give an important place to the question of further development of democratic principles in the management of production in the new edition of the Party Programme than under preparation. He also underlined the importance of translating into life "in full measure" the Draft Law on Work Collectives which was about to be discussed at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Soviet leader made a powerful plea for seriously implementing the Law on Work Collectives. In this connection what Andropov said at the June 1983 Plenum of the Central Committee deserves to be quoted at length. He said: "...the law must be implacable and its application inevitable. Protection of the interests of the people is one of the mainstays of our socialist democracy....We should declare a real war on such practices when our democratic principles and standards are not supported by actions, when people are content only with the formal aspect, with a semblance of action. What good can, say, a meeting do if, as often happens now, it is held in the main according to a prepared script, if there is no interested, frank discussion, if

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13 Ibid., p. 15.

statements by speakers are edited beforehand while initiative and especially criticism are smoothed over and muffled? And what is the worth of the work of a trade union organization which does not dare raise its voice in defence of the interest of the working people, against particular irregularities in production? Or what is the activity of people's controllers worth if their signals are not heeded and much-needed measures are not taken? It is a matter of exceedingly great importance to see to it that words are never at variance with deeds and that the essence of the matter is not replaced by form. This, if you like, is one of the major potentialities for improving our socialist democracy in all aspects of State and public life."<sup>14</sup> Andropov also stressed that democratization, which is essentially linked with a broader involvement of the masses in managing the affairs of society will not proceed of its own accord" or through "some body's goodwill" as it is determined "both by the material possibilities of society and the level of political consciousness and culture of the masses".<sup>15</sup>

While Andropov was quite forthright in demanding a real implementation of the laws enhancing the role of public

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14 Ibid., p. 16.

15 Ibid., p. 17.

organizations and work collectives and bridging the gulf that divided words and deeds, he did not agree to the Western advocacy of establishment of some kind of "pluralism" as an "inalienable attribute of democracy".<sup>16</sup> In his speech at the 112th anniversary of Lenin's birth on 22 April 1982 Andropov clearly declared: "In short, we Communists are for developing democracy in the interest of socialism, not to the detriment of socialism."<sup>17</sup>

From the above, it is clear that the short period of Andropov's rule was not just confined to measures aimed at ensuring tighter work discipline through a vigorous campaign against alcoholism and absenteeism. It was a period of great churning of ideas which had far-reaching implications for the future course of development leading to the launching of perestroika and glasnost under Gorbachev. In his brilliant article published in Kommunist in 1983 entitled "The Teaching of Karl Marx and Some Questions of Building Socialism in the U.S.S.R.", Andropov dwelt at length on the complexity of the process of turning "mine" into "ours", that is the real triumph of public ownership of the means of production. In this connection he cautioned against simplification of the process. Andropov wrote, "The historical experience of real

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16 Ibid., p. 116.

17 Ibid., p. 117.

socialism shows that the turning of what is 'my own' privately-owned into what is 'ours' and common to all is no simple matter. The revolution in the relations of ownership does not boil down to a single act as a result of which the basic means of production become the property of the whole people. It is far from one and the same thing to acquire the rights of a master and to become a real, wise and thrifty master. The people who have completed socialist revolution have for a long time yet fully to grasp their new position as Supreme and undivided owners of all public wealth - to grasp it economically, politically and, if you wish, psychologically, developing a collectivist mentality and behaviour."<sup>18</sup> He concluded: "The change in property relations does not remove by itself all the negative features of human relationships that have accumulated over the centuries."<sup>19</sup>

Andropov could foresee the difficulties in the way of development of Soviet democracy. In his Kommunist article he wrote, "Soviet democracy has and...will still have difficulties of growth conditioned by the material potentialities of society, the level of consciousness of the masses, their political culture and also by the fact that our society

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18 Ibid., p. 194.

19 Ibid., p. 199.

is developing not in hot house atmosphere, not in isolation from the hostile world around us...."<sup>20</sup> Andropov strongly rebutted the view that the contemporary aspect of socialist statehood and democracy was at variance with the perspective of Communist self government indicated by Marx. According to him Marxist ideas that to govern the new society is the task of "the people, constituted in Communes", was outlined by Lenin in the conditions of his country into the formulation "...the people themselves...united in the Soviets, must run the State". He totally rejected the interpretation of self-government as "leaning to anarcho-syndicalism, to splitting society into independent corporations competing with each other, to democracy without discipline, to the notion of rights without duties".<sup>21</sup> But Andropov wholeheartedly endorsed the idea of democratization of the Party. In his article quoted above, he wrote: "Being the nucleus of the political system of Soviet society, the Party itself sets an example of democratic organization in all its activities. It elaborates and develops democratic principles which become part and parcel of socialist life in all of its spheres. It is one of the most important manifestations of the Party's guiding role in society's life, of its inspiring influence on the masses."<sup>22</sup>

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20 Ibid., pp. 204-5.

21 Ibid., pp. 206-7.

22 Ibid., p. 208.

Andropov also raised the important issue of precisely delimiting the functions of the Party and State agencies which Lenin was obliged to take up during his last days. At the June 1983 Central Committee Plenum Andropov drew attention to this question. He said: "...it is very important to ensure in practice a correct distribution of functions between Party and State agencies. It has been said more than once that the Party agencies should not duplicate State agencies, but we have not always managed to avoid this. The result is frequently a diminution of the responsibility of executives of State agencies and an endeavour to shift responsibility to Party agencies, and elements of a departmental approach to work are engendered involuntarily in the Party bodies."<sup>23</sup>

While fully conscious of the need to raise the rate of switching over the country's economy to the course of intensive development through changes in planning, management and economic mechanism and overcoming the gap between words and deeds, Andropov at the same time cautioned against hasty changes. Addressing a meeting of Party veterans on 15 August 1983, Andropov said: "We must be very cautious when dealing with an economy of such size and complexity as ours. In this case the proverb 'look before you leap' is particularly apt.

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<sup>23</sup> Pravda, 16 June 1983.



That is why, while preparing major decisions, we do our best to study each question thoroughly and resort to extensive experiments in order to analyse, calmly and without haste, the effect of suggested innovations...."<sup>24</sup>

Chernenko who succeeded Andropov in February 1984 and stayed in power until his death in March 1985 when he was succeeded by Gorbachev, also contributed to the process of ideas which started in the late Brezhnev period, reaching its climax during the short period of Andropov's stewardship of the Soviet state. Contrary to the commonly held view of the Chernenko period as a relapse into Brezhnevite stagnation, the process of rethinking did not come to a halt notwithstanding Chernenko's struggles with the Brezhnevite old guards in the Politbureau. In any case Gorbachev played an important role in the Party and State affairs during the prolonged period of illness of both Andropov and Chernenko. In fact during the latter's illness he was functioning as the acting General Secretary. It was in his keynote address at the All Union Scientific and Practical Conference held in December 1984/Gorbachev first talked about glasnost in the context of development of Soviet political system. He made a strong plea for taking into consideration "the

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24 Andropov, n. 10, p. 264.

interests of various social groups in our political system" and for "scientific elaboration of principle of democratic centralism in today's conditions".<sup>25</sup> Gorbachev also highlighted the need for publicity or openness in public life as a vital condition of socialist democracy. He said: "Publicity (glasnost) is an integral aspect of socialist democracy and a norm of all public life. Extensive, timely and candid information is an indication of trust in people and of respect for their intelligence, feelings and abilities to comprehend various events on their own. It enhances the working people's activeness. Publicity in the work of Party and State agencies is an effective means of combating bureaucratic distortions and obliges people to take a more thoughtful approach to adoption of the decisions, the organization of supervision over the fulfilment of those decisions, and the rectification of shortcomings and deficiencies. In large part, the persuasiveness of propaganda, the effectiveness of upbringing and ensuring the unity of word and deed depend on this."<sup>26</sup>

Gorbachev's speech at the December Ideological Conference serves as a useful guide to his views on democratization. The central theme of his address was the

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25 Pravda, 11 December 1985.

26 Ibid.

need to introduce new ideas, to exchange opinions freely and to show respect to others' views. He urged the social scientists to encourage tolerance of different views and urged the economists "to part with outdated ideas and stereotypes". Gorbachev dismissed the idea that "everything must be regulated from the Centre" and repeatedly stressed the need for development of self-management skills and for provision of "room for initiative by people".<sup>27</sup>

In spite of opposite linkages of Andropov and Chernenko in the Politburo their views on such vital issues as the need for strengthening of socialist democracy and for economic reforms as also for a creative interpretation of Marxism-Leninism bear a close similarity. In his work Questions on the Work of the Party and State Apparatus Chernenko dwelt upon the need to strengthen democratic practices within the Party, for greater openness in Party decision-making and freer debates in Party meetings. Chernenko also advocated a more innovative approach to

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27 For full text of Gorbachev's address, the Partizdat brochure entitled, "The People's Living Creativity: A Document of the All-Union Scientific-Practical Conference on the Improvement of Developed Socialism and the Party's Ideological Work in the Light of the Decisions of the June (1983) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee."

economic management and greater experiment in industry. He favoured giving workers a greater role in management. In his article "The Vanguard Role of the Communist Party" (Kommunist, no. 6, 1982) Chernenko pleaded for "reassessment of seemingly indisputable theses" in the light of "changing conditions". He gave a call for a resolute struggle against "dogmatism, ossification of thought and the irrational imitation of existing models". It were Chernenko's efforts to force the Party and State bureaucracies to be more responsive to letters from the public which resulted in the 10 December 1982 announcement of the Politburo concerning the value of citizen's letters.<sup>28</sup> According to American scholar Baruch A. Hazan, Chernenko's term glasnost referring to the open approach to personnel appointments was used by Pravda editorial of 6 December 1982 concerning work with the cadres.<sup>29</sup> In any case Brezhnev had used the term glasnost even though casually in his Report to the 26th Party Congress in 1981. This was followed by Chernenko's use of this term in his work Questions on the Work of the Party and State Apparatus in 1982. As noted above, Andropov at the June 1983 Plenum reintroduced this term. The origin of the term can be traced back to the 50s and 60s of the last century when it appeared as a reformist watch word.<sup>30</sup>

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28 See Baruch A. Hazan, From Brezhnev to Gorbachev (New York, 1987), pp. 63-64.

29 Ibid., p. 64.

30 Robert C. Tucker, Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia from Lenin to Gorbachev (Sussex, 1987), p. 145.

Lenin had also used this term in<sup>the</sup> early Soviet period.

To sum up, beginning with the last days of Brezhnev and continuing all through the period of Andropov and Chernenko a distinct movement towards reform and renovation can be witnessed. There was an all-round realization that the command methods of the 30s could not deliver goods in the Soviet economy and stagnation could be overcome only through greater decentralization and a more real participation of workers in the affairs of the Soviet state and society, that is, greater democratization. The reversal of economic decline and modernization of Soviet economy clearly required more than reform of economic organizations and policies. A technologically advanced dynamic economy needed significant changes in the social and political spheres. The reforms of the 50s and the 60s could not succeed because they were not accompanied, by such socio-political changes.

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CHAPTER II

FROM APRIL 1985 PLENUM OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO 27TH  
PARTY CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY-MARCH 1986 : GORBACHEV'S  
SPADEWORK FOR DEMOCRATIZATION



Mikhail Gorbachev's appointment as the General Secretary of the Central Committee of CPSU following the death of Chernenko on 11 March 1985 came as the culmination point of a truly meteoric political career. In just 6 years Gorbachev rose from First Secretary of the Party organization in the Stavropol Krai to the exalted number one position in the Party hierarchy. After serving as First Secretary in Stavropol for 8 years, Gorbachev moved to Moscow in 1978 to take up the post of Central Committee in-charge of Agriculture. He had finished two courses of higher education, graduating in 1955 from the Faculty of Law of Moscow State University and in 1967 from the Stavropol Agricultural Institute. He was lucky enough to survive several disastrous harvests and was appointed candidate member of the Politburo in 1979 to be elevated as full member the following year.

Though not elected General Secretary after Andropov's death, Gorbachev was for all purposes the Second Secretary and heir apparent. His areas of responsibility included ideology, economy and foreign affairs. In Chernenko's

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absence he chaired Politburo meetings and led the Secretariat. By the end of 1984 Gorbachev had consolidated his position. By now he had given enough indication of his new ideas on democratization, foreign affairs and management of agriculture. His 10 December 1984 speech at the All-Union Scientific-Practical Conference to which reference has already been made in the preceding chapter, spelt out his bold and outspoken views on inner-party democracy and free discussion. Similarly in his earlier Pravda article of 10 February 1983 Gorbachev had endorsed the collective contract system in agriculture. He repeatedly expressed his support for expanding the private plots of collective farm workers, describing them as an important source of increased production and an integral part of the socialist system. In his 8 September 1984 speech in Sofia and in his 18 December 1984 speech before the British Parliament, Gorbachev propounded his novel ideas on International Communism and foreign policy in general. In Sofia he stated that Moscow had no "universal recipes" applicable to all countries and that socialism should develop in accordance with "the traditions and conditions of the separate countries".<sup>1</sup> In London, Gorbachev said: "We all agree that ours is a vulnerable, fragile, yet interdependent

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<sup>1</sup> Rabotnichesko Delo, 9 September 1984.

world, where we must coexist, whether we want this or not. For all that Separates us, we have one planet, and Europe is our common home, not a theatre of operations."<sup>2</sup>

Gorbachev started consolidating his new power immediately after his nomination as the Party General Secretary. During the early stages of his tenure by early April Gorbachev retired as many as six Obkom Secretaries. Another eight had already been removed by him during the final weeks of Chernenko's tenure. Several Union Ministers were also retired. At the 8 April CC Conference of leading economic and management personnel Gorbachev outlined his plans for an extensive economic reforms. That his new policy of reform was encountering resistance became apparent from the low coverage given by Pravda of 9 April to Gorbachev's plans. It was only after the 11 April Politburo meeting which discussed economic issues that the full text of Gorbachev's speech at the Conference was carried by all Soviet central newspapers including Pravda. The main thrust of the speech was that a decentralization of economic power was required. Gorbachev insisted that more rights and responsibilities should be given to plant managers and that interference by Central Ministries and Planning bodies should be reduced to the minimum.

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2 Pravda, 19 December 1984.



Gorbachev pointed out that "frank talks" must be encouraged to find out what was preventing the growth of efficiency and what needed to be changed and corrected.<sup>3</sup>

Although the April 1985 Plenum is usually referred to as the great turning point in the Post-Brezhnev course of Soviet policy of reform and openness, it is forgotten that bold and innovative measures were in fact recommended by the extraordinary March Plenum which elected Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Party Central Committee. As the Pravda editorial "Openness in Work" of 27 March 1985 wrote: "It was noted at the extraordinary (March) Plenary session of the CPSU CC that it is necessary to ensure even greater openness in work of Party, Soviet, State and public organizations...." The editorial stressed that public openness was essential to improved moral and political climate. Pravda noted, "Extensive, timely and candid information shows trust in people and respect for their intelligence, feelings and abilities to sort out various events for themselves.... there is still work to be done if we are to take full advantage of the considerable potential of public openness to further improve the moral and political climate in our society." Pointing out that personnel are the key link in the Party

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3 Ibid., 12 April 1985.

policy and that widespread public openness is "especially important in their evaluation, selection and promotion, the Party organ informed that the method of open discussion and selection of personnel had been used in Krasnodar to appoint more than 1,000 executives, including 135 chief executives, 30 of their deputies, 276 middle level officials and several hundred brigade leaders. Pravda also wrote that this exercise in Krasnodar was not just a "proforma procedure" and that 150 candidates were rejected in the course of collective open discussion. The Pravda regretted that "there are still some instances in which the appointment of a given official is decided within a narrow circle, without regard for the opinion of his comrades who work alongside him". The paper highlighted the need for more active use of public openness as an important instrument of correct personnel policy for Party, Soviet and public organizations "involving the working people in the daily discussion and resolution of questions pertaining to the work of our government bodies, enterprises, construction organizations, collective farms and state farms is of enormous importance" - the Paper commented. It also highlighted the role of Press, Television and Radio in promoting public openness and urged that "the Soviet person must be spoken to only in the language of truth, which tolerates neither circumlocution, deliberate omissions, evasion of acute

problems, nor the sensationalizing of shortcoming". The Pravda editorial recalled Lenin's words that "public openness was the sword that heals the very wounds it has inflicted".

In fact, the last week of March witnessed an openness campaign gathering momentum in the Soviet Press. Izvestia opened a new rubric "speaking out about openness" under which responses of about 200 readers to the Izvestia article (issue no. 19, 1985) were published. Among the readers who responded to this public discussion on openness there was a person who, sounded sceptical about the whole campaign. A letter published in Izvestia said: "Our problem is that you and I can speak about genuine openness on all fronts only in a private conversation over a bottle of brandy in your cosy kitchen and only provided we trust each other absolutely. After all, you yourself also are just a cog in that machine, and all you have to do is slip over so slightly, and the big gear wheels will instantly grind you into powder."<sup>4</sup> A Druzenko, author of Izvestia article of 23 March also referred to the March Plenary Session as the originator of the policy to expand openness. According to him thesis on expanding openness was formulated at this session "not as a wish or even as a task but as a duty of

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4 Izvestia, 23 March 1985.

Party, Soviet, State and public organizations". Openness was projected as an instrument of socialist democracy "undergoing a process of perfection just the way democracy does".<sup>5</sup> The author endorsed the readers view of openness "as an effective instrument of public control, and primarily of control over the activities of officials".

It was in April 1985 that Gorbachev brought his informal and personal style of leadership, which he had practised at Stavropol, to Moscow. On 16 and 17 April he toured Moscow's Proletarsky district visiting residential areas, the Likhachev plant and a hospital. All this happened on the eve of the famous 23 April CC Plenum. The historic April Plenum promoted V.M. Chebrikov, the KGB chief, from candidate member to member of the Politburo of the CC and elected N.I. Ryzhkov and Ye K. Ligachev, both secretaries of the CC of the CPSU, members of the Politburo of the CC. It also elected S.L. Sokolov, Defence Minister of the USSR, a candidate member of the Politburo of the CC and V.P. Nikonov a secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. These new appointments consolidated the power of M.S. Gorbachev who delivered at the Plenum a report "On Convening the Regular 27th CPSU Congress and the Tasks connected with Preparing and Holding It".

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5 Ibid.

Noting that profound changes have taken place in social life of the USSR, of which the Soviet people are rightly proud of, Mikhail Gorbachev observed: "Life and its dynamism dictate the need for further changes and transformations, for the achievement of a new qualitative state of society, in the broadest sense of the word. This means, above all, the scientific and technical updating of production and the attainment of the highest world level of labour productivity. It means the improvement of social relations, first of all economic relations. It means profound changes in the sphere of labour and people's material and spiritual living conditions. It means the invigoration of the entire system of political and public institutions, the deepening of socialist democracy and self-government by the people."<sup>6</sup>

Gorbachev was candid enough to acknowledge the "unfavourable tendencies" which had grown in the past few years. These were attributed by him to failure to properly assess in good time "the changes in the objective conditions of the development of production, the need for accelerating its intensification and for changes in the methods of economic management".<sup>7</sup> To overcome economic stagnation,

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6 Pravda, 24 April 1985.

7 Ibid.

Gorbachev suggested a fundamental improvement in the style of activity by restructuring management, planning and structural and investment policy to enhance organization and discipline everywhere. The Soviet leader gave top priority to "energising the human factor". Stressing the need to continue to develop the centralized principle, he made a plea for "more boldly advancing along the path of expanding the rights of enterprises and their independence, introduce economic accountability and, on this basis, increase the responsibility and stake of labour collectives in the final results of work".<sup>8</sup>

Gorbachev's address to the April Plenum also contained a plea "to enhance the responsibility of Republic and local agencies for the management of economic, social and cultural construction and the satisfaction of the working people's needs". "It is necessary to continue to expand the rights of local agencies, to intensify their initiative and stake in the development of production, the use of resources and the organisation of all spheres of service to the population" - said Gorbachev. The Soviet leader also stressed that the complex and large-scale task of the present stage could be accomplished "only by relying on the vital creativity of

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8 Ibid.

the people, on their intelligence, talent and labour" and declared: "We must rally millions of working people to the fulfilment of these tasks, constantly develop the initiative and energy of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia...."<sup>9</sup>

The consolidation of the Party organizations' ties with the masses, an upswing in the responsibility and activeness of Communist was also outlined as an important task before the Party by Gorbachev. Gorbachev also drew attention to the ill effects of undue Party interference in the work of management of the economy. He observed: "It is impossible to achieve substantial results in any sphere of activity as long as a party official is taking the place of an economic manager, an engineer is taking the place of a messenger, a scientist is working at a vegetable depot, and a weaver is working on a livestock section."<sup>10</sup>

Gorbachev's address also drew attention to the new Politburo line "aimed at ensuring the stability of Party leadership and the correct combination of experienced and young personnel". He was obviously referring to the compromise reached during the Chernenko period when the old guard insisted

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

on ideally combining stability with induction of new blood. In what amounted to a forceful plea for replacing the ageing leadership, Gorbachev referred to letters addressed by the Communists to Central Committee calling attention to the fact that some leaders holding the same post for a long time, frequently stops seeing new things and get used to shortcomings. Gorbachev said: "This is something to think about: We must look for ways to achieve more active movement among our leadership cadres. It is necessary to more boldly promote women and promising young personnel to responsible posts."<sup>11</sup>

In developing Soviet democracy Gorbachev saw a great scope for further intensification of Party guidance of the Soviets, the Trade Unions, the YCL and other segments of the Soviet political system. Exhorting the Party Committees to do a good job of seeing to it "that public openness is ensured, that all channels of communication with the masses work, and that attention is paid to public opinion and to critical comments, statements and letters from citizens", Gorbachev expressed the hope that preparations for the 27th Party Congress and discussions by the working people of the draft congress documents would undoubtedly stir Soviet

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11 Ibid.



people to greater activity marking an advance in the direction of further democratization of the Soviet system.

Following the April 1985 Plenum of the CC, Gorbachev continued his meetings with Soviet citizens. His visit to Leningrad on 16 and 17 May where he had informal meetings with citizens on the streets and with the students of the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute, were telecast by Soviet television. On 17 May Pravda published the CPSU Central Committee decision on measures to surmount drunkenness and alcoholism. Gorbachev's visit to Leningrad on 16 and 17 May 1985 also projected Romanov's eclipse. On 4 June Pravda reported the appointment of G. Razumovsky as head of the CPSU Central Committee Party organizational work department. Gorbachev had a close friendship with Razumovsky who worked as first secretary in Krasnodar region. The personnel changes initiated by Gorbachev were accompanied by pressures for economic reforms. On 11-12 June 1985 a Central Committee All-Union Conference on Acceleration of Scientific and Technical Progress was held. All Politburo members except G. Romanov attended this conference together with CC secretaries. Gorbachev in his speech at the Conference criticized "the lack of change for many years" and pointed out that "experiments are carried out but nothing

changes".<sup>12</sup> He recommended specific steps to deal with the situation: improving investment policy to produce a higher return from investments; sharply increasing investment in the engineering industry; initiating a process of decentralization by reducing the role of gosplan and the central economic ministries; and giving greater independence to individual enterprises. Several individual ministers were criticized by name for shortcomings and by implication Central Committee secretary V. Dolgikh and Premier Tikhanov, both survivals from the Brezhnev era, were also criticized.

In July 1985 a Central Committee Plenum was held. The Plenum accepted Romanov's request to relieve him of the duties of member of the Politburo and Secretary of the CC on health grounds. It promoted E.A. Shevardnadze as a full member of the Politburo and elected B.N. Yeltsin and L.N. Zaykov Secretaries of the CPSU CC. In July 1985 the Supreme Soviet session elected Gromyko as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and appointed Shevardnadze as Foreign Minister in his place. These changes further consolidated Gorbachev's personal power. On 28 September the Pravda reported the

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12 Moscow Television Service in Russian 1700 GMT, 11 June 1985, Daily Report (USSR), 12 June 1985.

retirement of Tikhonov as Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers in view of his state of health. The appointment of A. Yakovlev to the post of chief of the CC propaganda department and the nomination of D. Gvishiani as deputy head of the Gosplan also strengthened Gorbachev's hands. Tikhonov was succeeded by one of Gorbachev's closest ally Nikolai Ryzhkov. Tikhonov never went on record as a supporter of Gorbachev's reforms and the Council of Ministers headed by him had been the subject of repeated criticism from Gorbachev. On 14 October 1985 Nikolai Baybakov, Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee who had been appointed by Brezhnev in 1965 was replaced by Nikolai Talyzin. Baybakov was a strong opponent of decentralization of planning and of introduction of new mathematical models.

The 15 October 1985 Plenum of the CC concentrated on adopting the drafts of three key Party documents to be placed before the public for discussion before the 27th CPSU Congress which was to adopt them in their final form. These documents contained the New Edition of the CPSU Programme, the Revised CPSU Rules and Guidelines for the 12th 5-year Plan and for the 15-year period until the year 2000. In his speech at the Plenum Gorbachev described some of the points contained in the old CPSU Programme as based on "groundless

fantasy and bookish pedantry" which "have not stood the test of time".<sup>13</sup> On the subject of the new CPSU rules he said that the draft amendments were aimed at "expanding democracy within the Party" and increasing the Party organisations' "responsibility for resolving common concerns".<sup>14</sup> The Guidelines for 12th 5-year Plan and the period to the year 2000 were envisaged as a component part of Gorbachev's efforts to transform the Soviet economy by raising labour productivity and almost doubling Soviet economic output during the next 15 years.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of October 1985 four months before the convening of the 27th CPSU Congress Gorbachev had emerged as a strong leader in the Kremlin engaged in the historic task of transforming the entire Soviet economy through increased productivity and democratization of Soviet society and polity.

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13 Moscow Domestic Service in Russian 1200 GMT, 15 October 1985, Daily Report (USSR), 16 October 1985.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

THE 27TH PARTY CONGRESS : RENEWAL OF SOCIALISM  
THROUGH DEMOCRATISATION

The closing months of 1984 saw rejuvenation of the Party and State apparatus at the top and middle levels along with a nation-wide discussion of the Draft CPSU Programme and Statutes which were adopted by the 27th CPSU Congress in February-March 1985. On 1 November 1984, V. Murakhovskiy who had succeeded Gorbachev as First Secretary of the Stavropol Kraykom in 1978 and worked under him earlier as First Secretary of the Stavropol City Party Committee and Secretary of the Stavropol Kraykom was appointed Secretary CC in-charge agriculture. A Plenum of the Kirghiz Communist Party held on 2 November relieved T. Usubaliyev of his duties as First Secretary and elected A. Masaliyev, as the new First Secretary of the Republic's Central Committee. Murakhovskiy's appointment signalled reorganization of the agricultural administration. Several changes in the composition of the USSR Council of Ministers took place during the month of November following the replacement of 80-year old Tikhonov as Premier by 65-year old Rhyzkov. Gorbachev was preparing the ground for introducing his reforms by replacing most of the top economic leaders with younger ones.

The process as Baruch A. Hazan observed bore the "overt character of de-Brezhnevization campaign".<sup>1</sup> Brezhnev was however not criticized personally before 19 December when a Pravda article appearing on his 80th birthday came down heavily on many of the phenomena associated with his rule. Earlier in his 6 November speech the KGB chief Chebrikov had said: "Soviet society is now going through a period that is exceptionally rich in content and is crucial. We have all felt that over a certain period of time, although progressive movement did continue, problems accumulated in the country, and delays in their solution resulted in economic and social difficulties...negative phenomena, such as narrow departmental interest, playing safe and falsification of reports have made themselves felt at various levels of management."<sup>2</sup>

During November Moscow's Komsomol theatre staged a new play Noah and His Song featuring a President with trembling hands and Ukrainian accent resembling Brezhnev at the fag end of his career. The 10 November 1985 Pravda carried an article by V. Kozhemyako, "Reflections on

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1 Baruch A. Hazan, From Brezhnev to Gorbachev (New York, 1987), pp. 183-9.

2 Pravda, 7 November 1985.

Letters : Against Flattery and Fawning" criticizing flattery and toadyism. The article coincided with the 3rd anniversary of Brezhnev's death about which Pravda maintained total silence. A State Agro Industrial Committee was established in 3rd week of November with Murakhovskiy as Chairman. The new body assumed responsibility for administering all agricultural production and processing, replacing 5 ministries, namely, agriculture, fruit and vegetable growing, rural construction, meat and dairy industry and the State Committee for production and technical servicing of agriculture. The step was intended to curtail the powers of ministerial bureaucracy.

The second half of November witnessed the first summit between Gorbachev and Reagan at Geneva. At the 26-27 November Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet Gorbachev assessed the summit results in highly positive terms though he was cautious enough to state that "at the meeting we did not succeed in finding solutions for the very important questions connected with ending the arms race". Nevertheless Gorbachev described the meeting as "undoubtedly a significant event" resulting in "personal contact with US President". Gorbachev called the dialogue as a "stabilizing" factor and also referred to its positive assessment by the Warsaw Pact leaders. That some dissident voices were also there is clear

from the speeches at the Supreme Soviet Session by chief of the General Staff Marshal Akhromeyev and Politburo member Shcherbitskiy. Marshal Akhromeyev was reported to have said: "The commitment adopted by the United States at the Geneva meeting not to seek military superiority over the Soviet Union is as yet only words. The so-called counter-proposals put forward by the US side at the talks are basically designed to undermine the strategic equilibrium in favour of the United States, and lead not to a lowering, but to a raising of the level of military confrontation.... These problems are far from solution. That is why we must not rest on our laurels, but must continue to struggle against the threat of war in all avenues."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Shcherbitskiy after admitting half-heartedly that the results of the Summit had shown "in principle" that it was possible to normalize relations between the USSR and the United States, warned that "the U.S. Administration will continue to make efforts to achieve military-strategic superiority over us and will try to deal with us, proceeding not from the principle of equality but from a position of strength".<sup>4</sup>

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3 Izvestia, 23 November 1985.

4 Ibid.



But opposition from the military circles did not deter Gorbachev from making changes in the composition of Council of Ministers. A number of important Union Ministers were retired in December 1985 including the navy chief Marshal Gorshkov and V. Dymshits. The accountability - election campaign preceding the 27th Party Congress gathered momentum during December to reach its zenith in January and February 1986. A. Koychumanov, First Secretary of the Alma Ata City Party Committee and a protege of Kazakh party chief D. Kunayev was sacked for abuse of power and immodesty. On 24 December a Plenum of the Moscow City Party Committee which Gorbachev attended, "relieved Victor Grishin of his duties as First Secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee due to his retirement" and appointed Boris Yeltsin as a successor. The new Moscow City Party chief followed Gorbachev's style of unannounced face-to-face meetings with ordinary citizens during his tours of the city's industrial plants and residential districts. At the city accountability election conference held on 24-25 January for the 27th Party Congress Yeltsin sharply criticized the city party organization for poor discipline and organization and other negative phenomena which he attributed to placing the City Party organization "beyond the sphere of criticism".<sup>5</sup> The Central Committee

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5 Moskovskaya Pravda, 25 January 1986.

Politburo praised the work of the conference of Moscow City Party organization at its meeting held on 30 January and gave a mandate to its leadership for "decisively reshaping the style, forms, and methods of party work and for eradicating examples of a carefree attitude and ostentation".<sup>6</sup> Thus Yeltsin was given a free hand in dismantling Grishin's political machine.

By January 1986 the accountability election campaign preceding the 27th CPSU Congress entered its final stage. The Party Central Committee Secretary Ligachev played an important part in it. By 15 February, 46 of the 157 oblast secretaries had been replaced (31 had already been replaced under Andropov). The Party election conferences in many of the oblasts were personally attended by Ligachev. On 26 January 1986 the Supreme Soviet Presidium removed V. Fedorchuk from the post of Minister of Internal Affairs. Several Ministers of Internal Affairs in the republics were also changed. These changes were linked with the anti-corruption campaign launched by Gorbachev, the most obvious targets of which were the Central Asian Republics. The Turkman Party Congress had already deposed First Secretary

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<sup>6</sup> Daily Report (USSR), 31 January 1986.

M. Gapurov for promoting "kinship", "personal loyalty", "flattery" and "careerism". As already noted the Kirghiz Party Congress had ousted First Secretary T. Usubaliyev for encouraging "servility and intrigue" and violation of "collective leadership". The Uzbek Party Congress accused Sharaf Rashidov who died in November 1983 of "creating a cult around the top leader and of creating an atmosphere of self-glorification, flattery and servility".<sup>7</sup> The Kazakh Party Congress however did not produce the desired result. Kunayev still managed to retain his post as First Secretary of the Kazakh Party Central Committee at the Kazakh Party Congress which reelected him on 8 February 1986. The 9 February Pravda carried a report on the Kazakh Party Congress under the title "The Times Require". The report quoted First Secretary of Kzyl-Orda Oblast Auyelbekov who had charged Kunayev with "conniving, promoting cadres on the basis of personal loyalty, kinship, common place of origin". Pravda also reproduced criticisms made by other Congress participants including Premier Nazarbayev. Pravda report was unique in so far as it publicly criticized a member of the Politburo. Another setback for Gorbachev was the confirmation of Shcherbitskiy as First Secretary of the

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7 Pravda, 2 February 1986.

Ukrainian Communist Party at the Republics Party Congress held in the first week of February. However unlike Kunayev Pravda did not carry any criticism of Shcherbitskiy's report to the Congress. At the CPSU Central Committee Plenum of 18 February 1986 which approved the Central Committee's report to the forthcoming Party Congress and summed up the results of the nationwide discussion of the new Party Programme and statutes, removed Grishin from the Politburo membership. According to American scholar Hazan, Gorbachev urgently needed to demonstrate his strength on the eve of the Congress to counteract the effect of his failure to achieve Kunayev's removal by the Kazakh Congress.

The 27th Congress of the CPSU held in Moscow from 25 February to 6 March was a momentous event that has with the passage of time become as important a milestone as the 20th Party Congress which ended on 25 February 1956. It is not without significance that Gorbachev chose 25 February the concluding day of the 20th Party Congress and also the 30th anniversary of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech to open the 27th Party Congress. An old classmate of Gorbachev and a former member of Czech Politburo Mlynar called Gorbachev "a child of the 20th Party Congress".

American Sovietologist Hazan is of the view that the Congress "proceeded in the well-established routine

pattern and differed in no respect from those at previous Party Congress".<sup>8</sup> He writes: "The issues of the supremacy of the Party, the importance of Central Planning, and the infallibility of Marxism-Leninism were sacrosanct. Obsolete Leninist jargon permeated every statement delivered at the Congress. Little was new, and indeed nothing new could be expected without renewing the elements of the system itself....Although accusing Brezhnev (in effect) of wanting to improve things without changing anything, Gorbachev actually signalled that he wanted to improve everything while changing nothing of consequence. His emphasis was on better utilizing existing results, cutting down waste, corruption and fraud, and strengthening discipline but not touching the system itself."<sup>9</sup> There are several other Western scholars who likewise feel that the main thrust of the 27th Party Congress was to make the existing system work better without changing its substance.

Of course, the 27th Congress did disappoint those Western scholars and experts who are badly addicted to the old habit of equating innovation and reform with the

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8 Baruch A. Hazan, n. 1, p. 203.

9 Ibid.

renunciation of socialism as a system. A careful scrutiny of the documents of the 27th Party Congress leads one to the conclusion that this Congress was really a Congress of bold innovation and radical reforms. In his political report to the Congress, Gorbachev made a powerful plea for not evading the problems that have arisen. "That sort of attitude is much too costly for the country, the State and the Party. So let us say it loud and clear!"<sup>10</sup> - said Gorbachev.

Gorbachev also said: It is not enough to see shortcomings and defects, to stigmatise them. It is necessary to do everything so that they do not exist".<sup>11</sup> To overcome the shortcomings Gorbachev suggested a three-pronged strategy, viz. (1) exposure of the truth to get real measure of the weaknesses; (2) no half-hearted efforts once transformation were launched; and, ensuring the masses' active, conscious and widest participation.

In the Congress Gorbachev reportedly talked about Perestroika. The term has been variously translated as restructuring or reconstruction or renewal. The Russian language dictionary published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences

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10 27th CPSU Congress Documents and Resolutions (New Delhi, 1986).

11 Ibid.

in 1983 describes perestroika as deriving its meaning from the corresponding verb which signifies changing the procedure of one's work, the direction of one's activity, of one's views. Gorbachev appears to be using this term in this larger sense of a reordering, reorientation or reformation.<sup>12</sup> In his Congress speech we find Gorbachev referring to perestroika in several contexts, as for example, "perestroika of thinking", "perestroika of the economic mechanism", "perestroika of party work", a "radical perestroika of the management mechanism", a "perestroika of higher and secondary special education", and a "psychological perestroika of our cadres". Gorbachev's perestroika in fact means, to quote Robert C. Tucker a "pervasive within-system reform of... real culture patterns, and to some extent of ideal patterns as well; in other words, a deep change of customary ways of thinking and acting in institutions and common situations in Soviet society and in the government way of thinking and acting in internal and external policy".<sup>13</sup> Tucker compares Gorbachev's reformation with the reformation in early modern Europe and feels that if it succeeds it would

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12 Robert C. Tucker, Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev Wheatshaeaf Books, 1987 p. 155.

13 Ibid., p. 156.

be as far-reaching in its consequences as the first reformation which encompassed only Western Europe and did not extend to Eastern Europe and Russia.<sup>14</sup>

Gorbachev's political report to the 27th Party Congress contained a resounding call for expanding glasnost. It is only through glasnost that people can be actively involved in administration and the process of governing the country which cannot be treated as the privilege of a narrow circle of professionals or political elite. "Broader publicity", said Gorbachev, "is a matter of principle to us." It is a political issue. Without publicity there is not, nor can there be, democracy, political creativity of the citizens and participation of the citizens in administration and management".<sup>15</sup> Rejecting the plea for exercising greater caution while speaking about shortcomings, omissions and difficulties, Gorbachev said: [T]here can only be one answer to this, a Leninist answer: Communists want the truth, always and under all circumstances. The experience of the past year has shown how forcefully Soviet people support an uncompromising appraisal of everything that

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14 Ibid.

15 27th CPSU Congress Documents and Resolutions (New Delhi, 1986), p. 78.



impedes our advance. But those who have grown used to doing slipshod work, to practising deception, indeed feel really awkward in the glare of publicity (glasnost), when everything done in the state and in society is under the people's control and is in full public view. Therefore we must make publicity an unfailing operative system."<sup>16</sup>

Gorbachev stressed the need for publicity in the work of not only the centre but also about "decisions taken locally by Party and government bodies, factory management and trade unions".

Both Gorbachev's political report and the new edition of the Party programme highlighted the need for further deepening the democratic character of socialist system. The new Party Programme put forth task calling for "consistent and unswerving development of the People's socialist self-government". In his report Gorbachev said: "Democracy is the wholesome and pure air without which a socialist public organism cannot live a full-blooded life. The report while highlighting the Party's role as "the guiding force and the principal guarantor of the development of socialist self-government" and its "leading role in

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16 Ibid., p. 78.

society" described the party as "itself the highest form of a self-governing socio-political organisation". Gorbachev pleaded for making the maximum use of the potentialities of Soviet representative bodies for securing full power for the people and for uniting and mobilizing the masses.

Gorbachev's report also recommended a course of promoting the autonomy and activity of the local Soviets and informed that proposals were being worked out to make each Soviet "a complete and responsible master in all things concerning the satisfaction of people's everyday needs and requirements; in using the allocated funds, the local potentialities and reserves; in coordinating and supervising the works of all organizations involved in servicing the population".<sup>17</sup> He suggested "a thorough examination" of the relationship between Soviets and the centrally managed enterprises in their territories". The General Secretary's report to the Congress recommended that the sessions of Soviets should be conducted far more effectively and that the standing committees' work should be more thorough and the practice of deputies' enquiries should be improved. It also stressed that the Committees' recommendations and the deputies' proposals and observations should be carefully considered and

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17 Ibid., p. 72.

taken into account by the executive bodies.<sup>18</sup> Also significant was a remark contained in Gorbachev's political report about "excessive centralization in matters which are not always clearly visible from the centre and can be much better solved locally".<sup>19</sup> It also contained an observation about the timeliness of making "necessary corrections" in the election procedures. Other important features of the Report were stress on activating people's control committees, more active involvement on the part of public organisations in governing the country, making the Law on Work Collectives operative in everyday practice, gradual extension of the range of issues on which the work collectives decisions are final, extension of the principle of electiveness to all team leaders and then gradually to some other categories of managerial personnel - foremen, shift, sector or shop superintendents, and state-farm department managers.<sup>20</sup>

The new Party Programme referred to "advancing Soviet democracy and increasingly promoting socialist self-government by the people on the basis of active and effective

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18 Ibid., pp. 72-73.

19 Ibid., p. 72.

20 Ibid., p. 77.

participation of working people, their collectives and organizations in decision-making concerning the affairs of state and society" as the strategic line of development of the political system of Soviet society.<sup>21</sup> The programme also underlined the role of the Party as the "leading force" in the process of advancing Soviet democracy. It stressed that the Party was to act "within the framework of the constitution". The programme declared: "It is a matter of key importance for the Party's policy to develop and strengthen the Soviet socialist state and increasingly reveal its democratic nature as a state of the whole people and its creative and constructive role."<sup>22</sup>

The Report of the General Secretary and the new Party Rules adopted by the 27th Congress made an important contribution to the development of the principle of responsibility of Party members. The new Party Rules emphasized the principle of systematic renewal of the composition of Party bodies and of continuity of leadership in election of all Party bodies from primary organizations to CPSU Central Committee. The Rules also stressed the importance of "free and effective discussion" of Party policy in the Party.<sup>23</sup> In his Report

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21 Ibid., p. 285.

22 Ibid., p. 286.

23 Ibid., pp. 337-8.

Gorbachev drew attention to the question of improving the forms and methods of Party leadership. "The Party is emphatically against confusing the functions of Party committees with those of governmental and public bodies" - said Gorbachev.<sup>24</sup> The difficulty of realizing this in practice was admitted by the General Secretary who advocated a "specific approach" in this matter where "much is determined by the political culture and maturity of leaders".<sup>25</sup> The resolution on the Political Report stated that the Party pays special attention to the exercise of all forms of direct democracy which should be further improved through citizens' meetings, constituents' suggestions, the press, radio and television, letters by working people and all other means of expressing public opinion.<sup>26</sup> The resolution further stated: "The Congress attaches cardinal significance to strengthening the legal foundation of governmental activity and of the life of society, to the strictest observation of the laws, to consolidating the guarantees of the rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens."<sup>27</sup>

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24 Ibid., p. 106.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., pp. 144-5.

27 Ibid., p. 145.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the documents of the 27th Party Congress fully bore an imprint of the new leadership's quest for renewal of Soviet society through further democratization.

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## CHAPTER IV

THE POST-27TH PARTY CONGRESS DEVELOPMENTS : FORMULATION  
OF AN INTEGRAL APPROACH TO DEMOCRATIZATION AND STRUGGLE  
FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The January 1987 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee which discussed General Secretary Gorbachev's Report "On Reorganization and the Party's Personnel Policy" forms besides the April 1985 Plenum another important landmark in the new leadership's quest for an effective and realistic democratization of Soviet polity and economy to carry out its plan of perestroika. In his Report to the January Plenum Gorbachev declared: "We have begun reorganization and will not look back". Gorbachev's Report however candidly admitted that "change for the better is taking place slowly, that the cause of reorganisation is more difficult and the problems which have accumulated in society are more deep-rooted than we first thought".<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the Party to check in time the growth of negative tendencies in the later seventies and early eighties was attributed by Gorbachev to both "the situation in theory", "scholastic theorising", "ossified concept of socialist relations of production" and underestimation of

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1 Soviet Review, vol. 24, no. 5, 5 February 1987, p. 2.

their dialectic interrelation with the productive forces resulting in simplistic interpretation of ideas of socialism. "The leading Party bodies", said Gorbachev, "failed timely and critically to appraise the danger of the growth of negative tendencies in society and in the conduct of some communists and to take decisions which life was imperatively demanding".<sup>2</sup> Gorbachev warned: "We cannot overlook just indignation of working people at the conduct of those senior officials in whom trust and authority has been vested and who were called upon to stand guard over the interests of the state and citizens, and who themselves abused their authority, suppressed criticism, sought gain, and some of whom even became accomplices in if not organizers of criminal activities."<sup>3</sup>

Gorbachev's Report to the January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee described democratization as an essential ingredient of perestroika. Making a detailed analysis of the process of reconstruction, he called it "reliance on the creative endeavour of the masses, all-round extension of democracy and socialist self-government, encouragement of initiative and self organized activities better discipline and order, greater openness, criticism and self-criticism in

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2 Ibid., p. 9.

3 Ibid., p. 10.



all fields of public life, and high respect for the value and dignity of the individual".<sup>4</sup> The remedies suggested by Gorbachev to pull the country out of the mire of stagnation related to both theoretical and practical fields and included a whole range of measures from "formulation of theoretical provisions based on realities of our time and a deeply substantiated scientific forecast of the future" to "changes in social consciousness and a consistent development of democratic institutions, fostering the political culture of the masses and the reorganization of the mechanism of economic management, of organisational structures and...the pursuance of a vigorous social policy".<sup>5</sup> He also forewarned that "a difficult struggle lies ahead, requiring of every communist and every citizen a high degree of consciousness and organization, tenacity and utmost selflessness".<sup>6</sup>

To the question of guarantees about the irreversibility of the process of transformations launched, the General Secretary's Report to the Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in January 1987 referred to, among others, "the deepening of Socialist democratism" as an important factor.

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4 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

5 Ibid., p. 19.

6 Ibid., p. 19.

The Report stated, "These ( guarantees) are the all-round developments of the democratism of the Socialist system, the real and ever more active participation of the people in solving all questions of country' s life, the full restoration of Leninist principles of openness, public control, criticism and self-criticism, and sincerity in policy consisting of the unity of words and deeds."<sup>7</sup>

Gorbachev' s Report to the January Plenum made an impassioned plea for understanding better than before the depth of Lenin' s thought about the "vital inner link between socialism and democracy". The Soviet leader suggested a return to Lenin' s approach to the "question of the maximum democratism of the Socialist system under which people feel that they are their own masters and creators".<sup>8</sup> Further democratisation of Soviet society was projected as the Party' s urgent task. "The reorganization itself is possible only through democracy and due to democracy. It is only in this way that it is possible to give scope to socialism' s most powerful creative force - free labour and free thought in a free country" - declared Gorbachev in his Report. In his closing remarks at the conclusion of the January Plenary Meeting of

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7 Ibid., p. 20.

8 Ibid.

the CPSU Central Committee Gorbachev again underlined the importance of democracy for perestroika in the following words: "We need democracy as we need air. If we fail to realise that, and even if we do realise that but take no real serious step to broaden it, to advance it and to draw the country's people extensively into the reorganization process, our policy will get choked, and the reorganization will peter out".<sup>9</sup>

General Secretary Gorbachev's Report not only emphasized the importance of democratization but suggested a number of constructive measures to develop it in all spheres including production. The Report stated: "The economy is the decisive area of society's life. Tens of millions of people are daily engaged there. Therefore the development of democracy in production is the most important trend in deepening and broadening Socialist democracy as a whole."<sup>10</sup> The increasing role of the work collectives in production management, as also the role of workers' meetings and collective agreements was hailed by the Report which also commended the Draft (circulated for discussion) of the Law of the State Enterprise for carrying forward the line of the 27th Party Congress towards effective use of direct democracy.

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9 Ibid., p. 85.

10 Ibid., p. 22.

The powers given under the Law of State Enterprise to the general meetings and council of work collectives in resolving questions in connection with production, social and personnel affairs were welcomed as an advance towards "genuine self-government by the people". The Report added: "The consistent implementation of the Law on the State Enterprise in combination with package of measures being implemented now in the economic field, will, we believe, altogether create a new situation in the economy, will become an accelerator of economic development and lead to the qualitative perfection of many aspects of social life."<sup>11</sup> Democratization of all spheres of life in Soviet society, as Gorbachev emphasized, is important because of its linkage with the "further development of working people's initiative and the use of the entire potential of the socialist system".<sup>12</sup> Democratization, it was stated in the Report, is needed "in order to move ahead, in order to ensure that legality grows stronger and justice triumphs in society and that a moral atmosphere in which man can freely live and fruitfully work, is asserted in it".<sup>13</sup> Thus the Party's new approach to democratization was far from formalistic and abstract. It was aimed at providing a moral atmosphere in

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11 Ibid., p. 23.

12 Ibid., p. 33.

13 Ibid.

which alone the full creative potential of man can be realized.

The effectiveness of real democracy was linked by Gorbachev not with some abstract human rights promised on paper but "on how far it stems from the interests of the broad masses, relies on them is supported by all segments and groups of society".<sup>14</sup> Socialist democratism was visualized as an "organic combination of democracy and discipline, of independence and responsibility, of the rights and duties of officials, of every citizen".<sup>15</sup>

Lest his emphasis on further democratization was misinterpreted as a plea for restoration of the kind of democracy prevailing in some bourgeois countries in the West, Gorbachev took care to add that a great amount of work must be carried out to "inculcate in our cadres a correct understanding of the fact that expansion of democracy in production presupposes an organic combination of one-man command and collective effort, a deepening of democratic centralism and development of self-administration".<sup>16</sup>

The General Secretary's Report at the January Plenum was significant in its suggestion for "perfection of the Soviet

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

16 Ibid., p. 25.

election system".<sup>17</sup> It revealed that proposals were being drafted on that issue on the instructions of the 27th Party Congress. Referring to people's suggestion for a more effective and active participation of the electorate at all stages of pre-election and election campaigns by enlarging the size of the electoral districts and making them elect several deputies from each district, Gorbachev's Report promised to "look anew" at the way the elections are organized and at the practice of nominations and discussions of candidates for People's Deputies. It also promised to rid the voting procedure of formalism and submit for discussion the draft for a legislation on changes in the electoral system.

The Report also laid stress on continuing the work started by the 27th Congress by introducing changes in the CPSU Rules and to take the advise of the people about the refinement of the mechanism of forming leading Party bodies. The Report called for broadening inner-Party democracy by giving full scope to the expression of the will of all Communists during the election of Secretaries of Party bureaus and Party Committees at the level of primary Party organizations. It also recognized the need to think of changing the procedure for the election of Secretaries of district, area,

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17 Ibid., p. 26.

city, regional and territorial committees of the Party and the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics. In this connection it referred to suggestions that Secretaries including first ones could be elected by secret ballot at Plenary Sessions of respective Party Committees and that members of Party Committee be given the right to enter any number of candidates in the voting list. The Report also mentioned the political bureau's opinion that further democratization should also apply to the formation of the Central leading bodies of the Party.<sup>18</sup> However, Gorbachev's Report made it clear that "the principle of the Party rules, under which the decisions of higher bodies are compulsory for all lower Party Committees including those on personnel matters, should remain unshakable in the Party".<sup>19</sup>

In his Report to the January Plenum the Soviet leader while recognizing the importance of control "from above", referred to the need to raise the level and effectiveness of control "from below" as a matter of fundamental importance.<sup>20</sup> Gorbachev however cautioned against introducing "the veritable avalanche of all imaginable kinds of check-up and inspections" which distract people from work. He suggested that the Soviets

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18 Ibid., pp. 27-28.

19 Ibid., p. 28.

20 Ibid., p. 29.

of People's Deputies, trade unions and other public organizations should utilize their resources for control. In this connection, he stressed the need to strengthen the democratic principles of the work of the sessions, standing commissions and deputies and to raise the efficiency of regular accountability of officials to the Soviets and the practice of inquiries by deputies.

A noteworthy feature of the Report presented by Gorbachev to January Plenum was recognition of the timeliness of beginning elaborating of legal acts guaranteeing openness. Gorbachev regretted that there were cases not only of non-acceptance of criticism but of persecution for it.<sup>21</sup> The General Secretary's Report also mentioned Politburo's support to a proposal for drafting new criminal legislation. It also informed that a draft law has been prepared on procedure for filing a complaint with a court against illegal actions of officials infringing the rights of a citizen.<sup>22</sup> Other important features of the Report related to promotion of non-Party members to leading positions, open selection of the people to be promoted both from among Communists and non-Party people, promotion of more women to leading positions and equitable representation of all nations and ethnic groups in

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21 Ibid., p. 31.

22 Ibid., p. 32.



Party, state and economic bodies, including at all union level "so that the composition of the leading cadres fully reflect the country's national structure".<sup>23</sup>

In connection with the task of further democratization, Gorbachev's Report also referred to the question of principles in the work with personnel as also the establishment of a new mechanism of control and management to achieve a "correct combination of the Party's political guidance and the active role of state bodies, trade unions and other public organizations".<sup>24</sup> Gorbachev did not mince words in declaring that "no one can relieve Party Committees of their concern and responsibility for the state of affairs in the economic field".<sup>25</sup> But he stated that "the matter in question is such an improvement of the methods of Party's guidance as would rule out substitution and petty tutelage over economic bodies".<sup>26</sup> While recognizing the need for personnel stability he also emphasized that it should not be carried to extreme of absurdity and turned into "personnel stagnancy".<sup>27</sup> The Report also underlined the need for enhancing the role of the Soviets and was critical of unjustified interference by Party Committees in

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23 Ibid., pp. 35-36.

24 Ibid., p. 57.

25 Ibid., p. 41.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

their affairs. Pointing to the fundamental decisions already adopted on perfecting the activities of Soviets which enabled them to act as true bodies of authority over their territory, it expressed its dissatisfaction over the unsatisfactory pace of changes in the activities of the Soviets.<sup>28</sup>

Thus the numerous practical steps suggested by the January 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee marked an important stage in further broadening of socialist democracy and advancing the Soviet political system. As the resolution on reorganization and the Party's personnel policy adopted by the Plenum said, "Plenary meeting considers it essential to take maximum advantage of the opportunities for broadening socialist democracy and advancing the Soviet political system, fill the activities of Party and state agencies and mass organizations with real democratic content and ensure conditions for working people to increase substantially the influence on the selection of personnel and exercise control over their own work."<sup>29</sup>

The June 1987 Plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee which devoted itself to defining the Party's task in restructuring management of the economy also underlined the need for further democratization. It adopted principle

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28 Ibid., p. 57.

29 Ibid., p. 68.

guidelines for radical reorganization of economic management calling for ushering in the 13th 5-Year Plan with a new economic mechanism. The January Plenary meeting supported the proposal for calling the conference in 1988 following a round of report-and-election meetings in the Party organizations. At the June 1987 Plenary Meeting General Secretary Gorbachev's Report put forward the Political Bureau's proposal to convene the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU on 28 June 1988. The Conference was to address itself to the evaluation of the implementation of the decisions of 27th CPSU Congress and the main results of the first half of the 12th 5-year Plan period and on the task of the Party organizations in promoting restructuring. It was also to discuss measures for the further democratization of the life of the Party and society.

The June Plenary meeting brought a fresh approach to bear upon the attempt to change the existing system of management. As Gorbachev pointed out in his Report, attempts made in the 1950s, the second half of the 1960s and the late 1970s did not lead to the desired breakthrough and only had a short-lived effect because they were not "all-out or consistent"<sup>30</sup>. According to Gorbachev the main question in the theory and practice of socialism is creation of stimuli even more powerful than under capitalism for economic, scientific,

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<sup>30</sup> Report by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of CPSU Central Committee, "On the Party's Task in Fundamentally Restructuring Management of the Economy", Soviet Review, vol. 24, no. 27, 2 July 1987, p.38.

technological and social progress on the socialist basis as well as effective combination of planned guidance with the interests of the individual and of the collective. The key in his opinion lay in "ensuring for the worker the position of a real master in his workplace, in the collective and in society as a whole". This alone would provide effective stimuli for higher production efficiency. Spelling out its implications in practice, the Soviet leader said: "This means giving collectives and individual workers broad possibilities of managing public property and increasing their accountability for how efficiently it is used. This means ensuring the practical involvement of broadest masses of working people in economic management at every level - from a worker team to the national economy."<sup>31</sup>

Gorbachev further added, "To achieve all this, it is essential to changeover from predominantly administrative to predominantly economic methods of management at every level, to broad democratization in administration, and to activate the human factor in every way". The changeover involved, said Gorbachev switch over of factories and enterprises to full-scale profit-and-loss accounting and self-financing; radically transforming centralized economic management; cardinal reform in planning, pricing, financing and crediting; creation of

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31 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

new organizational structures to ensure deeper specialization and direct involvement of science in production; and last but not the least, "going over from the excessively centralized command system of management to a democratic one, promoting self-administration, creating a mechanism for activating the individual's potential, clearly delimiting the functions and fundamentally changing the style and methods of work of Party, local government and economic bodies".<sup>32</sup> Gorbachev's Report made a plea for elaboration of a new concept of centralism "resting on the activity of the working people and independence of enterprises, that is, a genuinely democratic centralism as Lenin understood it, possessing a far greater potential than the centralism bogged down in the attempts to regulate all and everything".<sup>33</sup>

Gorbachev's Report at Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in June 1987 noted the dialectical link between the economic and political processes going on under perestroika. According to the Soviet leader the Soviet people acutely felt the complexity of the accumulated problems during the period following the January Plenary meeting. The Party and society understood that restructuring was a complex and contradictory

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32 Ibid., p. 42.

33 Ibid., p. 47.

process. Specially felt was the contradiction between the growing vigour of the masses and the still surviving bureaucratic manner of activity in various fields. The overcoming of this contradiction, Gorbachev stressed, required prompt and resolute measures not only in the personnel policy and economic management but in the assertion of "new approaches and norms of Party, State and public life".<sup>34</sup> The most effective means of solving the contradiction noted above lay in what Gorbachev called "the extensive development of democracy". He said: "Today...it is the command and administrative forms of managing society that put a brake on our movement. Democratic and only democratic forms are capable of imparting a mighty acceleration to it."<sup>35</sup> **This interconnection** between democratization and economic development was again highlighted by Gorbachev in his concluding speech at the June 1987 Plenum in the following words: "I want to stress once again that our economic work, the reorganization in the national economy can be successful only if they attract millions of working people. It can therefore be said that our course of fundamentally restructuring management actually merges with the course of further democratization and not only of economic life but of the entire life of society. Progress in the economy and development

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34 Ibid., p. 7.

35 Ibid.

of socialist democratization are indivisible."<sup>36</sup> Gorbachev's Report took cognizance of opposition to restructuring in certain Party and Government circles. "We see distinctly the difficulties with which the restructuring is taking place in Party, government and economic bodies. And do not we feel how painfully it is being received in some central agencies?"<sup>37</sup>

Gorbachev's Report to June Plenum is also noteworthy for its elaboration on the inseparable link of democratization in the economy with the active use of various forms of co-operative and individual enterprise projects along with state property. In this connection he rejected the charge that cooperative and individual labour activities amounted to a revival of private enterprise. Gorbachev said: "They help meet people's vital needs ever more fully, crowd out the 'grey economy' and various forms of abuses and thus facilitate the real process of making social and economic relations healthier."<sup>38</sup>

Gorbachev's 2 November 1987 address "October Revolution and Perestroika: The Revolution Continues" delivered on the 70th Anniversary of the October Socialist

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36 Soviet Review, vol. 24, no. 28, 9 July 1987, pp. 6-7.

37 Ibid., no. 27, 2 July 1987, p. 38.

38 Ibid., p. 40.

Revolution marks an important stage in the understanding of the Party on further development of democratization. The address is unique in its fulsome tribute to the February revolution which was described as "the first victorious people's revolution in the imperialist epoch".<sup>39</sup> The victory of the October Revolution was, in Gorbachev's view, "also rooted in the gains of the February 1917 revolution" which provided October with its main weapon - "power organised and revived in Soviets".<sup>40</sup> The February revolution's contribution to political education of the masses and their experience of tangible democracy was lauded by Gorbachev. Gorbachev's 2 November address is also remarkable for its explanation of the emergence of the methods of command administration in the thirties under Stalin. While asserting that Stalin's personality cult was "certainly not inevitable" and had "no justification", Gorbachev still conceded that the methods of command "generally produced results"<sup>41</sup> in the field of industrial development. But he found the method "impermissible in tackling the problems of refashioning rural life". The negative aspect of the application of rigid centralization and methods of command management lay

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39 Ibid., no. 46, 5 November 1987, p. 4.

40 Ibid., p. 5.

41 Ibid., p. 18.



in Gorbachev's opinion in people starting to believe in their "universal effectiveness".<sup>42</sup> As the Soviet leader summed up, "To understand the situation of those years, it must be borne in mind that the administrative command system, which had begun to take shape in the process of industrialization and which had received a fresh impetus during collectivization, had told on the whole socio-political life of the country. Once established in the economy, it had spread to its superstructure, restricting the development of the democratic potential of socialism and holding back the progress of socialist democracy."<sup>43</sup> Gorbachev also explained the 'erroneous' theory of aggravation of class struggle in the course of socialist construction to the mechanical transfer to the period of peaceful socialist construction of methods dictated by the period of struggle with the hostile resistance of the exploiter classes. An atmosphere of intolerance, hostility and suspicion prevailing in the country in the period of overcoming the resistance of the exploiter classes resulted in the "absence of a proper level of democratization in the Soviet society that made possible the personality cult, the violation of legality, the wanton repressive measures of the 1930s".<sup>44</sup>

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., p. 19.

44 Ibid., p. 20.

Gorbachev termed Perestroika as continuation of the work begun by the October Revolution, namely, projection to the forefront of the task of further deepening and developing socialist democracy. As he said in his address on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, "The democratization of society is at the core of perestroika, and on its progress depends the success of perestroika itself and - one can say without exaggeration - the future of socialism in general."<sup>45</sup> Gorbachev described the changes taking place in the country today as "the biggest step in the development of socialist democracy since the October Revolution". The Soviet leader clearly stated that socialist democracy rejected "methods of command or pressure" which are alien to socialism. He called for giving more attention to socialist democracy and rule of law. Gorbachev said: "Democracy must not be confined to the political sphere. It must permeate all spheres of human relations. We proceed from the premise that socialism is a society of growing diversity in people's opinion, relationships and activities."<sup>46</sup> Dilating further upon this concept of pluralism of opinions and interests under socialism Gorbachev remarked: "Every person has his own social experience, his own level of knowledge and education, his own distinctive

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45 Ibid., p. 32.

46 Ibid., p. 34.

perception of what is taking place. Hence, a tremendous range of views, convictions and assessments, which, naturally require careful consideration and comparison. We are for a diversity of public opinion, a richness of spiritual life. We need not fear openly raising and solving difficult problems of social development, criticizing and arguing. It is in such circumstances that the truth is born and correct decisions take shape."<sup>47</sup>

With all his emphasis on doing away with command methods and resumption of the course of deepening socialist democracy initiated under the leadership of Lenin, and notwithstanding his plea for eliminating all "blank spots" in history, it is clear to any one who cares to scan his 2 November address minutely that the Soviet leader is moving - rather cautiously and is averse to taking an extremist position. To the question whether a course other than the one taken by the Party under Stalin in the thirties was possible, Gorbachev's answer is in the negative. His position on Stalin's assessment is also that of a moderate. For example, he says: "To remain faithful to historical truth, we have to see both Stalin's incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism, to the defence of its gains, and the gross political errors and the abuses committed by him

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47 Ibid.

and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequence for the life of our society."<sup>48</sup>

The period from the April 1985 Plenum of the Central Committee to the June 1987 Plenum formed the first stage of the perestroika. As Gorbachev stated in his address of 8 January 1988 at a meeting with the heads of mass media, ideological institutions and artistic unions, during this period the concept of perestroika was worked out and several important and major decisions were adopted. This was to be followed by a period of implementing the concept. To quote from Gorbachev, "The difference between the first stage and the next one is that we have found out what has to be done and in what way. This has been a hard task and it remains topical today as well. But now the most complex stage has begun, when the concept of perestroika must come into broad contact with life, with the practical activity of millions of Soviet people. What has been realized by the political leadership and the advanced part of our people must now be realized by all Soviet people, by every section."<sup>49</sup>

Stating that the Party and cadres are currently accumulating experience in making use of the potential of

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48 Ibid., p. 20.

49 M. Gorbachev, Democratization - The Essence of Perestroika, the Essence of Socialism (Moscow: 1988), p. 4.

socialist democracy which is a "difficult process", Gorbachev referred to the frequent criticism from both the right and the left. The left, according to him, was alleging that restructuring has stopped and called for more resolute measures. He did not name Yeltsin but his reference to the October Plenary meeting of the Central Committee left no doubt that he was referring to him. Criticizing Yeltsin for his "useless ultra-perestroika rhetoric" Gorbachev commented: "Advocates of the 'revolutionary' slogans have neither the composure, nor the readiness to assume the responsibility, the onus of persistent and prolonged work in order to move our society to new frontiers."<sup>50</sup> The criticism of the right that the foundations of socialism were being undermined was also referred to by Gorbachev who asked "what is undermining them? People's mobilization, their tackling the affairs of the country, where they are the masters, more confidently?" The establishment of a new moral and ideological atmosphere, characterized by broad openness, criticism and self-criticism, by a deepening process of democratization and a growth of the working people's responsibility for the state of affairs in the country was listed as "a major accomplishment of the first stage of perestroika".

The question of carrying perestroika to the Party

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50 Ibid., p. 8.

has been a very sensitive question from the very beginning. Assertions have been made by the Party leadership on numerous occasions that the perestroika drive started on the Communist Party's initiative and the Party was leading it. At the various Plenums of the Central Committee during the last three years the need for inner-Party democracy and a new understanding of the Party's vanguard role have been time and again highlighted. As Gorbachev writes in his famous book Perestroika New Thinking for our Country and the World: "The Party started the effort with self-improvement. I spoke frankly about it at the meeting with Party activists in Khabarovsk, in summer of 1986. We must begin with ourselves, I said. Everyone must assume the responsibility: in the Politburo, in local bodies, and in grass-roots Party organizations. We must be better than we are. We shall help those who can't improve themselves. The main thing is to/conscientious. We have grown accustomed to many practices when there was no openness. This applies to both the rank and file and high officials."<sup>51</sup> Yet the effort towards reconstruction of the Party remain confined to mere expressions of pious wishes and vague though verbose formulations. What is interesting even Gorbachev in his work cited above, tried to find a justification for

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51 M. Gorbachev, Perestroika New Thinking for Our Country and the World (London, 1987), p. 55.

the perks and privileges enjoyed by the Party high-ups by comparing them to benefit and privileges available to various other groups, institutions and enterprises. Admitting that the existence of special forms of services can and does generate problems particularly in a situation when services provided to the entire population is much lower, he still asserted that "these issues should be solved in the course of furthering the programmes we adopted".<sup>52</sup>

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One does not know whether Gorbachev's reticence in touching the Party privileges has something to do with his desire to keep the Party united by avoiding a confrontation with the conservatives. The same may be said about the restraint observed by Gorbachev in relation to appraisal of Stalin's role. But the situation seems to have changed of late. At the February 1988 Plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee Gorbachev revealed that "the Party had to literally fight for perestroika in production and in the spiritual sphere".<sup>53</sup> He called this fight quite an "acute" one. Expressing popular anxiety about the fate of perestroika

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52 Ibid., p. 102.

53 Speech by M. Gorbachev General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, 18 February 1988, Information Department, USSR Embassy, New Delhi, p. 4.

Gorbachev said: "Fervent discussions are underway on obstacles standing in the way of perestroika. People are worried that innovative decisions of the January and June Plenary meetings of the CPSU Central Committee are being implemented slowly and with difficulties. For the first time in many decades we really feel the Socialist Pluralism of views. This is something unaccustomed, and it is being assessed in different ways, it demands study, analysis and elucidation. Behind all that we must see the principal thing - growing support for the policy of restructuring on the part of the people."<sup>54</sup>

Gorbachev referred to three different ways of understanding perestroika. There are some who regard it as a kind of adjustment of the existing mechanism that does operate, poorly as it were, while it is not clear how the new one will work. Others demand the dismantling of the very system of socialism, deny off hand the values of socialism and borrow alternatives to them from the arsenal of bourgeois liberalism and nationalism. Still others turn to radical phraseology, call for leaping over stages of socialist development.

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54 Ibid.



In retrospect it now appears that by January 1988 Gorbachev was beginning to somewhat revert to his radical positions. A signal for this came with the clash between Gorbachev and the Sovetskaya Rossia editor Valentin Chikin at a meeting of media editors and writers with the Party General Secretary on 8 January 1988. Gorbachev took Chikin to task in the discussion in which the Pravda editor Viktor Afanasiev indulged in Shatrov-bashing. Gorbachev disagreed with Chikin that there should be no glasnost about history. And insisted that no blank spots must be left in Soviet history. Obviously the conservative opponents of perestroika had started mobilizing their forces skilfully harnessing the pro-Stalin sentiments of a sizeable section of the Soviet people. They had been increasing their pressure on Gorbachev particularly since the ouster of Yeltsin, Secretary of the Moscow City Party organization and an ardent champion of perestroika, in October 1987. The battle lines were already drawn during the period starting from January. Some sensation-mongering extremist journalists and writers like playwrights Shatrov and Gelman and liberal economist Shemelev also added fuel to fire through their sensational allegations about physical threats to them from the Stalinists in their articles published in pro-perestroika Nedelya, Novy Mir and Ogonyok. Again one does not know if the real motive behind the anti-Stalinist tirade of these self-styled champions of glasnost

is not so much to promote democratization as to curry favours with the Party General Secretary and his group in the Politburo. Be that as it may, the struggle around perestroika and glasnost reached its height with the letter by Nina Andreyeva published in Sovetskaya Rossia of 13 March which in turn spoke about the threat posed to socialism by children of Nepman (it may be recollected that Gelman and Shmelev had earlier spoken about threats by the Stalinists). It was in such a situation that an otherwise moderate Gorbachev was forced to take a hard stance in self-defence. The 5 April unsigned article in Pravda which called the Sovetskaya Rossia letter anti-perestroika manifesto is believed to be Gorbachev's rejoinder to the opponents of perestroika and glasnost. The struggle between pro-perestroika followers of Gorbachev and the pro-Stalin conservative opponents of perestroika has since further grown in intensity in the election campaign for delegates to the June 1988 19th Conference of the CPSU. Fears are being expressed in the Press by leading pro-Gorbachev intellectuals who apprehend that the entire process of renewal might not be reversed by the Conference. Particularly disturbing are the reverses suffered by pro-perestroika Party men, many of whose leading lights have failed to get elected as delegates to the Conference at the Moscow City Party Plenum held on 3 June.

True, some of them have succeeded in getting elected from distant regions, but the onslaught launched by their opponents has shaken them thoroughly. Thus Gelman has already warned: "I am convinced if we are thwarted again, the sound forces will withdraw from the Party, will leave it for good. And then everything will become meaningless....Our Party will not lead any longer down this path, there will be some other political force which will emerge in the deep crisis."<sup>55</sup>

This may however turn out to be too pessimistic a prognosis. Judging from Gorbachev's various recent speeches, the Soviet leader is still reluctant to take a sharp stand against strongly entrenched elements in the Party which would not like to carry perestroika and glasnost to their logical conclusion. Of course, there are indications in Gorbachev's recent utterances that he understands the need to carry perestroika deep into the Party. At the February 1985 Central Committee Plenum Gorbachev ridiculed the "addition of many Party committees and their staffs to giving commands and their eagerness to dictate to everybody and decide everything for everyone."<sup>56</sup> In an open indictment of the Party apparatus

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55 Cited by Dev Murarka in his article "Gorbachev May Take Middle Position - II", Times of India (New Delhi), 21 June 1988.

56 Speech by M. Gorbachev General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, 18 February 1988, Information Department, USSR Embassy, New Delhi, p. 11.

for its opposition to the new changes, Gorbachev observed at the February Plenum: "There still are many attempts to squeeze glasnost and democracy into convenient limits, rein in the press, and act without reckoning with public opinion in one place, they come down on a 'trouble-maker' having the nerve to revolt against torpor, bungled management, and wrong doing. In another, they infringe on collective farmers' rights. In yet another, they turn a manager's election into a farce. In still another, they ride roughshod over people's opinion and make decisions contradicting their vital interests and rights. This is, no doubt, due to the habit - developed by a significant part of our cadre over the years - of "keeping everything under their thumb", acting the ultimate authority on every matter, and applying pressure to get things done."<sup>57</sup>

But if Gorbachev's diagnosis of the ailment is not wide of the mark, the remedy prescribed by him is far from precise and does not go beyond general pleas for "perfecting the political system", suggestions for taking "specific decisions on updating our political system and on the Party's role as the political vanguard at the new juncture in the nation's development", and "delimiting the functions of

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57 Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Party and State bodies", etc.<sup>58</sup> Yet Gorbachev has the temerity to claim that "the Party has begun perestroika with itself."<sup>59</sup> Of course, the Central Committee Theses for the 19th All-Union Party Conference which are in the main drafted by Gorbachev do go a little further in the direction of reconstructing the Party, as for example, the provisions for nomination of number of candidates exceeding that of the Committee membership, bar on holding an elected post for more than two terms of five years each subject to decision on admission to election for the third term by no less than three-fourths of the membership of the Party Committee concerned through voting by secret ballot and the provision that election result should determine the final settlement of personnel questions.<sup>60</sup> Proposed changes do not go to the extent of mandatory one-third to one-fourth renewal of membership of Party Committees from the City and district level to the level of the All-Union Central Committee under Khrushchev's leadership as incorporated in the Party rules adopted in 1961. Gorbachev seems to be all set to reconcile

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58 Ibid., pp. 29, 30 and 39.

59 Ibid., p. 38.

60 News and Views from the Soviet Union, vol. 48, no. 97, 27 May 1988, pp. 14-15.

himself to a compromise. He seemed to be preparing for this when he observed at the Moscow City Party Plenum on 3 June 1988: "...there is no need in this serious matter for superfluous emotions. Also counter-productive is leftist phrasemongering. Cheap authority should not be gained by means of this....Only persistent concrete work on the basis of long-sighted and considered assessments is capable of providing a real result. Adventurism is not what we practice."<sup>61</sup> One does not know for certain if Gorbachev is not using the fight between perestroika enthusiasts like Shatrov and Gelman and the Stalinists to project himself as an ideal centrist. All said and done, one must give due credit to the new leadership of Gorbachev for unleashing a new climate of openness in press and public affairs which the country never experienced before even in the aftermath of the 20th Party Congress. Khrushchev's ideas about restructuring the Party might have been more sweeping, the Soviet Union however did not have the refreshing experience of Glasnost during his times. Even Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin was contained in a secret speech delivered behind the closed doors. This is a measure of success of the current campaign for further democratization of Soviet society launched under the leadership of Gorbachev in April 1985.

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60 Pravda, 4 June 1988.

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