

**POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CURRENT
CAMPAIGN FOR *GLASNOST* IN THE USSR**

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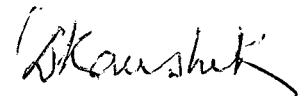
DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled Political
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is
A Study/submitted by Shri Arvind Gupta in partial fulfilment
of six credits out of a total requirement of Twenty-Four
credits for the Degree of Master of Philosophy of this
University. This dissertation has not been submitted for
any other degree of this University and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed
before the examiners for evaluation.



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C O N T E N T S

	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1 - 3
CHAPTER I <u>GLASNOST</u> : THE CONCEPT AND SCOPE	4 - 17
CHAPTER II <u>GLASNOST</u> IN THE VARIOUS SPHERES OF THE SOVIET LIFE	18 - 57
CHAPTER III POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF <u>GLASNOST</u>	58 - 90
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS: STRUGGLE FOR REFORMS AND HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE	91 - 125
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	126 - 131

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in March 1985. The policies enunciated by the new leader are described as Perestroika - the restructuring of all aspects of the Soviet society. Radical Economic Reforms and the Democratisation of the society are twin planks of Perestroika and Glasnost is its outcome. The main justification for the need for Glasnost is that people should be intimately involved in the affairs of the State. Hence the need for an atmosphere of openness i.e. Glasnost¹.

Perestroika and Glasnost are political concept worked out by Mikhail Gorbachev and his supporters, and being handed down from the top. Gorbachev has accepted that Perestroika is a revolution from above but combined with an initiative from below. Perestroika and Glasnost satisfy the felt current political need of the Party. Therefore, Glasnost is not an absolute concept - its meaning, the scope is evolving with time. There are limitations even if only loosely ^{defined} at/times on the concept of Glasnost. There are also clear political dimensions to the manifestation of Glasnost campaign. For instance it is a matter of debate whether the current ethnic tensions in Armenia in the USSR were: the

¹ Mikhail Gorbachev: Perestroika Novoe Mishleniye; Moscow, 1987; Chapter I & II.

result of the policy. The current ideological debate unfolding in the USSR and amply reflected in the Soviet media is both a manifestation of the scope of Glasnost² as also / caused by it. / The outcome of this debate will in turn also influence the course of Glasnost.

The present study sets out to examine what Glasnost is (Chapter I), how it has proceeded in the various spheres of the Soviet life (Chapter II), its political dimensions (Chapter III). Chapter IV continues with the theme of the third chapter, examines the ongoing ideological debate and current opposition within the Soviet Union to Gorbachev's reforms. A comparison of Gorbachev's policies with the course of Khrushchev's liberalisation in the late fifties and early sixties is also made with a view to identify similarities and differences between the two phases of liberalisation in recent history of Soviet Union.

SOURCES

Since the Glasnost campaign is still evolving, there are no standard references on this aspect as yet.

The study depends primarily on the Russian sources - the speeches of the leaders, the Party documents, the Soviet media articles. The issues of Russian language newspaper PRAVDA from 1985-todate have been extensively used. The

² See Pravda Editorial Pirssipi Perestroikii: Revolutionost Mishleniya i Deistvii. April 8, 1988, p. 2.

newspapers and journals like International Herald Tribune, Problems of Communism, Foreign Affairs, New Left Review and the Indian media have been the main non-Russian sources used in the study. Wherever possible the English translations by the Soviet sources (TASS, APN, etc.) as well as by BBC's World Summary of short-wave Broadcast (SWB) have been used. In other cases, translations were done by myself.

The Approach

The approach adopted in the study is analytical. The main emphasis in the study is on the political dimensions of Glasnost. The statements and articles have been analysed to draw conclusions taking into account the importance of newspapers or journals in which they appear, the context in which they are mentioned, the timing of their appearance, the status of the author or the speaker as well as comparisons with earlier precedents, if any. This is the traditional approach used in analysing the developments in the Soviet Union.

C H A P T E R - I

GLASNOST : THE CONCEPT AND SCOPE

Meaning

The most accepted translation of the Russian word Glasnost is 'openness'. However, Russian-English dictionaries define Glasnost as 'publicity'. The word derives its meaning from the Russian verb 'Glasiť' which means to popularise, to highlight. However, in the recent times, the words Glasnost and Perestroika (restructuring) have become two most important catchwords which are being used to describe Gorbachev's policies. Most Western Sovietologists who take the totalitarian model of the Soviet state as basis for the analysis of the Soviet society, interpret Glasnost in terms of freedom of thought and expression, criticism, improvement of human rights situation in USSR, liberalisation and even dilution of the socialist system. Very often they ascribe meanings to Glasnost which go beyond what is actually intended by the proponents of this policy in the Soviet Union. While for many in the Western world, Glasnost is the goal of Perestroika, it is differently understood in the Soviet Union where Glasnost is considered more as a tool as well as an essential component of Perestroika. While the Western scholars would like to view Glasnost as an end in itself, the Soviet ideologues see Glasnost as one of the means to democratise the Soviet society. The meaning of Glasnost and the policies which it implies is also evolving as the reforms in the Soviet Union unfold

themselves. In order to understand the phenomenon of Glasnost, as it is seen today in the Soviet Union, it is necessary to consider the theoretical and ideological foundations of Perestroika of which Glasnost is an essential ingredient.

Perestroika

Since the April 1985 Plenum of CPSU, the Soviet theoreticians have been making efforts to put Perestroika on sound theoretical and ideological foundations. The concept of Perestroika has been explained theoretically by Gorbachev himself in his speeches, statements, etc. The April 1985 Plenum of the Central Committee of CPSU, the 27th Party Congress, Plenums of January 1987, June 1987, February 1988 as well as Gorbachev's speech of November 2, 1987 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution were different stages in the evolution of the concept of Perestroika and have made important contributions in giving theoretical foundation to the concept. An understanding of the nature and content of Perestroika is essential for the understanding of Glasnost, how it is progressing in the Soviet Union and the limits which the very process of restructuring might place on it.

The Need for Perestroika and Democratisation

Gorbachev has characterised the present drive for restructuring and democratisation of society as a continuation of the October 1917 Revolution. All along the Soviet citizens

had been fed with official declarations that the country had progressed tremendously in years after the Revolution and had reached a state of developed socialism. Therefore, when the current restructuring effort is described as a continuation of the 1917 Revolution or where Perestroika is described as by Gorbachev in November 1987 as a "specific historical stage¹" in the march towards communism it, at once, raises doubts about the correctness of the path which the country took after 1917. Questions are being raised as to why Soviet Union requires a restructuring campaign today when it has already undergone a socialist revolution that exerted a tremendous influence on the course of the world history and which created a powerful economic, scientific, technological and intellectual potential and of which Soviet people should justly be proud of.

In order to explain the need for revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union at the present juncture, the Soviet ideologues are portraying the present changes as 'a Revolution of a special type' The fundamental fact which is being stressed is that restructuring is not aimed at replacing one mode of production by another and that restructuring is taking place within the framework of socialist phase of the communist system. The restructuring is not going to change the State power but is aimed at deepening the socialist popular rule and secure a fuller and more effective

¹ Gorbachev's Report: Restructuring, SWB/SU/8716/C/1
of 4 November '87 p.18.

use of socialism's potential. According to Gorbachev, the purpose of Perestroika is to impart to socialism the most upto date forms of organizing society and to open up the humanistic nature of all socialist systems to the utmost in all the decisive areas - the economic, social, political and ethical. It has been made absolutely clear that the point at issue is not a socio-political revolution which would involve destroying the old political power and creating a new one. The point at issue is also not the destruction of public ownership of the means of production or scrapping the basic principles of socialism, i.e., 'from each according to his ability to each according to his work'. What is envisaged under Perestroika is to reinforce the system of public ownership of the means of production, to ensure more consistently the social justice, to deepen socialist democracy and to take the country along the path of further advancement of socialist revolution that began in October 1917. The reason why restructuring became imperative and urgent were identified at the 27th Congress of the CPSU and the January 1987 Plenum.

The origins of Prestroika have been analysed by the CPSU and discussed at length at the January 1987 Plenum of the CPSU. Gorbachev in his book Prestroika and New Thinking has also candidly dealt with this aspect. It turns out that the basic reason for Perestroika drive is the economic stagnation of decades which had adverse impact on all spheres of life.²

² Mr. Gorbachev: Perestroika i Novoe Mishleniye: Chapter I, Moscow, 1987, p.11-56.

Ligachev⁴, in his article "The Revolutionary Essence of Perestroika" mentions that the "Super Centralisation" that evolved during specific time periods in Soviet history is no longer required now. Its advantages are outweighed by negative consequences. The chief fault is that the immediate producer, that is, the work collectives, are in effect barred from participation in management. Thus, according to Ligachev, 'Super Centralisation', led to the exclusion of the worker, the masses, from the participation in the State affairs. The method of economic management led to the rise of formalism and bureaucratism which spread to all spheres including the social spheres. One inevitable effect of such a system which excluded masses from the formulation and implementation of policies led to the undermining of the Socialist democratic values. According to the present Soviet thinking, the CPSU sees greater democratisation of the entire social fabric as the lever making it possible to activate the decisive forces of Perestroika, i.e., to involve people in it. According to Ligachev, "this means that we are not under-taking broad democratisation just to please someone.... but we view this from clearly defined class-based positions and regard it as the best possible order of things which best serve the fundamental interests of the people." ^{4A} Broad democratisation in all spheres of Soviet society is seen as a

4 Ligachev: The Revolutionary Essence of Perestroika, World Marxist Review; July 1987; p 5-17.

4A Ibid.

fundamental requirement of carrying out of Perestroika. Thus, the concept of Perestroika which was put forward essentially as economic acceleration programme in USSR in April, 1985, soon encompassed broad democratisation as essential part of the programme.

The concept of Glasnost or openness is closely tied up with the concept of democratisation. The need for openness arises because it is felt that only in conditions of open discussion and a full unhampered comparison of viewpoints can one avoid mistakes in decision-making on matters relating to the country's future⁵. Democratisation, openness, criticism, self-criticism - all these are now considered important to avoid the distortions committed in the past. In fact, the current party slogan, regarded as axiomatic is - "More democracy, more socialism". Glasnost emerges as one of the most important conditions which will make democratisation of the society possible.

A recent article in Pravda⁶ discussed the link between the openness and democracy. Glasnost was defined as "maximum openness in the work of party, Soviet, economic

5 Gorbachev; op.cit. p.72

6. Pravda; Democracy and Glasnost ; Dec 14, 1987

and social organisation...it is the criticism of shortcomings and mistakes. It is principled criticism. Openness and the respect for every opinion - this is the democratic essence of Glasnost." Further, Glasnost is not harmonious with arrogance, conceit, and indifference to common man. Glasnost repudiates bureaucratism, formalism, red tapism. Bureaucratism is antipode of Glasnost, democracy.

Clearly, criticism, self-criticism, is considered essential for Glasnost. For instance Gorbachev, on October 3, 1987 addressing a public gathering at the Leningrad's Smolny Institute said, " we have pinned much hope in the reorganisation on the development of criticism and self-criticism as ^{an} effective instrument of the renewal of society."⁷ However, there has been severe criticism in the Soviet press of the way in which some people have gone about criticising all and sundry without a sense of responsibility. It has been mentioned that very often criticism is motivated by the spirit of settling scores. Thus in a front page article⁸ "The Culture of Discussion" Pravda observed, "precisely honesty should distinguish the culture of discussion and the atmosphere for it. Discussion . it is the honest expression of views on major current issues, and not lack ^{of it.} / Behind every discussion, there ought to be a cause, the interest of the people, society and not personal sympathies and antipathies". Further, the newspaper

7 Pravda; October 14, 1987

8 Pravda; August 3, 1987

wrote, "The discussion should basically be about concrete problems..... with all seriousness, with honesty, with respect. If we lack the political culture, culture of discussion and debate - then we must learn it". Clearly, the Pravda article was sounding caution lest the right to criticise, which the atmosphere of openness permits, be misused for character assassination for personal vendetta or individual ambitions. The discussions should be aimed at finding the truth. This article in Pravda was widely commented upon in the Western press which dubbed it as an attempt to strangle openness in the Soviet society. Pravda came out with yet another article⁹ "Democracy and Glasnost". The Western interpretation of Pravda's August article was rejected but the question was raised about the people against whom Pravda's August article was directed. The answer given in the latter article was: "against those who, under the flag of democracy and 'Glasnost' are trying to blacken our glorious history, who defend parochialism, groupism, self-interests, who give offensive labels to their opponents, who restrict Glasnost to merely criticism and pushing the creative work to background".

Clearly, Glasnost, according to the Pravda article, means not only criticism but also creative work and responsibility. The critics would not be allowed to

9 Pravda; December 14, 1987

undermine the socialist system, its values; they will not be allowed to destroy the "glorious" history of the Soviet Union.

Openess in Practice

It must now be considered as to what precisely Openess means in practical terms. A good idea of this can be had from a resolution¹⁰ of the Central Committee of the CPSU about "Openness in the work of party Local organisations and the Soviets of Vladimir region" - in which the party organisations of Vladimir Oblast were criticised for their lapses in implementing the Party's policy^{of}/democratisation and openness:

"Glasnost in the region has still not become the chief means of activising the human factor in the restructuring process..."

In connection with inner democracy in the party organisations the resolution said:

"...Absence of required openness in the issues about dismissals and transfers of personnel is doing serious harm to the personnel policy of the party.... Majority of personnel changes have been done without adequate explanations...and without consulting wide circles of people".

About bringing shortcomings to light, it says:

"...In the party organisations there is still the

the tendency to keep silent about shortcomings....

There is absence of practically open struggle against
bureaucraticism....."

About media performance in the region, it stated;

"The reorganisation of press has been slow. Critical
analysis of state of affairs in the region is absent".

It advised that the Glasnost should be aimed at:

"Putting down the mechanism of retardation, uprooting
bureaucratism, departmentalism, parochialism, stereo-
typed dogmatic thinking, groupism..."

The resolution also cautions that it would be necessary to
fight those who try to misuse glasnost:

"It is essential to oppose those who try to use the
atmosphere of openness for social demagoguery and for
achieving one's own selfish narrow interests. The
distorted notions about democracy should be corrected
with the help of chief weapon - Glasnost, and public
criticism of ideas which are foreign to us and of
those who propound such ideas."

Thus, the adopted resolution makes it clear that while
there will have to be more openness in the work of the party
organisations, the fanciful interpretations of democracy
and how it should be in USSR will also not be allowed.

Democratisation of the society, once begun, will
have its own dynamics. The process of democratisation
cannot be switched on or off at will. The most important

aspect of democratisation process is that once people get used to it, the old methods of conducting affairs become useless. If somebody tries to use old approaches to some present day problems, "this will only bring society in a fever, will unnerve people, bring nervousness into our political and ideological atmosphere, in public awareness," said Gorbachev at CPSU conference on Perestroika, on 20th November, 1987. The initiation of democratic process will only bring forth new tasks, new challenges. "Today, when the democratic process will be deepening, when our programme of radical economic reforms will set entire society in motion, it will have a bearing on the interests of millions and the Party will face still more complex tasks".¹¹

Gorbachev, in his speech at the June '87 plenum of the CC, CPSU¹² declared that the first stage of Perestroika was over, in as much as the concept of Perestroika had been formed. The country entered a new stage, a stage of translating decision into deeds. Already, the discussions about the tasks of the party, society and state have begun. In the second stage, the key tasks are defined as practical interpretation of the economic reforms and continued democratisation of society.

11 Pravda; 21 November, 1987

12 Pravda; June 1, 1987. This theme was amplified by Gorbachev in his speech on Nov 2, 1987 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. See Pravda, Nov 3, 1987.

In the second phase of Perestroika, the focus in the democratisation debate is centered on what is being described as the "Culture of Democracy". V.I. Dolgikh, Secretary of CPSU, speaking at the Plenum of Kemorovskaya region said that the party should help the masses to master the "Culture of Socialist Democracy"¹³ in a front page editorial "Democracy and Initiative" unambiguously set forth the directions which the campaign for democratisation should take. Warning those who are trying to distort the meaning of socialist democracy, it said:¹⁴

"There exist groups, who, under the signboard of independent organisation are directly carrying on with provocative actions, working for establishment of opposition parties, "free" trade unions, are propagating the surrogates of culture, masquerading them as real values. Their activities often acquire clearly anti-lawful character: they organise demonstrations without the previous consent of authorities, illegally publish and distribute literature which is inimical to socialism. It is precisely on such phrase-mongers that our ideological opponents are relying upon, cherishing the dream of establishing in the USSR the "pluralism" of bourgeois kind. But those who love to fish in troubled waters should know that our course is not the liberalisation of Western kind but involves the deepening and widening

of socialist democracy... Genuine democracy does not exist outside the law. Outside the law, it only brings about anarchy. At the same time, the law is effective only in the conditions of democracy."

This loud and clear warning to those who are looking for different interpretation of democratic freedoms than the conventional understanding of socialist democracy makes it amply clear that the Western type liberalisation in USSR is not what the proponents of democratisation and Glasnost have in mind. What is being intended, however, and which is new, is that within the framework of socialism, a citizen would have much more freedom of action, manoeuvre than had been possible so far. He, by right, can and would be encouraged to participate in the matters of state and society. But he would have to accept reasonable restrictions which, according to the official ideologues, are necessary to prevent degeneration of the democratic freedoms into anarchy. The commentaries appearing in the Soviet press and the CPSU resolution on Perestroika particularly after November 1987, make it clear that the entire Perestroika campaign including the drive for Glasnost would be directed and controlled by the Party. In fact, the Soviet assessments of progress made in restructuring so far make the point that Perestroika - democratisation, radical economic reforms - have succeeded precisely in those places where the links between the Party and other organizations close.

In conclusion, it can be said:

/It is expected
that

- The concept of Glasnost derives its content from that of Perestroika.
- Without Glasnost the efforts to democratise Soviet society cannot succeed. / Glasnost ^{will} instil confidence into the common man that he can take part in the State affairs without fear.
- Glasnost is essentially a political doctrine handed down by the Party. It, however, concerns every aspect of the society and everyone. As such, openness can bring to surface the views which may not be in conformity with Party's ideology. Therefore, Party has every reason to keep a watchful eye on how the atmosphere of Glasnost is used.
- Despite obvious limitations on the scope of Glasnost, it has led to palpable difference in the social, political life of USSR. Glasnost can change the political culture of the Soviet society. But this will depend on how far democratisation proceeds in the USSR.
- Glasnost has its critics, just as Perestroika has its own critics. Neither Perestroika nor Glasnost has become irreversible as yet.

CHAPTER - IIGLASNOST IN VARIOUS SPHERES OF SOVIET LIFERapid Economic Development and the Need for Glasnost
April 85 Plenum

Gorbachev, in his report to the April, 1985 Plenum of Central Committee of CPSU talked about the need to achieve a qualitatively new state of society.¹ This, he said, would require, inter alia, the "deepening of Socialist democracy, the self Government of the people". In this plenum, the stress, however, was on accelerated economic-scientific development. The need for Glasnost was not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, the April 1985 Plenum, according to Gorbachev, marked a decisive turn towards "new strategic course towards restructuring and in fact laid the foundation of the concept of Perestroika. That the new reforms were being contemplated by a group of people even before March, 1985 has been mentioned by Gorbachev in his book "Perestroika..² However, the refrain of the Soviet media during 1985 was the idea of rapid development of the economy. There was a perceptible change in the prevailing atmosphere in the country. The mass media began to discuss openly and objectively the problems facing the country. The atmosphere of openness was visible in the June'85 conference of CC, CPSU, where the problems of the economy were discussed in a frank manner. Gorbachev mentions in his

1 TASS, April 24, 1985, quoted in the press release of the USSR Embassy in New Delhi.

2 Gorbachev; op.cit, p.21.

book that the nature of discussions in this conference was unlike those on previous such occasions.³

The 27th Party Congress - Direct Democracy & Glasnost

The 27th Party Congress dealt with the question of openness more explicitly.⁴

Gorbachev, in his political report to the 27th Party Congress dwelt upon the need for "Direct Democracy"⁵ which would ensure participation of masses in State and government decisions. He emphasised that for involving the people, "broader publicity" is a must.⁶ Publicity, which, he said was a matter of principle with the Party, was a political issue. He disarmed the critics of Publicity by saying that "Communists want the truth, always and under all circumstances"; this, he said was the 'Leninist' answer to the critics.⁷ In his report, Gorbachev summarises the new policy on propaganda and publicity as follows:

Mass Media: Mass media should overcome dullness, inertia. The news reporting should be prompt and deep. Mass media is an instrument of creation and expression of Party's general viewpoint. Party would support the work of the media which should be guided by principles and should help in improving Party's work. The media should avoid the lure of sensation, however.⁸

3 Gorbachev; op.cit, p.22

4 XXVII CPSU Congress- Documents and Resolutions, Allied Publishers New Delhi, 1986.

5 ibid, p.76

6 ibid, p.78

7 ibid, p.78

8 ibid, p.115

Cultural Policy; Literature & Art: "Society's moral health and the intellectual climate are determined in no small measure by the state of literature and art. What the Society expects from the writer is artistic innovation and the truth of life, which has always been the essence of real life...Criticism and self-criticism are a natural principle of a Soviet life...It is time for literary and art criticism to shake off complacency and servility to rule, which erodes healthy morals and to remember that criticism is a social duty and not a sphere serving an author's vanity and ambitions."⁹ The task of the cultural policy is, he added: "To raise society's level of maturity and build common means steadfastly to enhance the maturity of individual's consciousness and enrich his intellectual world."¹⁰

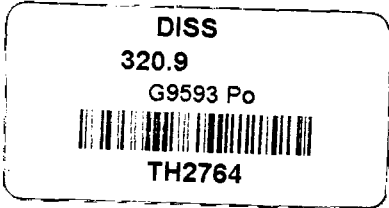
The Congress resolution on the political report mentioned that it attached "fundamental importance to greater openness in the work of Government and other bodies and to keeping the people better informed about decisions they take and how these decisions are implemented."¹¹

The 27th Party Congress finally removed hesitations from the mind of intelligentsia regarding Party's unmistakable intention to opt for openness in the Soviet society. During

9 *ibid*, p.117

10 *ibid*, p.118

11 *ibid*, p.145



1986-87 Glasnost manifested itself in various spheres of Soviet life. The extent to which the intelligentsia and the common man adopted himself to the changed climate is examined below.

Glasnost in Political Life of the Soviet Union

There are a number of areas in the political life of the country where more openness is now visible. A few illustrations representative of Glasnost in some of the important areas in political spheres are mentioned below.



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a) Plenums, Congresses, Interviews & Speeches of Party Leaders

The debates in the Party fora have become sharp, and, what is significant, are also being reported in detail. Unlike before, the approximate dates of the future plenums and the topics of discussions are declared in advance. This helps media to focus on the relevant issues. In an unprecedented manner, Gorbachev himself revealed at the January 1987 Plenum that this plenum on cadre policy was postponed thrice before it could be finally held.¹² Such openness helps in better understanding of the nature of internal debates in the Party organs on crucial issues. For instance the November 1987 Plenum of the Moscow city Party Committee which removed Boris Yeltsin from the post of First Secretary of the Moscow city Party Committee was reported in detail in the press.¹³ This unprecedented openness on the Yeltsin affair has sharpened the public debate on Perestroika.

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12 Pravda; Gorbachev: Perestroika i Kadri, Plenum of CC, CPSU, January 31, 1987.

13 For details of Yeltsin Affair, see Chapter III of this study.

Today, thanks to Glasnost, it is relatively easier to discern the differences of approach between the members of the Politbureau on crucial issues. For instance writings of Ligachev and Chebrikov mark them as conservatives. Chebrikov's speech at the 105th birth anniversary of Dzerzhinsky on 9th September, 1987 was a warning to those who were prone to misuse the atmosphere of openness to create political and law and order instability in USSR. Yeltsin's speech at the 27th Party Congress criticising the privileges of the Party members marked him as a radical amongst pro-Perestroika men.¹⁴

b) Disasters, natural & manmade

It has been normal in USSR to either suppress the news about disasters or underplay them considerably by putting out incomplete, delayed and often misleading information. The situation has now changed for the better thanks to Glasnost. The most noteworthy instance of openness in this regard in the recent times has been that of Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station disaster in April 1976. A review of Chernobyl chronology¹⁵ showed that the initial Soviet reaction closely followed the KAL 007 pattern of September 1983. The first official Soviet report on the Chernobyl accident came on 26th April, 1986, two days after the accident took place. The brief announcement merely stated that the accident had taken place and that

14 For details see Chapter III of the study.

15

Problems of Communism, November-December 1986, p.9

measures were being taken to deal with it. This low key coverage continued over the next few days. Thereafter a long series of articles condemning the West for exaggerating the seriousness of the accident was released. The Western media in turn sharply criticised the Soviets for suppressing the vital information on radiation levels, casualties, evacuation, etc. The Western coverage of the incident reaching the Soviet public, on the contrary, was extensive. In response to this, the Soviet media began to give more detailed coverage of the incident. The reporting on the Chernobyl soon came to bear the stamp of Glasnost. There were multiple press conferences, tours for foreign newsmen, interviews with officials, human interest stories, visual coverage on T.V., informed discussions on the hazards of nuclear energy, visible attention of the top Party leaders. Finally, plant director Bryukhanov, Dy. Chief Engineer Dyatlov, Chief Engineer Fomin were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment each. Mayorets, the Minister of Power and Electrical Energy was severely reprimanded by the Politbureau. Also sacked were a Deputy Minister and local Ukrainian officials. Gorbachev used the opportunity to push his own ideas on arms control.

c) Multi Candidate Elections

There was a discussion on multi candidate election at the January 1987 Plenum of the CC CPSU.¹⁶ Gorbachev in his report to the Plenum emphasised the need to introduce elections

¹⁶ Pravda, January 31, 1987, op cit.

based on secret ballot and multiple candidates to elect the office bearers of enterprises, shop floors, departments, etc. He further stated that the Politbureau considered it necessary to improve the system of electing deputies to the Soviets.

Gorbachev also stressed the need for greater inner Party democracy noting that there were suggestions within the Party that Party Secretaries including the First Secretaries should be elected by secret ballot and that the Party Committee members should be allowed to nominate several candidates. He considered this as a good idea. Gorbachev added in his report to the Plenum that the central leading organs of the Party should also be democratized. While mentioning this, Gorbachev allayed the fears of those who might be opposed to such reforms while pointing out that such changes would only strengthen the principle of democratic centralism further.¹⁷

The implementation of the measures proposed by Gorbachev has begun to some extent. The press has reported that elections of team leaders, shop managers, foremen, etc. have become 'wide spread' in Latvia.¹⁸ Latvian First Secretary Pugo is reported to have stated that a Komsomol organization at a Riga plant had run several candidates for the post of plant Party Secretary. A few other Komsomol organizations had followed its lead.¹⁹ The Soviet press carried first reports of multi candidate elections in the Party organizations.

17 *ibid.*

18 *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 7, 1987.

19 *ibid.*, January 3, 1987.

The reports described in detail a contest between two candidates for the post of First Secretary of a Raikom in Kemerovo, which was settled by secret ballot, 29-20.²⁰ In June, 1987, in the elections for local Soviets, 2341 local Soviets followed the new system of elections, based on multi candidates and secret ballot.

The modest election reforms proposed by Gorbachev and their limited implementation has led to considerable openness in the media about the shortcomings of day today administration, working of Party organs, the functioning of Soviets, etc. It is yet to be seen how far these reforms would be allowed to proceed in the USSR.

d) Foreign and Military Policies:

The "New Thinking" which Gorbachev has been advocating in International Relations entails essentially non-confrontationist co-existence based on interdependence, mutual cooperation, notwithstanding the basic ideological differences between countries. Accordingly, Gorbachev has called for rejection of old stereo-types in the conduct of foreign relations. The Soviet foreign and military policies since 1985 have acquired a sophistication which has surprised, even worried, the West. Gorbachev has projected USSR as a peace loving country by strongly, even aggressively pursuing the various arms control agreements (INF, START) by withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan, by making concessions on Human rights (release of Sakharov) etc. The conduct of foreign policy

²⁰ Pravda, February 10, 1987.

in Soviet Union has become more open, more visible.

A few examples of openness in Soviet foreign policy can be mentioned as follows:

i) Arms Control Verification

The strict verification regime is the crux of the agreement on INF signed by Gorbachev and Reagan in December, 1987.

ii) Afghanistan

After a series of unilateral concessions which resulted in the signing of Geneva accords on April 14, 1988, the Soviet Union decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan from May 15, 1988. Domestically, the Soviet media has been candidly portraying the plight of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

iii) Military Budgets

There are indications that Soviet Union would now start publishing the details of military budgets in the course of next one or two years as stated by Gorbachev.

iv) Foreign Office

The Soviet Foreign Office has been reorganized to facilitate the implementation of the new foreign policy. The Foreign Office has resumed the publication^{of}/"Vestnik" which had been started by Lenin and stopped subsequently. This newsletter discusses details of day-to-day foreign policy conduct, and even publishes unpublicised speeches of leaders (e.g. Gorbachev's and Sheverdnadze's address to diplomats in 1986) It is scheduled to publish the addresses of old leaders also

There are now regular press briefings in the Soviet foreign office where uncomfortable issues are tackled openly and boldly.

v) Mathias Rust Case

The unauthorised, undetected landing of a German Pilot in Red Square in 1987 gave Gorbachev a justification to criticise USSR's air defence system and sack the Soviet Defence Minister for the shortcomings.

The openness in foreign and military policies does not mean that the Soviet decision-making in these areas has become an open book. This is far from true. The limited openness in these areas is dictated more by tactical reasons - projection of reasonableness of the Soviet Union as well as desire to allay suspicions and misgivings in the minds of USSR's principal adversaries. The shifts in the Soviet postures abroad are closely linked with the desire to see the Soviet society restructured.

e) Public Demonstrations:

The atmosphere of openness has resulted in the Government tolerating a limited amount of public displeasure over certain issues reflected through demonstrations in public places and also allowing public debate on sensitive topics. Following instances would illustrate this:

i) Riots in Alma Ata, Azerbaizhan & Demonstrations in Armania

The sacking of Kunaev, the First Secretary of Kazakhstan Communist Party in December 1986 had resulted in discontent

in the republic. When Kolbin, a Russian, was appointed as the First Secretary of Kazakhstan, it resulted in wide-spread riots in Alma Ata. After initial hesitation, the riots were reported in the press extensively and the controversial issues related to the Nationality policy of the USSR were discussed in the press. This would have been unthinkable in pre-Glosnost days.

A fairly complete account of ethnic disturbances in Nagorno-Karabakh, Sumagit and wide-spread protest demonstration in Yerevan has been published in the Soviet press in Feb/March, 1988. An open debate in the media on the nationality question has also begun.²¹

ii) Crimean Tartars:

Tartars of Crimean origin, who were resettled by Stalin in Central Asia during the Second World War have been allowed to stage demonstrations in Moscow and send representations to the Soviet leadership. As a result of these demonstrations, the Government appointed a Commission under Gromyko to look into the grievances of the Crimean tartars. The Commission gave its report in October 1987 and ruled out mass-scale return of the Crimean tartars back to Ukraine.²² However, it promised that the grievances of individual tartar would be sympathetically examined,

iii) The Pamit Group:

There are certain negative tendencies in the society which have come to surface under the policy of Glasnost. The 'Pamit' group (leader Dmitri Vasilyev) has

21 For details see Chapter III of this study.

22 TASS, , October 15, 1987.

taken up the cause of Russian historical monuments. 'Pamit' logos are reminiscent of right-wing extremist groups in the West. This group has been allowed to hold demonstrations in Moscow and other places. The group's pronouncements have anti-semitic, slavophile overtones.

f) Human Rights in USSR

The West has routinely accused USSR of human rights violations. The issue of human rights is one of the most evocative, sticking-points in the East-West relations. In order to silence his critics, Gorbachev has ended Sakharov's internal exile in Gorky and also relaxed exit visa regime to allow more emigrations of Jews and political dissidents from the Soviet Union. In fact, Sakharov has become a supporter of Gorbachev's policies. The recent astute move by Gorbachev in Human Rights has considerably improved his image abroad. As a result of tolerance shown by the regime, political dissidence has become visible and reported in the press. Samizdat journals like "Glasnost" have also been distributed more widely. However, relaxation of controls in this area is quite modest so far.

Glasnost in Cultural Sphere

Apart from Glasnost in the political life of USSR, considerable openness is visible in the Cultural life of of the USSR too. In fact it is in this sphere that openness

is most noticeable. Major areas of cultural activities where big strides in adopting Glasnost have been made are discussed below.

a) Media

The media, heavily censored till recently, was the quickest to adopt openness. Even during Andropov's time the media had begun to criticise the governmental bureaucracy for corruption, red-tapism, inefficiency, nepotism etc. Glasnost during his years was more of an exception than a rule. Today, in contrast Gorbachev is advocating conscious application of openness coupled with responsibility in the media.

Trends

Since April '85, Glasnost has become a common feature of the media. The broad trend of media discussion since 1985 has been the debate about intensification, Perestroika: its scope and the pace of reforms, the "blank spots" in the Soviet history, the democratisation of the society etc. Evidently the media has taken its cue from the party guidelines issued from time to time to determine what is today permitted for debate. Some of the newspapers, journals like OGONYOK (Ed. V.Korotich), NOVY MIR (Ed S.Zalygin), ZNAMYA (Ed. G.Baklanov) MOSCOW NEWS (Ed. Yakovleiv), SOVIETSKAYA ROSSIYA (Ed. V.Chikin) LITERATURNAYA GAZETTA (Ed. A.Chokovsky), SOVETSKAYA KULTURA showed the way in introducing more openness in media reporting,

and championing the cause of restructuring, Sovetskaya Kultura introduced a column titled "Directo Speech" in which well known artists and writers began to talk frankly about the problems that worried the Soviet intelligentsia.²³ Round Table discussions were introduced by several prestigious journals to discuss the issues which were at one time forbidden.²⁴ The topics which were taboos till recently began to appear in the media - Prostitution, Nationality Problem, weaknesses of Soviet military campaigns in second World War, suppressions and repressions of 1930s', black-marketing, moral decline in Soviet society, corruption in high places - the list is virtually endless.

It has become common for most newspapers in USSR now to take up a topic of interest and initiate a debate. In the process, opposing views are published and discussed. A great deal of importance is attached to the views of the readers. Thereupon, a concluding article summarising the differing views is written. Albert Belyayev, Editor-in-chief of Sovetskaya Kultura, in an interview to Moscow News discussed

23 Boris Kagarlisky; The Intelligentsia and the Changes; New Left Review (NLR); July/August, 1987.

24 The Round Table discussions introduced by the editorial board of prestigious history journal 'Voprosil Istorii' have been widely commented upon. In one such discussion the historians discussed "the systematic offensive against sincence that began in '30s'. Please see Moscow News; Dec 20, 1987; p 10 & 11.

how the newspaper had in recent times given extensive coverage of differing views on sensitive issues like the art of criticism, the restructuring in the science of history.²⁵ The discussions in the newspaper columns extend to areas of practical importance: For example,

a) Siberian river diversion

The celebrated case of public outcry about the diversion of Siberian rivers to Central Asia is an illustration of the impact of media debates on the decision makers. Novy Mir in its first issue of 1986 carried an article on the subject which initiated an intense debate. Eventually, the Politbureau of the CPSU ordered²⁶ scrapping of the project resulting in a decisive win for the environmentalists. Another success for the public opinion has been the decision of the Soviet Government reported in Komsomolskaya Pravda ^{to}shelve the plans of constructing a nuclear plant near Minsk in the face of hostile public opinion²⁷ generated after Chernobyl mishap.

b) Afghanistan

Similarly, the media has been giving considerable coverage to the difficulties being encountered by the Soviet troops in Afghanistan. The ill-treatment being meted out to the soldiers who have returned from Afghanistan and

25 Moscow News Weekly, No.36, 1986, p.13: "Tolerance Different Views" published by the newspaper.

26 Politbureau resolution of 15 August, 1986.

27 IHT, 29 Jan.'88, p.1. The newspaper quoted Komsomolskaya Pravda.

expect recognition and material benefits has been covered by the media.²⁸ The controlled expression of public opinion on a sensitive issue like the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, acknowledgement of difficulties encountered by the Soviet troops, the public airing of grievances of the troops returning from Afghanistan is a part of Glasnost to which media is now adjusting itself.

The openness in the media in a controlled society gives rise to a number of problems concerning the limits of Glasnost indicating that openness is no easy matter. Pravda²⁹ strongly castigated the central newspapers like Sovetskaya Kulture, Ogonyok for having accused the newspaper Molodaya Gwardia of being an obstacle (Poperyok) in the path of perestroika, and described the newspaper as "immoral fake" and as one who is suffering from "nostalgia for the earlier times" etc. Pravda strongly advised that in the atmosphere of Glasnost the media would have to learn the culture of discussions. The press should also refrain from aiming personal narrow views and ambitions. This view has also been echoed by Gorbachev in several of his discussions with media representatives.

The Media & the Party

One of the issues which Pravda has again and again drawn attention to is that of relations between the media and the Party. Soon after the January 1987 Plenum, Pravda

28 See Pravda , Nov. 11, 1987.

29 Kultura Diskusti, Pravda 3 August, 1987, p.1.

wrote, "the strength of the press lies in the Party leadership"³⁰ and further "the role of party committees in the leadership of press organs has been rising with every passing day". Of course, added the Pravda editorial, party control should not mean that unpleasant material should not be published or pressure should be exerted on the editor to toe the line. The role of the party committees is to see that the cause of Perestroika, as outlined by the party, is promoted by the media. The present situation in the media, therefore, seems to be that the editors would have as much freedom of action as is allowed to them by the party. Since the present media policy as enunciated by the party is that of openness, the media consequently is relatively open. The important conclusion to be drawn is that the openness in the media depends upon the party and that this trend can be reversed if the party so decides.

Bureaucrats and the Newspapers:

The openness in the press is not taken by all, particularly, the bureaucrats both in the Government and the party who have to face public criticism frequently, kindly. They in turn urge the media to show balance, restraint and responsibility in dealing with sensitive issues. For instance, the Soviet Defence Minister, General Dimitri T. Yazov, in a T.V. appearance sharply criticised

30 Pravda; Programma Raboti Pressi; Feb 21, 1987

the Soviet press for undermining the public respect for the army.³¹ The programme "I serve the Soviet Union", directed at soldiers, featured the Soviet Defence Minister, several writers and editors. Yazov specifically criticised articles in Ogonyok and Literaturnaya Gazetta, calling one of the articles as "an obscenity". Alexandr B. Chakovsky, the Chief editor of Literaturnaya Gazetta, set the tone of the programme by issuing a warning that press articles critical of depicting the military in unfavourable light could lead to "a diminished desire amongst the people to serve in the armed forces". Chakovsky's comments, in contrast to the tone of Literaturnaya Gazetta articles, indicate that while he is somewhat conservative, the newspaper of which he is the chief editor, is not. This is yet another feature of press today in the Soviet Union. Often the newspapers publish material with which the chief editor or some of the members of the editorial board may not be in agreement.

Regular meetings between the Party leaders and media representatives: Party's expectations from the media.

One of the features of media Glasnot has been the regular meetings between the media representatives, artists, writers and cultural workers on the one hand, Soviet leaders like Gorbachev, Ligachev etc. on the other.³²

31 International Herald Tribune, Jan 22, 1988

32 i) Meeting of the CPSU CC with leading representative of the mass media and Unions of Culture & art workers, July 14'87; APN, Moscow'87.

ii) Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at meeting with top executives of mass media, bodies, ideological institutions and creative workers' Unions; Press Release, Info. Deptt, USSR Embassy in India, Jan.12, 1988; Pravda, 13 Jan.'88.

The main purpose of these meetings seems to be to inform the mass media representatives of Party's evolving thinking on the Prestroika campaign and also to obtain feedback from them as to how people are taking to it. For instance, Gorbachev in his speech in January 1988 to the media representatives, inter alia, warned the press that "the Soviet press is not a private shop". He also advised the press to rise above "personal emotions and attitudes" and reminded them that "a newspaper is not someone's private concern but a concern of the entire Party, of the whole people." Gorbachev was most emphatic about the following:

a) The media should support and defend those who are for Perestroika

b) Party is for openness without reservations, without limitations as long as it is "in the interest of socialism";

c) Party retains its vanguard stature in the current phase of Perestroika.

d) Mass media should support Perestroika and should advise the Party whether any policy adjustments are required; in other words, Party and media should join hands in furthering the cause of Perestroika.

e) The media should be especially attentive to the processes taking place in the society, as, "the next two or three years will decide where the Perestroika drive will lead to."

Gorbachev in his talk with the media representatives was clearly giving the impression of a man who needs media

support for his policies; he was also warning them not to go to extremes in dealing with Perestroika. The media representatives, in turn, were emphasising the dialectic nature of processes unfolding in the society today. This meeting, as reported in the press clearly left the impression of various contradictions with which media is faced as regards its role in the context of Perestroika campaign.

Reaction of the Common man to Glasnost:

We must also briefly touch on how the common man is reacting to increased Glasnost in the media. The letters to the editors, of which the Soviet citizens have always been fond of, have increased to millions. The newspapers are publishing them more freely. The combined circulation of newspapers increased by 1.5 million in 1986 alone. The newspapers also take up the grievances of the citizens and carry out their independent investigations and quite often manage to sort out ticklish issues. The concerned Government departments pay more heed to criticisms in the press. Features like "Raid Pravdi", "Posle Kritiki" etc. have become common features. Side by side with these positive changes, there is also a certain impatience in the common man about openness in the media. This was acknowledged by Mikhail Ulyanov, Chairman of the Board of the Union of Theatrical Workers of the Russian Federation in an article in Kommunist33 in which he wrote, "What worries me most is that sharp criticism in the press, on the radio and on T.V. is resented by a large number of quite ordinary people who are not leading officials

at all...It is hard to say exactly how large this group is, but it does exist and it is necessary to find out... why the non-acceptance of criticism has become rather firmly entrenched in our way of life." This once again underscores the fact that the atmosphere of openness does not mean that the democratisation of the Soviet society would be a smooth process.

The Soviet T.V. & Glasnost:

A few remarks about the Soviet T.V. would be in order to round-up the discussion on Glasnost in the media. One of the most interesting innovations on the Soviet Television is the monthly programme "Twelfth Floor". It is a programme for the young and deals with acute social and psychological conflicts in the Soviet society, the problems and attitude of the young. The discussions between the experts and the ordinary young people featured in the programme have been sharp and honest. The invited participants from the establishment have often to face angry young people. The "Twelfth Floor" is often the topic of discussion in the press. Some other T.V. programmes which deal with today's problems are "Projector Perestrokii", "Mir i Mologyozh", "Vazglyad"(The (Projection of Perestroika)(Word & the Young) viewpoint)" etc. It may be noted that not all these programmes have been able to keep to their initial high standards of Glasnost as in 1986. For instance Pravda recently criticised the programme "Projector of Perestroika" as having become toothless".³⁴ Television, like other components of media, has

34 Pravda, 8th Jan'88, "Tuskli Leek Ekрана" by A. Vartanov, p.3.

adopted a good measure of Glasnost in as much as many new sharp programmes have been telecast, but it remains subject to similar constraints as other components of the media.

Glasnost and History:

Literature, Theatre as well as Films in Soviet media are today giving utmost importance to the question of clearing "blank spots" in recent Soviet history. The first time Gorbachev urged for an objective analysis of the Soviet history was soon after the January 1987 Plenum. He said to media representatives, "I agree, there must not be blank spots in History or Literature. Otherwise, it will not be history or literature but artificial time serving structures. In my opinion much deserving ^{the} community interest has been published. A perfectly normal process".³⁵ Gorbachev, in his speech on the occasion of 70th anniversary of October Revolution made several explicit remarks about Party's approach to the question of history and culture. These have set the tone for Literature, theatre and social sciences to go ahead with the examination of the Soviet Union's recent history. He had the following to say on important issues:^{35A}

Stalinism

- (i) The period from twenties through the thirties in the Soviet history was "an arduous path, full of contradictions and difficulties, but also one of achievement and heroism".
- (ii) Stalin "the guiding nucleus of the Party" made "indisputable contribution to the socialism and the defence of its gains",

35 Gorbachev in his speech to media representatives, 12 Feb. '87.

35A Gorbachev's Report: Restructuring, SWB/SU/8716/C/1 of 4 November '87.

but one could not ignore "the gross political mistakes and arbitrary actions committed by him". Stalin's guilt for massive repressive measure was "enormous and unforgivable",

(iii) Stalin's personality cult was not "unavoidable". "It is/^{not} akin to the nature of socialism."

History of CPSU

A special commission of the CC, CPSU would be set-up to prepare an essay on the history of CPSU.

Rehabilitation of the innocents

The Politbureau of the Party has set-up a commission to deal with the issues concerning the rehabilitation of innocent Soviet citizens who were the victims of Stalinism.

(The Commission has started its work. A supreme Soviet notification published in Pravda, March 27, ¹⁹⁸⁸ rehabilitated many military generals, and others.

Collectivisation

Collectivisation was highly significant for the consolidation of socialism's position in the countryside. However, a deviation from the Leninist policy took place while dealing with peasantry. The struggle against Kulaks had its extremes too but the policy of struggle against the Kulaks was "in itself correct".

Trotsky

Trotsky was condemned by Gorbachev for an "all-out attack on Leninism", and as one who had staked "exorbitant claims" to leadership of the Party after Lenin's death.

"Trotskyism is a political trend whose ideologues, using left-wing pseudo-revolutionary phraseology, actually stood on

capitulatory positions". Trotskyism, in alliance with the 'new-opposition' headed by Zinovyev and Kamenev further complicated the situation." Thus Trotsky remains unrehabilitated.

Industrialisation

Gorbachev justifies the pace of industrialisation in the 1930's as it made the country "a really great industrial power".

Bukharin

Bukharin has been rehabilitated, at least partially. Referring to the crucial issue of bringing peasantry into the fold of socialism, Gorbachev referred to Bukharin^{and} merely said that he underestimated the importance of time factor in building socialism in the 1930's.

Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact

Gorbachev criticised the West for blaming USSR for the Second World War on account of USSR having signed Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Hitler. He counter-attacked the West by saying that the "first fires" of the Second World War had already been lit earlier^{by the} seizure of Manchuria by Japan, (1931-32); Italy's attack on Ethiopia and Albania (1935, 1939); etc.

20th CPSU Congress & Khrushchev

The 20th CPSU Congress brought many changes and cheers in people's lives. Nikita Khrushchev showed "much courage" to criticise Stalin's Cult of Personality. Old stereotypes in domestic and foreign policy began to collapse. Attempts were made to do away the command and bureaucratic methods of

management. At the same time, however, a lot of "subjectivist errors were committed" which made it more difficult for socialism to enter a new stage. October 1964 Plenum of the Party (Removal of Khrushchev)

The decisions were adopted in this plenum to overcome "voluntary tendencies and aberrations in domestic and foreign policy."

Brezhnev Years

In those years (i.e. 60s and 70s') USSR possessed great potentialities for speeding up its development. But these required changes in society and a corresponding political will. "Both were lacking".

This is the basic official outline of the Soviet history which Gorbachev has given to the intelligentsia to take-up the question of rediscovering the past. A few remarks about Gorbachev's observations about the Soviet history are in order.

a) The new element in Gorbachev's criticism of Stalin was the denunciation of excesses. It is to be noted that contrary to the Western estimates of those who died in Stalinist purges, Gorbachev puts this figure at "many thousands of members of the party and non party people" who were subjected to "mass repression." Gorbachev has held Stalin a contradictory personality who had good as well as bad sides to him. This assessment

of Stalin tallies essentially with the assessment contained in the previous editions of CPSU history, where, for instance it is mentioned:

"The CPSU sees two aspects in Stalin's work; a positive aspect which the party values, and a negative aspect, which it criticises and denounces."³⁶

However, it must be mentioned that today the Party is showing more willingness to squarely face the "negative" aspects of Stalin. This has become necessary because if the party has to promote Glasnost and democratisation, it cannot do so without itself analysing where and how things went wrong. The previous editions of CPSU history/^{tried} to sweep the inconvenient phases of Soviet history under the carpet; this cannot be done now. However, it is yet to be seen how far would the Party go in explaining the past. There are quite obviously the limits on this kind of re-examination which could lead to denigration of the Party itself, and which could cause doubts in people's mind about socialism in these years.

b) Gorbachev has defended collectivisation and industrialisation policies and even criticised Bukharin for having underestimated the time-frame in which these reforms could be carried out. It is becoming clear that

36 "A Short History of the CPSU" ; Progress Publishing House 1974; p.346

too radical a restructuring of past is dangerous as the Party would find it difficult to justify to the people the immense sacrifices made by the Soviet people during these years.

c) Gorbachev does not propose to review certain other "blank spots" in the Soviet history; the forced displacement of about a million from Eastern Poland to Siberia, history of Baltic republics etc. Instead, the policy on Nationalities is listed as one of the great achievements.

Re-examination of history as backdrop to Cultural activities in the field of Theatre, Films, Literature:

Re-examination of history as well as the society's concern about bureaucratism, moral decline in the society, dialectic of Perestroika provide the backdrop for today's concerns as spotlighted by literature, theatre, films, etc.

Glasnost in Theatre

Mikhail Shatrov, the Soviet playwright, is in the forefront of those who are having a close look at the history. He has produced eleven daring plays on the historical theme, the latest of which and probably the most outspoken one, is "Onward...Onward...Onward!", which was first published in magazine Znamya in December, 1987 and serialised in New Times since January, 1988.³⁷

37 See New Times, Jan. 1, 1988 & subsequent^{three} issues for the play. It is interesting that after the fourth issue, New Times abruptly stopped publication of the play. This coincided with sharpening of ideological debate concerning Perestroika and related matters in the Soviet Union. The debate was fierce and is still continuing.

The play is extremely important as it takes a close, unorthodox look at the Soviet history. It features a wide cast of 22 historical personalities : Lenin, Stalin, Bukharin, Rykov, Kerensky, Trotsky, Zinovyev, Kamnev, Martov, Denkin, Dan, Krupskaya, Korinov, Rhaja, Dzerzhinsky and others and gives them "the opportunity to speak". In one scene Stalin is accused of murder of "hundreds of thousands" of people. Stalin answers back by threatening to exterminate Grigori Ordzhonikidze's entire family. In an another scene Lenin admits of his guilt before the workers of Russia for failing to get rid of Stalin. One reader, in a letter to Shatrov, described the play as "conversation between Lenin and Gorbachev"³⁸

In an another play titled "The Dictatorship of Conscious", inspired by a Pravda article of 22 April, 1920, Shatrov re-enacts an imaginary trial of Lenin in which the witnesses speak their minds according to the dictate of their conscious, including on Stalin's Great Purge. One of the witnesses compares these purges with the genocide committed by Pol Pot in Kampuchea in the seventies. Similarly in Buransky's play called "Speak", based on themes from the late writer V.Ovechkin the officials are advised to let the people speak-up in order to find lasting, durable solution of the problems. 'The Speak' is set in ^{the} fifties when Stalin dies and Khrushchev is in power.

38 International Herald Tribune, December 16, 1987

The rank and file working people begin openly to talk about their problems, their rights, put forward their own demands and solutions, and begin electing their own leaders. At such a turn of events, the conservative and progressive officials alike take fright. The initiative assumed by lower cadres is dubbed as "insubordination" and "mutiny". Radzinsky's 'Sporting scenes of 1981' is a play that spotlights the dege^{ne}ration of the grandchildren of the powerful leading figures of Stalin's time, shows the corruption, alienation and lack of spirituality prevailing among the elite. The play talked frankly about the cynical conversations amongst the elite about sex, purchasing of articles in foreign exchange shops and other innuendoes in which the rich and the privileged indulge. This is for the first time that such a play denigrating the elite has been put up in USSR. F. Burltasky's 'Two Views From One Office', first published in Literaturnaya Gazetta and then shown on the T.V., attempts to tackle the issues like relations between the opposing social forces, anatomy of new political conflicts etc. The participants in Burltasky's 'Dialogue' are the progressive First Secretary of a regional Party Committee and its conservative Second Secretary. In the end the progressive hero, who talks in terms of generalities, and about the future, loses out to the conservative Second Secretary who emphasises the dangers to the system on account of the new changes, and about contradictions between new

slogans and old political dogmas with which people have been fed for generations.³⁹

The Soviet playwrights are also having a dig at themselves for not having been communicative, truthful in the past. For instance Alexander Galin's play 'The Wall' staged by Sovremennik Theatre group, is the story of a man who is producing a play but has a wall built to separate the stage from the audience. A city cultural inspector visits the theatre and thinks why not convert the walled stage into a hostel, to end the space shortage! The play is funny, tragic, but makes its point in a telling manner. Galin enjoyed considerable success in 1986 theatre season. Five of his plays: 'The Retro', 'The Toastmaster', the 'East Grandstand', 'The Roof' and of course 'The Wall', were hits.⁴⁰

Glasnost and Films

While many new works in the fields of theatre, literature and cinema have been produced in the last 2 - 3 years, a number of old works which have been banned during the sixties, seventies and early eighties are now being released. Even today their topicality remains. This illustrates the fact that the question like destalinisation, evils of bureaucracy, absence of freedom of speech, the hiatus

39 For details, please see (i) R.C. Tucker - "Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia", Wheatsheaf Books, 1987.

(ii) New Left Review, "The Intelligenstia and the Changes", July/August 1987

40 Moscow News; 32, August 9, 1987, p. 14

between the Party and People, the truth about past history continue to worry the Soviet people acutely. Klimov's new wave film 'Go and See' about the savagery of war as experienced in Byelorussia during the 2nd World War would not be pleasing to the Soviet war chiefs who only promote films which glorify the Red Army. A long banned film, German's 'Testing on the Roads', features a Soviet deserter to the Germans who comes back to the Soviet Union to join the partisans fighting against the German, only to remain ever suspect in the eyes of his colleagues. Georgian director Abuladze's 'Repentance', which drew large crowds in cinemas throughout the country, was one of the films which had been lying on the shelf for many years. It is the story of Varlam (a double of Beria) and those whose prosperity was based on the results of terror. The sons and children of Varlam and his friends fake to a life of complascent existence and become almost respectable bourgeoisie. In 'Repentance', the youth, symbolised by Varlam's grandson, revolts against the past generations. Most of the critics of 'Repentance' concentrated on the image of Varlam, seeing in the film an allegorical account of Stalin's terrors.⁴¹

Glasnost and Literature

Glasnost has thrown literature in ferment, too. Boris Pasternak's 'Doctor Zhivago' and other works are going to be published. There are appeals from influential, prominent writers like Vozhnesensky to publish the writings

41 i) Ibid; 164, New Left Review, July/Aug. 1987.

ii) For an interview with Abuladze, please see NEW TIMES, No.6, Feb. 16, 1987, p.28

of E. Zamiatin (author of early 1930s, novel 'We' - banned for 70 years), Vladislav Khodsaevich, Anna Akhmatova's complete works. There are appeals to publish Nobokov and poet Gumilev who was shot dead by Bolsheviki in 1920. Anatoly Rybakov's 'Children of Arbat' which had remained banned for decades, was finally published after political intervention from the highest authorities. Whether or not Rybakov's novel would be published became a ritual question, almost a test of fate of cultural liberalisation. 'Children of Arbat' is set chiefly in Moscow climate of terror in 1934 and portrays Stalin in the backdrop of intrigues which led to assassination of Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad Party chief. The novel tries to reveal the "logic of power, the logic of omnipotence" during thirties and forties. "Stalin's logic of power turns out to be something much bigger than Stalin's own thinking...it turns out to be the logic of the very system created by Stalin".⁴² The novel personifies two kinds of forces; the "positive", who suffer in the quest of truth and the "evil" ones, who run the system whose logic is that of power. The concepts like "honest", "wrong", "noble" do not exist for them. They however, well understand the values of "power", "strength", "advantage", "interest".

Anna Akhmatova's Requiem, a poetic indictment of Stalin's terror that ranks amongst master pieces of Russian literature⁴³ is being published in USSR. Yevtusknko's plea

42 The "Children of Arbat", Fifty years on, by Leonid Ionin, New Times, August 3'87, p.26-27.

43 See Tucker, *ibid.*

for Stalin victims "Monuments Not Yet Erected" was published by Izvestia in November 1987 and raised acute controversy.⁴⁴

Three 1986 publications - Rasputin's 'Fire', Astafev's 'The Sad Detective', Aitmatov's 'The Executioner's Block'- give an idea of the crisis of traditional concepts and of the liberal intelligentsia culture in USSR. Astafaev in his novel seems anti-semitic; he sees the root of evil in the Jews. Rasputin blames everything on European civilisation and urbanisation and Aitmatov points out the devil as the source of all troubles and preaches the need for instilling a sense of the divine among a mankind.

Bykov's war novel Omen of Disaster, which was refused publication by the Military Publishing House, was actually published during Andropov's time. It describes how the forced 'dekulkakisation' campaign of the thirties drove inhabitants of a village in Bydorussia to cooperate with the Germans. It points out that the war disasters which befell on the Soviet Union were in part due to the hate instilled in the peasant masses on account of forced collectivisation campaign which drove villagers into the hands of Germans.

In today's climate of openness, anything, even mediocre criticism of the past becomes worthy of publication and good reviews. In fact, not all that is being produced today contains new and fresh ideas. People like Aitmatov, Eidelman, Shatrov

44 Times of India, 20th January, 1988 carried the poem.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN FOR GRASSROOTS IN THE USSR

are advocating a fresh unbiased look at the past but do not come out with any new approaches for the future. While Aitmatov emphasises the Christian values, Eidelman glorifies the traditions of the 19th century liberalism, Shatrov wants Leninism to be re-interpreted. "The future turns out to be the hostage of past"⁴⁵.

While the works of Astafaev, Aitmatov or Belov (It is All to Come) were considered daring in 1986, the first six months of 1987 produced even sharper books. These were: White Robes by Dudinsev, Aurochs by Granin, Golden Cloud Went to Sleep by Pristavkin, By the Right of Memory, a poem by Tvardovsky, Foundation Pit by Platonov and Dog's Heart by Bulgakov. Some of these books were written years ago but never published. These books are concerned in one way or the other by processes which affect people's lives. While they contain strict judgements over past events, they also are an attempt to find out which social forces are predominant in today's social life.⁴⁶

Glasnost and Cultural Institutions

A) The course of the 5th Congress of Cinema Workers' Union (May '86) as well as the 8th Congress of the Writers' Union (June '86), held soon after the 27th Party Congress gives us an idea of how a section of intelligentsia reacted to the climate of openness. The Party, after a long time, was encouraging freedom of thought. It was for the intelligentsia to take up the challenge.

⁴⁵ New Left Review, op.cit.

⁴⁶ Moscow News, Traditions and Paths of literary criticism No.33, 1987, p.11.

A) The 5th Congress of the Cinema Workers' Union (May 1986):
Decentralisation of the Film Industry

The most notable aspect of this Congress was that a new set of people, who were not the Party's candidates, were elected as the office bearers of the Cinema Workers' Union. The new ruling body of the Union, headed by Elem Klimov, sought to bring in a fundamental structural reform of the whole system of film production. Klimov set new tasks; not only to defend the film-maker against censorship but also to fight for decentralisation of film industry. The delegates to the Congress gave vent to their long suppressed feelings against the system of cinema production, which they felt, was chiefly responsible for colourless, mediocre films totally divorced from the problems of real life. The main plank of the reforms in the new system - the new model of cinema - is "transition from administration by mere injunction to economic methods of running the cinema industry combining both State and social interests"⁴⁷. Concretely, the film studios are going to operate on the basis of cost accounting and freedom of choice about production of theme of the films. According to Klimov, a government document is being drafted which would include the main principles of the new Studios being worked jointly by the Union of Cinematographers, Goskino, Glavkinoprokat, the Studios themselves and others concerned. The reforms are also aimed at infusing young blood into cinema. The model provides for contests in creativity and competition to locate and

⁴⁷ An interview with Elem Klimov, reproduced in Perestroika: Views and Opinions, APN, Moscow, 1987, p.23.

encourage talent. The model further limits the role of Goskino, as well as the Union of Cinimatographers. Goskino, would have the production facilities and would be entrusted with the task of coordinating the work of the Studios, train personnel and fulfil Government orders. The studios, on the other hand, would be allowed the freedom to decide what film to make right from the conception of the idea to its realisation. The new leadership of the Union, despite its strict views about the inhibiting role of Goskino in the past, wants to avoid confrontation. They are counting on cooperation. However, as the reforms are not going on smoothly as was expected. Klimov, speaking at Gorbachev's meeting with the representatives of media and the Cultural Unions spoke about certain unforeseen difficulties which have arisen. He felt that certain people were trying to restore the old systems where Central Organs had the final say in matters relating to films.⁴⁸ He also mentioned about differences of opinion between the Unions and Mossovet on some matters.

Clearly, despite the fact that some of the recently produced films have encouraged the reforms process in USSR, it is difficult to say that this trend has become irreversible.

c) The 8th Congress of the Writer's Union:

The Eighth Congress of the Soviet Writer's Union held in Moscow in June '86 was a turning point in the course of

48 Pravda, 13 January, 1988; p.3

Glasnost in USSR. The Congress itself was preceeded by Gorbachev's meeting with leading writers. It may be recalled that it was in 1934, at the first Congress of the writer's Union, that Boris Pasternak was thrown out. The Eighth Congress rehabilitated him. The Congress also became a platform for a concerted attack on the state organisations like Glavlit, who have misused the powers to question works involving issues of military and national security. The Congress speeches were a mix of pro-reform as well as conservative opinion. The boldest call for change came from the poet Andrei Voznesensky who alleged that Moscow's Writer's Organisation had falsified the results of elections of Congress delegates by excluding 14 writers including Bella Akhmadulina and Bulat Okudzaeva. There were sharp criticisms of censorship, corruption in the Union leadership and state interference in Cultural matters. Despite this trend, the conservatives however managed to hang on to the key union posts. Markov, the Chief of the Writer's Union was replaced by his deputy Vladimir Karpov. For the progressives, it was a matter of some satisfaction that four of the fourteen non-delegates including Akhmadulina and Okudzaeva were elected to the new Writer's Union board in absentia. At the congress there was a sharp criticism of Government's river diversion project, which ultimately was shelved by a Politbureau decision of 15 August, 1986.

(d) The Theatre Reforms

A Party Central Committee Conference on theatre reforms was held in August 1986. Sixty nine theatres in Eight Soviet

republics are adopting new forms of Organisation; planning and financing. Until now the system worked out in 1946 has been in force. Depending upon the success of this experiment, the system would be extended to all theatres in the USSR by 1989. Under the experiment, the directors and artistic councils of the 69 experimental theatres would have the freedom to decide on which plays to put up. In the Russian Theatrical Union's Congress in December 1986, the old bureaucracy and persons connected with the Ministry of Culture were excluded from positions in the Union that was formed at the Congress itself to replace the All-Russia Theatrical Society. The formation of the Union of Theatrical Workers, is inconceivable and unprecedented by old standards. However laudable these reforms, the fact is that bitter struggle is already on. Whether or not these reforms would succeed or not is yet to be seen.

Conclusions:

The present situation as regards the Soviet Culture is well summed up by Novosti analyst Gavriil Petrosyan

" 1988 is expected to be even more complicated for Soviet Culture than the two previous years.....

Generally speaking the year 1988 marked the beginning of the second stage of restructuring... Many supporters of the experiments and new works, and many opponents of mediocrity and time-serving have somewhat shrunk away.

The "new" scares them and the "old" no longer seems that bad and stagnant."⁴⁹

In 1988, the discussions are increasingly about the difficulties in the path of Perestroika. Gorbachev admitted as much when, in February, 88 plenum of the CPSU, he 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...are being implemented slowly and with difficulties".

and further,

"For the first time in many decades we really feel the Socialist plularism of views. This is something unaccustomed, and it is being assessed in different ways, it demands study, analysis and elucidation"⁵⁰ (emphasis added)

The fact that Gorbachev has been able to say so firmly about the difficulties in the path of Perestroika and has lauded the current atmosphere when "the socialist plularism of view" can be clearly felt, is an indication of the extent of Glasnost already prevalent in the Soviet Union. What is even more significant is the reference that such "socialist plularism of view" has become possible in decades. Which earlier period of the Soviet history is Gorbachev referring to? Considering that many of Gorbachev's ideas are based on Lenin's views particularly during the New Economic Policy days, it would be worth examining

49 Quoted News & Views from the Soviet Union, January 1988

50 "Gorbachev's pspeech at the regular Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee (Theses); Press Release, Information Deptt., USSR Embassy in India based on TASS report of 18th Feb.88

whether the atmosphere in which the great political debate of 1920s occurred is going to be resurrected in the present context. Glasnost, as we have seen is politically inspired, a concept handed over from the top. Then, is the evolution of Glasnost its scope, a reflection of new political realities emerging in the USSR ? The great debates of the twenties finally ended up in the rise of Stalinism. Where would the present phase of liberalisation lead to? These and other aspects of the Glasnost campaign in USSR would be examined in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER III

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF GLASNOST

Glasnost - Political Necessity?

'Glasnost', as we have seen, is a concept which has been worked out by the Party and handed down from the top. It satisfies the current political requirements of the Party. Khrushchev had gone for liberalisation because the very process of "destalinisation" of the Soviet Society which he undertook logically, so demanded. Gorbachev's reforms are aimed at rejecting all that led to socio-economic stagnation in the country taking measures to improve the system. Glasnost or openness is important for atleast the initial success of Gorbachev's reforms as it is only through openness that the old system could be exposed and the new ideas could be propagated, and People's participation in the nation-building ensured.

Glasnost and the People: Building up a Constituency?

Glasnost can be viewed at two levels. At the popular level, the people are told that the Party is interested in the 'truth'. Trust is expressed in the sound judgment of the people, who once armed with truth, it is believed, would cooperate with the State. In other words, more openness would ensure People's participation in the state affairs and thereby make them interested in the success of the state policies.

Gorbachev's speeches are replete with references to the importance of 'human factor' in the success of Perestroika. Glasnost, it is believed, would activate this human factor. Expression of Party's determination to permit endeavours aimed at seeking the 'truth' coupled with the emphasis on the Culture of criticism and self criticism has sent encouraging signals to the ordinary people, who now feel relatively easier to express their grievances and dissatisfaction with the State and Party machinery and also have been emboldened to make suggestions for the improvement of the system. Thus through Glasnost and other pro-people reforms, Gorbachev can hope for support for him at the mass level. Gorbachev's visits to the various parts of the country, particularly, in 1986, his open, frank, informal and spontaneous conversations with the ordinary people was one manifestation of the Glasnost which he was advocating. More importantly, Gorbachev successfully projected himself to his domestic as well as international audience as a leader with mass appeal - a charismatic leader. Thus Glasnost at popular level helped Gorbachev to carve out a constituency for himself- that is amongst the people. In time of need, this constituency could prove to him as the source of his power.

Glasnost and consolidation of power of the new leader:

At another level, there are many uses of Glasnost. It can help the leader in power to consolidate his position

mainly by; a) exposing the shortcomings of previous regimes, older system and by setting up the stage for the implementation of new policies; and, b) by exposing or discrediting the opponents. This can be easily illustrated:

Sharp denunciation of the Brezhnev years marked by stagnation and inertia set the stage for Perestroika. Similarly open and unsparing criticism of the past also helped Gorbachev to remove those who are seen as mere baggage or even opponents. The sweeping personnel changes carried out by Gorbachev in 1985-86 were facilitated by the sharp open criticism of negative tendencies in the state, party institutions.

Possible Dangers of the Glasnost Policy:

Glasnost can prove to be double edged weapon. The adversaries can also benefit by it as Glasnost ensures certain minimum freedom to speak, to criticise and even affords opportunities to the opponents to re-group forces. This is evident from the fact that a number of social groups of dissidents some of whom oppose the present socialist system have sprung in USSR and are reportedly indulging in anti-state activities. Theoretically, it is even possible that the discredited persons would prove embarrassing to the regime, although there is no evidence of it as yet.

Rising Expectations:

What are the dangers of Glasnost policy which might compel the Party to keep it within convenient limits? The first and foremost danger is that the expectations of the people from the present drive for Perestroika may rise disproportionately to unrealistic levels. For instance, there could be demands for a fresh look at the very system which, as per the present Party line, has to be preserved but improved. Would the policy of Glasnost tolerate such criticism, particularly, when Gorbachev is at pains to convince his critics that Perestroika is not aimed at undermining the socialist system. It is well known that there have all along been underground dissident groups in the USSR which have even been in receipt of foreign assistance. How would the activities of these groups, or dissidents be viewed in the light of Glasnost?

The Difference between word & deed; Party's inability to reform itself:

between
The difference between words and deeds as far as Glasnost is concerned would have an important bearing on People's perception of how serious the party is. The Party which retains the vanguard role in the Soviet society has to first

accept the idea of democratisation and Glasnost.

Gorbachev was hard at those Party Committees which pay only lip-service to the idea of democratisation. In his speech in the Feb. '88 plenum, Gorbachev said,

"In one place, they (i.e. party cadres) 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 managers' elections into a farce. In still another, they ride roughshod over people's opinion.They do not recognise other methods. They are plain scared by the growing activity of people".

He warns the recalcitrant party cadres who are unable to get out of the old habits of "keeping everything under their thumb";

"But it should be realised fully well that at the new phase of Perestroika, the Party can only ensure its guiding role of the vanguard..... if it uses democratic methods of work.⁵²

Thus it is plain that in Gorbachev's assessment the Party cadres are still not functioning in the spirit of democratisation and Glasnost. They continue to snub the "grass-root initiative, endeavour and independence".⁵³

52. Speech by M. Gorbachev at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, Feb. 18, 1988, published and distributed by USSR Embassy in New Delhi, p.12.

53. Ibid.

Party's apathy to the new ideas would constitute the greatest threat to Glasnost and other ideas. This much is acknowledged by Gorbachev himself.

"This (i.e. failure to encourage local initiatives thanks to Party cadres' attitude) is the biggest, the hardest, but also the most important task of Perestroika".

The situation in USSR today is such that the non-party people are more receptive to the new ideas than the Party cadres themselves. This asymmetry could have important consequence for Glasnost, as the experience in the Vladimir Oblast, quoted in Chapter I has already shown. Thus the differences between words and deeds would have to be narrowed down.

Practical difficulties to Glasnost: The ethnic tensions:

The dangers to Glasnost and Democratisation arise from the practical reasons also. For instance, the Soviet official claim is that the question of Nationalities has been resolved in the Soviet Union. There is no doubt that there are impressive achievements to USSR's credit in this field. However, the Nationalities problem, which can threaten the very basis of the Soviet State and Society, is far from fully resolved. How would this problem be viewed in the light of Glasnost? Gorbachev is indeed being bold when he suggests:

".... we should set out to thoroughly tackle nationalities policy at the present stage - in all areas, including theory and practice. This is the most fundamental vital issue of our society. I think one of the plenums of the Central Committee should be devoted to the problems

of nationalities policy"⁵⁴

These are brave words indeed, particularly when we observe that during 1986-1988 there have been riots in Alma Ata because a Russian was appointed as the First Secretary of Kazakh CPSU, demonstrations in Red Square of Crimean Tartars, riots in Armenia in February 1988 soon after the above speech by Gorbachev and disturbances in Pre-Baltic republics simultaneously with those in Armenia.⁵⁵ There is no doubt that ~~Gorbachev's liberalisation~~ campaign has affected the political, cultural, social, economic life of the country. The resurfacing of Nationalities problems is one such consequence. One could expect uncertain consequences in other fields in a society which is "super-centralised", where "grassroot" initiative has not been allowed to flourish. How would such manifestation of social discontent be managed under the policy of Glasnost?

Consequences of Glasnost policy

It would not be correct to surmise that Glasnost and other reforms are uniformly liked in the populace. Mikail Ulyanov wrote in Kommunist that he was most worried by the fact that sharp criticism in the press, on the radio and on T.V. is resented by a large number of quite ordinary people who are not leading officials at all. He feels that it is difficult to say how large such a group is, but such a group definitely exists. According to him, non acceptance of

54 Ibid

55 "Armenia: Threat to Glasnost", Andrew Wilson; Times of India, 4th March, 1988.

criticism is rooted in the psychology of people which, in turn has been shaped by the experience of last few decades.⁵⁶ In this context, we must take note of certain negative, even reactionary tendencies which have got encouragement in recent years. For instance, in the area around Moscow/a ^{has arisen} semi-spontaneous movement called "The Lyubers" (from the Lyubertsy town in Moscow region has arisen.) Their programme includes to beat up the Muscovites, or attack those who wear foreign clothes, to drive out the Metallists (a youth rock music group, similar to the Beatles) etc. The psychological basis for the Lyubers' activities is nostalgia for Stalinism. According to the editor-in-chief of youth magazine Smena, the Lyubers "want to model their 'behaviour' on the most distressing period of our history".⁵⁷ At the end of 1986, the Public Prosecutor's office began to investigate the doings of Lyubers. However, the investigations were never completed. On 22 February, 1987, there were demonstrations in Moscow against the Lyubers and to demand that their activities be stopped. The Literaturnaya Gazetta

56 Perestroika, Views & Opinions, APN, 1987 p.52

57 Knizhnoe Obozrenie, 1987, Smena No.9. Quoted in 164, New Left Review, July/Aug-1987. Also see "Prestroika..." p.31 for definition of Lyubers; they engage in body building and oppose what they call "Mass-Culture".

informed its readers of these demonstrations but downplayed the Lyubers' activities saying that irresponsible journalists had sensationalised the whole issue.

Paradoxically this Literaturnaya Gazetta article was written by the well known journalist Shchekochikkin, who was in fact the first one to write about the Lyubers. It would seem that certain influential but interested parties were not in favour of publicising the activities of Lyubers.

Lyubers' is not an isolated case. There have sprung in USSR well known clubs like Pamyat and Rodina with branches in Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, which have obvious anti-Semitic anti-democratic tones. Astafiev's anti-semitic views expressed in his book The Doleful Detective as well as his rather in elegant correspondence with Eidelman in which he defends his views are significant in this context.

Intelligenstia in Crisis

One consequence of the liberalisation drive, which can be appreciated thanks to the policy of Glasnost is that the Soviet Society today is in some sort of introspective mood and some section of it are even in a state of crisis. Nowhere is this most visible in intelligenstia as well as the youth.

We have seen how theatre, films, literature, media

have responded to the new changes. No doubt a lot positive is happening in these fields. However, we have also noted the resistance within each field - be it theatre, films or literature - to new changes. Even the most ardent supporters of Glasnost in intelligentsia do not expect a smooth going. The point to be emphasized^{is} that appearance of a dozen or even a hundred up-beat books or plays or articles denunciatory of the past do not add up to a movement for change. We have to see how the middle and lower levels of the intelligentsia react to the changes, to Glasnost, democratisation and Perestroika in general. There is no dearth of turn-coats or "the chameleons of the pen" in intelligentsia. Many of this type have now put-up the new "democratic" face. Till yesterday they extolled the virtues of old system, and now they are the staunch supporters of the new one. It is not yet known whether the new advocates of Perestroika are merely indulging in social mimicry, seeing that it is fashion to be for Perestroika. No doubt a number of works, banned till yesterday have a d made appearance. But they all essentially look towards the past. The new works, analysing the present and looking towards future are comparatively rare. It is the 'Children of the 20th Congress' who during the sixties collected round the journal Novy Mir (Tvardovski) who are once again active and are in the forefront of liberalisation today (e.g. Shatrov). However, it is yet

to be seen whether the intelligentsia would be able to produce the children of Perestroika, who would be able to carry it forward. One of the main fears of intelligentsia would be the fear of a new round of suppression and repression. This psychological fear would have an impact on the future of Glasnost.

The attitude of youth:

The attitude of youth towards Glasnost and the changes in general is of crucial importance. An idea of the frame of mind of today's young generation is to be had from the fact that a number of banned rock-music groups like the Aquarium, Mosaic, Kino, the Mettalists have become exceedingly popular in the Soviet Union. In December 1986, the television featured an interview between Leningrad youth and some singers known as "the bards". "The Bards", in the sixties, were a symbol of spiritual independence, free-thinking opposition and establishment. The Leningrad youngsters reproached "the Bards" for having stopped singing the songs of protests, about social problems, about freedom and about masses.⁵⁸ The popularity of rock-groups in USSR is to be explained by the fact that they represent this mood of the youth.

There is also considerable cynicism and indifference visible in the youth of today. The phenomenal success of

58 New Left Review, 164, July/Aug 1987, op.cit.

the Latvian documentary "Is it easy to be young?" can be explained by the fact that it captured this very mood of today's young. The young people talk openly about their problems, admitting that they need a lot of money, questioning the values of the society. The film featured punks, adherents of Hare Rama Hare Krishna movement as well as men who had returned from Afghanistan. For instance, the war-veterans from Afghanistan did not justify war with rebels in ideological terms. Somebody had "to do the dirty work" - shoot the rebels for instance - was the justification used. (This is not how a II-World War veteran would justify the internationalist duty, for instance) The attitude of youth to the present changes in the society would be determined to a considerable extent by their attitude to the party line on ideology. It is unlikely that in the present up-beat mood, the youth would easily accept the limits and confines of Glasnost and democratisation. On the negative side, ofcourse, there are youth movements as represented by Lyubers who symbolise the reaction. In short, the present campaign for reforms has exposed the crisis in the youth of today.

Political dimensions of Glasnost: Three case studies:

It is in the backdrop of above that we must consider a few important incidents of the last few years

to illustrate the political dimensions of the reforms as well as Glasnost. The following are examined:

- i) The Yeltsin Affair
- ii) Perestroika Conservatives vs Liberals
(Gorbachev vs Ligachev)
- iii) Recent Developments in Armenia; Manifestation of Nationality Problem

Glasnost and The Yeltsin Affairs

Boris Yeltsin, born in 1931, served as First Secretary of Sverdloorsk during 1976-85. In 1981, he was made full member of the CPSU, CC. In April 1985, after Gorbachev's appointment as the General Secretary, Yeltsin was moved to C.C. Secretariat where he headed the Department of Construction. From July - Dec. '85, he served as Secretary of CC, CPSU. In December 1985, he was appointed the First Secretary of Moscow City Soviet, replacing Grishin and in February 86, he was elevated to the Alternate membership of the Politbureau. He was sacked from the First Secretaryship of the Moscow city Soviet in December 1987 and finally stripped of his alternate membership of politbureau in February, 1988. Yeltsin's was a classic case of meteoric rise and rapid downfall. The reasons for his steep rise and then downfall are not fully understood, but they are quite obviously linked to the reforms drive in the Soviet Union. Yeltsin affair also provides important insights into Glasnost, as it exists in USSR today.

Yeltsin, an Engineer from Sverdlovsk, with close links with Ryzhkov (Ural Mash 1959-75), owed his rapid

rise to Gorbachev as is indicated by his quick promotions after Gorbachev came to power. He obviously enjoyed Gorbachev's confidence. He was an outspoken critic of "stagnation" and an irrepressible advocate of radical changes. For instance, at the 27th Party Congress he attacked the 'time servers in possession of party cards' and the party leaders for committing the same mistakes again and again. Further, he said, "How many times can some leaders of party committees, disregarding the lessons of history, be presented as miracle workers, while at the same time belittling collective wisdom as the key weapon of our party?"⁵⁹ Referring to shortcomings in Moscow City in the areas of trade, health, transport, construction etc., he held "the display of complacency, ostentation, bombast and just a comfortable life of a number of leaders" as responsible for this.

It is no wonder that Yeltsin, due to his strong bias in favour of Perestroika was perceived as Gorbachev favourite.

On October 21, 1987 a regular plenum of the CC CPSU was held. The ostensible purpose of this plenum was to discuss the political report of the General Secretary to be delivered on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October revolution. No details of the proceedings of the plenum were published (or have been published so far). However, the Western newsmedia speculated that Yeltsin had been sacked during the plenum for his criticism of the

59 SWB, Second Series Number 8193, 26 Feb. '86.

Party bosses - Politbureau - for not having done enough to further Perestroika. While the Western newsmedia speculations about Yeltsin affair were increasing, the Soviet media did not disclose anything till November 2 when the Party Secretary Lyukanov gave a brief account of Yeltsin affair to the newsmen corroborating the Western media speculations. He confirmed that Yeltsin had "touched upon the question of the style of work of the Party's leading bodies and the progress of Perestroika", and that 'his speech contained a number of assessments with which the CC members did not agree'. At this plenum, Yeltsin asked to be relieved of his duties.⁶⁰

The next important step was the 11th November meeting of the Moscow City Party Committee which eventually relieved Yeltsin of his duties as First Secretary of the Mossovet. Gorbachev spoke at this meeting. There were 23 other speakers who criticised Yeltsin. These included First Secretaries of Moscow district committees of the CPSU, Secretaries of the Party's Moscow City Committees, heads of a number of institutions and departments of Moscow, and others. Pravda (13th November) carried a detailed account of November 11 meeting, including Gorbachev's speech and remarks by other 23 speakers.

Briefly, Gorbachev disclosed that Yeltsin had made a speech in which he had criticised the "situation in the Politbureau", "matters related to collective

⁶⁰ Tass, November 2, circulated by the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi.

leadership principles" and had accused the Party leadership of lack "of revolutionary pressure in carrying out Perestroika". Yeltsin also regretted that "Perestroika was giving nothing to the people". He, according to Gorbachev also felt that "the directives of the Central Committee's plenary meeting for carrying out the tasks of the new Perestroika stage in the next 2-3 years are erroneous, would misorient the Party and the masses". He also complained of lack of support to him from the Party in his work as Moscow Party First Secretary as well as candidate member.

Gorbachev then moved on to his own assessment of Yeltsin. He felt that Yeltsin had tried to 'sidetrack the work of the Plenary meeting (i.e. deliberation on matters related to 70th Anniversary of October revolution), proclaiming his special position on a number of questions'. Yeltsin's speech, said Gorbachev, was 'politically erroneous'. Gorbachev accused Yeltsin of being 'ambitious', 'vain', 'irresponsible', 'immoral'; Gorbachev severely criticised Yeltsin's style of functioning. "Under Comrade Yeltsin's influence the Bureau of the City Committee tried to achieve the necessary changes by swoops, by pressure, by peremptory shouts and issuing orders". When Yeltsin failed to deliver goods, he tried to shift blames to others, "first of all to the leading cadres", continued Gorbachev. Gorbachev described Yeltsin's work style as characterised by "pseudo revolutionary phrases and "pseudo

resolve". No wonder, concluded Gorbachev, Yeltsin fast lost on the support of

Gorbachev also touched upon Yeltsin's complaint of non-cooperation from the leading Party bodies. He tried to refute Yeltsin's accusation on this score by giving a number of instances in which the Moscow City Soviet had been helped by the Central Committee Secretariat and other bodies.

Taking cue from Gorbachev, 23 other speakers made a mince meat of Yeltsin's character. all the norms of decency were transgressed. The speakers accused Yeltsin of being 'ultra-leftist', 'extra-radical', 'hasty in work with cadres', 'peremptoriness', 'unable to judge the value of people', 'big boss', 'impertinent', 'intolerant', 'infalliable', etc. etc.

Finally, Yeltsin made a self-critical 'confession' at the Plenum. He admitted of having been 'ambitious' and not having succeeded in checking this trait. He said he was guilty before the Moscow Party Organisation and before Mikhail Gorbachev.

Gorbachev, during the course of his speech, also disclosed Yeltsin had been having problems with the Politbureau, CC Secretariat etc., how Gorbachev himself had tried to counsel Yeltsin before the January 1987 plenum and later too, how Yeltsin had asked Gorbachev in mid - 87 to be relieved of his duties and how Gorbachev had in fact advised Yeltsin not to press the issue. Finally, Gorbachev admitted that he was taken by surprise when Yeltsin launched an unexpected attack on the Party

leadership at the October 1987 Plenary meeting.

The publication of the proceedings led to a palpable sweep of negative reaction of dismay, anguish and anger amongst the public . Yeltsin himself suffered from a heart condition and ^{was} admitted to hospital. This led to wild rumour of his death. A two day general strike in Sverdlovsk followed Yeltsin's dismissal. Late in the evening of November 18, the announcement came that Yeltsin had been appointed Minister and the First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Construction (Gosstroj).

Finally, Yeltsin was stripped of his candidate membership of Politbureau in the February 18, 1988 Plenum of the Central Committee.

Lets now briefly examine the Yeltsin episode from the point of view of Glasnost and also the working of Perestroika drive as a whole.

a) Glasnost

We can see both the scope and limitation of Glasnost in the Yeltsin episode. Till November 2, i.e. for 12 days, the Soviet media did not disclose the details of Yeltsin affair, as it unfolded in the October 21, plenary meeting. Although, we have some idea of what Yeltsin might have spoken in this meeting, we still do not have the full text of his speech. Clearly, the Party leadership wanted to consider in detail the ramification of the Yeltsin's episode, before it went public.

It can be reasonably expected that in his speech at the October Plenum, Yeltsin would have substantiated his charges; non-cooperation from the leadership, lack of enthusiasm in the leadership about Perestroika, the opposition to Perestroika etc. Instead, what we have is the lopsided confession by Yeltsin of his mistake - the ambition. We do not have even the full text of his confession. The fact that in the published confession he did not really admit wrongness of any of his serious accusations against the leadership only strengthened the conviction that a lot still remains suppressed.

Despite the above shortcomings, whatever has been published is unprecedented and gives one a fascinating peep into the working of high level policies in the Soviet Union. This is no doubt owing to the policy of Glasnost. Yeltsin's partial rehabilitation as a Minister, soon after his dismissal as Secretary of the Party also testifies to growing importance of public opinion.

b) The Political Dimensions of Yeltsin Affair

- Yeltsin's main fault is said to be his 'ambition'. This may very well be so. It may also be true that Yeltsin was not able to do justice to the posts he was holding. But the fact that he raised fundamental question about the slow progress of Perestroika, the hint of negative attitude of the leading Party bodies and leaders to Perestroika cannot be ignored. He may even have implicated some high placed individuals in this regard.

The virulent character assassination at the Central Committee as well as at the Moscow City Soviet Plenum only lends credence to the conviction that he may have been made a scapegoat for his unorthodox views on Perestroika related matters. In this connection, it is noteworthy that Yeltsin did not take back/^{out}any of the allegations he levelled against the Party leaders and organisations.

- Gorbachev severely criticised Yeltsin, thereby distancing himself from his more radical colleague. Was Yeltsin's sacking a set back for Gorbachev and for Perestroika? Gorbachev's subsequent pronouncements in favour of moderation as regards pace of Perestroika is concerned would lend credence to view considering that earlier on, particularly in mid-1986, Gorbachev was in favour of rapid and complete restructuring. After the Yeltsin episode, Gorbachev has begun to explicitly criticise the ultra-left as well as ultra right.⁶¹ As regards set

PRAVDA

61 Gorbachev's meeting with the media executives, /Jan 12, 88.

back to Perestroika, Gorbachev said, "some might say, we have lost something. We haven't lost as yet anything of importance, and I think we will not lose that if we stick to the principled line". Gorbachev admitted that some intellectuals particularly the younger lot, thought Yeltsin affair as a "blow to Perestroika"⁶² but he denied that it was so. Clearly Yeltsin episode has resulted in introspection both by the Party as well as people on the course of Perestroika.

- Yeltsin affair may have actually helped Gorbachev rather than weakened him, contrary to what is being suggested by the Western analysts. By agreeing to the dismissal of Yeltsin, he may have been able to remove a potential source of embarrassment for him in the Politbureau. This could have blunted some of the opposition to reforms. Gorbachev would have learned the right lessons from this episode, so that mistakes committed by Khrushchev would be avoided. Similarly, pro-reforms supporters of Gorbachev would also be able to reformulate their strategies.

62 Gorbachev's speech at the Nov 11, MOS-SOVET Plenum, op. cit.

the persuasive tone of Gorbachev's speech at the Feb. 1988 plenum is any indication, Gorbachev has already recovered from the ill effects of Yeltsin affair. Politbureau is now packed with Gorbachev's supporters.

The careful, controlled display of Glasnost in connection with Yeltsin affair has possibly been put to good use by Gorbachev to clarify his own position and even strengthen it.

Perestroika: Conservatives vs. Liberals:

Thanks to Glasnost, it is possible to detect differences in emphasis in the speeches, writings of the various leaders of the Party. In particular, analysts have noted that Ligachev, member of Politbureau and widely believed in the West to be No.2 in the Party heirarchy, is cautious and conservative as compared to Gorbachev, on matters concerning Perestroika. While Ligachev and Gorbachev seem to be in agreement on the need for Perestroika, they seem to differ on the question of approach to reforms. The most striking differences seem to be on the scope of Glasnost. Let us briefly mention the differences in tones and emphasis between Ligachev and Gorbachev on some of the issues:

History: Gorbachev has time and again said that there should be no blank spaces in the history. He also feels that there can be no selective portrayal of history.⁶³ Ligachev, on the other

63 See Gorbachev's talks with media executives, 12 Jan 1988

hand, feels that past should not be depicted as a mere long chain of errors. Too much discussion of "the negative phenomenon" of Soviet history, Ligachev warns, could obscure the achievements of 70 years of Communist rule.⁶⁴

The Seventies

Gorbachev has been a strong critic of the 1970s'. This was a period of stagnation when a number of negative tendencies in the Socio-economic spheres of Soviet life set in. Ligachev agrees. He feels that there was a lot of "abuse of power decline in discipline a drop in the international prestige of our country ..." in these years.⁶⁵ Interestingly he does not use the Gorbachevian phraseology for the description of this period. He, instead, qualifies the years by pointing out that there was a lot positive too which cannot be ignored. Referring to the achievements of these years - fourfold increase in national income, seven-fold increase in production assets, strategic parity with USA etc. -- he says

"If I were to be asked what my attitude is to that time (i.e. 1970s), I would answer as follows:
It was a splendid time".⁶⁶

Ligachev is always careful, more careful than Gorbachev, in pointing out the plusses and minusses of every period. He is in favour of unearthing of "the complete truth and

64 Radio Liberty, R L 325/87, Aug.12, 1987; Ligachev vs. Gorbachev?, Alexander Rahr.

65 Ligachev on "Ideological and Moral Victory" of Restructuring, speech at a conference of workers in Elektrostal, Moscow Oblast, 26 Aug 1987. See "Uchitelskaya Gazetta", 27 Aug. 1987.

66 *ibid.*

a dialectical understanding of the essence of that time".⁶⁷ His philosophy to the history of the country is summed up unequivocally: "we made errors, but they were always side by side with real achievements".⁶⁸

History is a favourite theme of Ligachev. He has repeatedly warned in his public speeches on undue stress on the dark aspects of the Soviet history ignoring the achievements. He is not entirely happy with the growing public re-examination of the history, particularly Stalinism. This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that Ligachev is an opponent of Perestroika. On the contrary he has spoken and written considerably on the need for going ahead with Perestroika. But he is a puritan. He wants Perestroika to proceed strictly within the framework of socialism - a point made by Gorbachev himself. But the interpretation of Marxism-Leninism can differ. He warns those who are trying to distort the meaning of Perestroika:

"Among the class opponents are those, too, who praise us for restructuring imparting to it a distorted content to their own liking and who nourish the hope that the Soviet Union will depart from socialism in the direction of market economy and ideological pluralism of Western democracy. We say: these are vain hopes".⁶⁹ That there are differences of nuances between Gorbachev and Ligachev,

67 Electrostal Speech, Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

between Ligachev and Yakovlev is without doubt. Chebrikov and Ligachev are conservatives. Yakovlev, who has had rapid rise under Gorbachev is the only member of the Politbureau who has had the benefit of Western education (Columbia University, 1959) and has spent long years in the West (Ambassador to Canada, 1980s). Ligachev, in contrast, is a party man who spent most of his time in Siberia (Tomsk). Therefore, the outlook of the various persons would differ, and would even be reflected openly considering that there is some openness today in USSR. However, to conclude from these, that Ligachev is emerging as rival of Gorbachev is stretching the thin evidence a bit too much. For such a conclusion to be made, it is necessary to first assess the base-support of Gorbachev's adversaries. This is a very difficult task. One should therefore merely note the differences in nuances between Gorbachev and Ligachev on a number of issues, with a view to understand the further development in USSR under conditions of Glasnost and Perestroika. However, in show of force in future, if it ever takes place, the differences in approach of the various Politbureau members may become important from the point of view of power struggle.

Nationalities: Recent Developments in Armenia

Now we briefly touch upon a very important issue - that of recent developments in Armenia which are likely to have a bearing not only on the question of

Nationalities but also on the course of Perestroika, including Glasnost. It would be useful to see the role, if any, the policy of Glasnost may have played in the policies of recent Azerbaizhan-Armenian ethnic tensions.

Briefly the sequence of developments, as pieced together from Western ⁷⁰ and Soviet ⁷¹ media reports is as follows:

The 3500 sq. km. area of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the eight Autonomous Oblasts of the USSR. This area, with 75% of the population being Armenians, has been administered in the Azerbaizhanian Republic since 1923. Both the Armenians as well as the Azerbaizhanians consider the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh as cultural fountainhead of their respective communities. The contest over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh has aroused ethnic passions considering that the Armenians have suffered considerably in the hands of Turkish Moslems (e.g. Turkish Massacre of Armenia, 1915). The Armenians have been demanding for the return of Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia. This can happen

70 See International Herald Tribune issues of 1st to 12/13th March, 1988; particularly Armenia: A taste of Freedom Turned into Tide of Revolt by Barringer and Bill Keller, IHT, 12-13 March, 1988. This issue carried a photograph of part of a crowd estimated at 1.5 million at a protest rally on February 26, 1988 in Verevan. If the photograph to be believed, the rally was truly mammoth.

71 See Pravda, 22 March, 1988

only if the boundaries of Armenian and Azerbaizhanian Republics are redrawn.

According to the Western reports, the authorities knew of the simmering discontent in Nagorno-Karabakh for years, though there never was an official acknowledgement of these. However, two years ago, encouraged by the policy of Glasnost, a couple of delegations from Nagorno-Karabakh went to Moscow in November 87 and January '88 where they were received by officials including Alternate Politbureau member Mr. Demichev. Mr. Demichev is understood to have assured Nagorno-Karabakh delegation that he did not consider their demands "either anti-Soviet or nationalistic". A third delegation went to Moscow in February '88 and found the reception even warmer. In Nagorno-Karabakh the council of Peoples' Deputies, on February 20, '88, asked Moscow to redraw the internal political boundaries of the USSR.

Meanwhile, the political temperatures in Armenian Republic was unusually high during these months. The Moscow central press had been carrying on for months articles critical of the state of affairs in Armenia. The criticism of Armenian Communist Party was being widely interpreted as that of its First Secretary Mr. Demirchyan. The impression was gaining in Armenia that CPSU authorities had probably decided to replace Demirchyan, a native of

Armenia. Anyhow, there were a series of demonstrations in February '88 on a number of questions of local importance, including the protest rallies on the question of pollution in Yerevan. These rallies coincided with fervent in Nagorno-Karabakh. The circumstances led to a mammoth protest rally, consisting of half a million people in Yerevan on February 26.

The rising passions amongst the Armenians also coincided with that amongst the Azerbaizhanis. Azerbaizhanis revived their claims on Nagorno-Karabakh. The net result of these developments was that on February 28, there were large scale riots in the Azerbaizhanian city of Sumagit, 35 km from Baku, where there are large numbers of Armenians residing. The spark of violence, in Sumagit, was, it seems, due to the revelation, that two Azerbaizhanians had been killed in an earlier incidents in Agdain. According to reports, Azerbaizhanians went on a rampage looking for Armenians.

The official media admitted of the violence in Sumagit, but did not specify number of people killed. The situation remains tense.

It is of interest to us to see the official response in the light of current drive for restructuring and Glasnost.

- (a) Authorities were aware of Nagorno-Karabakh issue. They even conveyed their sympathy to the delegations, which visited Moscow. Gorbachev has already announced a commission to study the problem.
- (b) In order to diffuse the crisis, Gorbachev employed two Armenians, writer Balain and Poet Kaputikian to calm down the crowds in Yerevan. His appeal to the protestors, read out on the T.V. had a quietening effect on the crowd. The crowd agreed to disband, with a decision to meet again. This shows that Gorbachev's prestige amongst the population is high. Gorbachev has probably staked his authority on the issue.
- (c) Gorbachev who would have probably known of the simmering ethnic tensions in the two southern republics declared in Feb.18, 1988 Plenum of CPSU that "This (nationalist policy) is the most fundamental, vital issue of our society. I think one of the plenums of the Central Committee should be devoted to the problems of nationalist policy". The riots erupted on February 28, 1988. Could there be a link between these two developments?

There are several question marks which these events have raised.

- (a) Demirchyan, First Secretary of Armenian Communist Party, had been the butt of criticism for several months. Were the tensions due to this? Did Armenians fear that Demirchyan would be replaced by a Russian like in Kazabhsian in December 86, when native Kunaev was replaced by Russian Kolbin after a spate of criticism of the former? This had led to student riots in Alma-Ata. Is the pattern in Armenia-Azerbaizhanic tensions similar to one in Kazakhstan.
- (b) Is the policy of Glasnost been used by Gorbachev to remove the opponents in these republics. If so, how does this impinge on the nationality question? (We should also take note that in Ukraine, ~~Sherb~~bitsky is presently under criticism)
- (c) Gorbachev, despite these problems, is seen to be pressing ahead with the re-examination of the nationality question, admittedly the most sensitive of the USSR's problems. He continues to advocate removal of 'blank spots' - this has relevance to nationalities -from history. Knowing fully well that any open re-examination of these questions can arouse passions in other

areas too. i.e. Baltics - What is the implication of Gorbachev's ideas, if they are implemented? Has he got the necessary political support to press ahead with this sensitive task?

- (d) Will the nationality question lead to regrouping of political forces in the country? Is the 19th Party Conference in June '88, the first to be held since 1941, an attempt by Gorbachev to join the issue of Perestroika with his opponents openly? Will the increased openness on Nationality questions be used by Gorbachev against his opponents. The analysts say that Glasnost may have fuelled the ethnic tensions. Will Glasnost be under pressure? Will the conservatives be able to pressurise Gorbachev to modify his stance?

These are some of the important issues related to Perestroika and democratisation which the recent developments in Southern republics have thrown-up. There are no final answers available. But the political dimensions of Glasnost and Perestroika are clearly brought out by these developments. Meanwhile, after an initial lag, the debate in the Soviet media on Nagorno-Karabakh developments and related issue, Pravda ⁷² in a tough article blamed external provocation in Armenia for the recent troubles.

72 Pravda, 22 March 1988

It also criticised the Nagorno-Karabakh people's committee for demanding redrawing of the republics' borders. It ruled out this option as one that would lead to similar demands elsewhere in the country. It laid stress on greater discipline together with immediate attention to improving economic situation in the region. It held economic problems of the region as the main cause of recent troubles. In contrast, Komsomolskaya Pravda⁷³ took a more sympathetic line and suggested policy of reasonable compromise. In the meantime, the Presidiums of the Supreme Soviets of the thirteen republics have issued appeals for calm and peace. If Pravda is any indication, it would seem that the re-examination of the nationalities policy suggested by Gorbachev is likely to devote more attention to economic causes than ethnic roots of the problem.

Conclusion:

Today, thanks to the policy of Glasnost, it is possible for an outsider to see the complexities of the political life in the Soviet Union. Glasnost being a political concept, a political necessity for Gorbachev reforms process, clearly interacts with the politics of the country. The most important dimension of Glasnost is that it can play an important role in pushing the reforms, or strengthening a leader, or even in tackling the opposition.

73 Komsomolskaya Pravda, 26 & 27 March, 1988.

Therefore, there is no concept of absolute Glasnost.
When Gorbachev says that 'blank spots' in history
should be cleared, he does not mean all of them should
be cleared at once. Expediency in Glasnost is important.
Because Glasnost is a political concept, it would continue
to be regulated in accordance with the felt political
needs of the leadership.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS: STRUGGLE FOR REFORMS & HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

In this chapter we would examine the kind of difficulties in the way of implementation of Gorbachev's policies of democratisation of the society and Glasnost. In order to understand the significance of the nature of opposition to Gorbachev's **policies**, it would also be useful to examine critically the previous period of liberalisation in the Soviet Union, the Khruchev period.

Opposition to reforms

It is an accepted fact now that the reforms in USSR are not progressing as well as was expected initially. There is considerable opposition to reforms, too. Gorbachev, for instance, speaking at All-union conference of heads of social science departments of Soviet higher educational institutions, said, "the old is not giving up without a fight and is finding new ways of adapting itself to the dynamics of life through various scholastic stratagems".⁷⁴ There have been a number of articles in the press from the liberals who fear that there may be a relapse for old times. In order to assess the difficulties in the path of reforms and also to assess Gorbachev's own political future, it would be necessary to have a brief look

74 Pravda, October 2, 1986

into a comparable period of great reformist activity in the USSR, that under Khrushchev. There is a great deal of similarity between Gorbachev and his Perestroika and Khrushchev and his reforms. Just as Perestroika is turning out to be a complex process, so were the times under Khrushchev, where the socio-economic and political life of the country was under turmoil. In the words of F. Burlatsky,

"Khrushchev and his times. An indisputably important period, and perhaps one of the most complex in our history. Important, because it has close echoes in the restructuring now taking place in the country and in the present process of democratisation. Complex, because we are dealing with a decade which was at first called 'glorious', but later censured as a period of voluntarism and subjectivism. It was the time of the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses, which were reflection of the bitter political struggles that determined the country's new course. Under N.S.Khrushchev, the first steps were taken towards the revival of Leninist principles and the purification of the ideals of socialism. Then, too, the transition began from the 'cold war' to peaceful coexistence. At that abrupt turning point in history, society took a deep breath of the air of renewal, and choked, either from too much oxygen, or from not enough."⁷⁵

75 F.Burlatsky, "Khrushchev: Sketches for a political Portrait": Lit. Gazette, 24 Feb 1988, translation: SWB, SU/0091/C/1, 4th March 1988. An excellent demonstration of Glasnost.

Khrushchev's eleven years stay at the top of the power structure was full of bitter political struggles. This was also a period of great achievements for the Soviet Union, increase in its international prestige and socio-economic and very significantly, political reforms in the USSR. Yet, Khrushchev was removed in 1964, his name became unmentionable for two decades. He had been lucky in 1957 when he was nearly done for. He was not so lucky in 1964, when he was removed. This also heralded the Brezhnevian era of stability which Gorbachev has been ruthless in criticising. An examination of Khrushchev's personality, his policies and his responses to crisis situation would be useful for critical appraisal of the present period in the Soviet history.

Personalities of Khrushchev and Gorbachev

In contrast to sophisticated Gorbachev, Khrushchev was typical of early 20th century workers and peasants of Russia: courageous and committed. He was energetic, hard-working. He lacked education but compensated this shortcoming by wit and earthy sense of humour. He put little faith in documents and was not content to run the Party and the country from the Kremlin office. He loved to travel extensively. He felt at home with people. "He was not only country's leader; he was her Inspector-General".⁷⁶

Khrushchev was no theoretician or an ideologue. His decisions were often based on common-sense approach. This

76 Roy Medvedev: Khrushchev, Basil Blackwell OXFORD, P.ix

perhaps explains the boldness and freshness of his ideas. This indirectly contributed to the development of Marxist theory.

Khrushchev was uniquely original. He imbibed the characteristics of a Leninist style of leadership: openness, oratory, populism, courage to take risks. At the same time, he was too clever to be easily fooled. He could be ruthless, independent. He was by nature a highly impatient man, always hankering after results. He excelled in political intrigue and always kept his opponents guessing about his next move.

Khrushchev, during his last years, often fell prey to the vagaries of absolute power and adulation. He would often refuse to see his mistakes and errors. He was often wrong in his judgement of people. "This man of keen, innate political intelligence, bold and energetic, could not resist the charms of his own personality. "Our Nikita Sergeyevich". "Was not this the beginning of the fall from grace, for the acknowledged fighter against the cult?," asks Burlatsky.⁷⁷ Burlatsky mentions that Khrushchev was easily carried away by the "chorus of limpets and flatterers landing the successes of the 'great Decade'".

Khrushchev was no apparatchik. Power was not an absolute end for him. He was driven by a genuine desire to undo the harms done to the nation. Burlatsky writes, "He (Khrushchev) was deeply wounded by Stalinism. There

77 Ibid, Burlatsky.

was a mixture of everything here: mystical fear of Stalin, there was a sense of personal guilt and the longing to protest, built up over the centuries, which burst out like steam from a cauldron".⁷⁸ On his understanding of his own role in history, Burlatsky, who had long conversations with Khrushchev, writes, "He (Khrushchev) used to say that Lenin was the organiser of revolution and founder of the party and the State, while Stalin, despite his errors, was the man who ensured victory in the bloody war against fascism. Khrushchev saw his own mission to give the Soviet people peace and prosperity. He spoke of this repeatedly as the main aim of his activity".⁷⁹

For all his desire to usher in better times for the people, Khrushchev, unfortunately, was not very clear about the means to achieve this. He undid the personality cult, but did not seek the roots of this cult in the system which was distorted, disfigured by Stalin. The thirst for novelty and an energetic nature was not matched by desire to clearly analyse the negative features of the system. "Khrushchev was the victim of his own character, not only the victim of the environment. Haste, rashness and emotionalism were unconquerable characteristics of his.", writes Burlatsky. Khrushchev was undoubtedly the last great reformer in the USSR. How does Gorbachev's personality compare with that of Khrushchev?

⁷⁸ Ibid Burlatsky.

⁷⁹ Ibid Burlatsky.

Similarities with Gorbachev

Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev is also driven by the desire to enhance the potentialities of socialism. He has spoken of 'new thinking', 'acceleration of socio-economic' development and deeprooted changes in country's political culture. He is not for capitalism, but he makes it clear that the rigid, prevalent interpretation of socialism which excludes individual's initiative is wrong. Like Khrushchev, he swears by Lenin, but particularly emphasizes the pragmatic humane part of Lenin's legacy. Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev also believes in remaining in direct touch with the people as is indicated by extensive travels within the country undertaken by Gorbachev. Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev has also shown evidence of political dexterity in dealing with ticklish political situations e.g. the Yeltsin affair.

Dissimilarities between the two

The similarities however are less striking than the dissimilarities. Unlike Khrushchev, Gorbachev is a highly educated, sophisticated man, well-versed in Russian and Western thought. Khrushchev used to distrust intelligentsia; Gorbachev sees it as an ally in the struggle for reforms. Gorbachev has a better, more enquiring approach when it comes to identifying the ills of the system. He has considerable theoretical and ideological insight into the maladies as well as the proposed cures for the systems. He believes that there has to be a sound ideological basis to the Perestroika

Gorbachev has an added advantage over Khrushchev; that of hindsight into what went wrong with the Khrushchevian reforms. He is also unencumbered by a burdensome political past, unlike Khrushchev, who was himself involved to an extent in the Stalinist atrocities. Unlike Khrushchev's inconsistent, unplanned, piecemeal reform programme, Gorbachev has tried to build a well thought out integral reform programme. The main difference between Gorbachev's and Khrushchev's personality would probably be in the sophistication of the approach of the former. However, this would not necessarily mean that Gorbachev would certainly be more successful than Khrushchev.

The Sweep of Khrushchevian Reforms:

Let us begin by examining briefly the sweep of reforms initiated by them. This would be compared with Perestroika to bring out the similarities and differences.

Political

The beginning of Destalinisation was undoubtedly the most important reform undertaken by Khrushchev. Millions of victims of Stalinist purges were rehabilitated, the concentration camps closed and prisoners freed. Khrushchev's speech at a secret session at the 20th Party Congress, no matter how incomplete or imperfect, it might have been, was an act of great personal courage and deep conviction. There are several theories as to why Khrushchev chose to deliver his speech on the 'Cult of personality and its consequences' -

power struggle, personal conviction, the desire to make the Party stronger, etc. But the fact remains that denunciation of Stalin's crimes was a 'personal mission, a service performed by him to his people'.⁸⁰ Khrushchev also tried to form a common attitude to the Stalin Cult in all the members of the Central Committee Presidium, writes Burlatsky. For instance, on his instructions each representative of the leadership had to define his attitude to this question of principle. However, destalinisation, begun by Khrushchev has not proved to be easy matter either in USSR or other East European countries. Khrushchev did not hesitate to bring the Party, the KGB, the Army, the Militia under his reform programmes.

Party

For instance, the new Party rules adopted at the 22nd Party Congress stipulated fixed terms for the Party functionaries. Members of the Presidium of the Central Committee, as a rule, could not be elected for more than three successive terms. One quarter of the Central Committee members and its Presidium were to be re-elected at each regular election. These rules were well intentioned as they sought to put restrictions on the powers of the Party officials. But when implemented, they caused resentment particularly amongst the middle levels in the Party hierarchy where the elections were at greater frequency.

Khrushchev's decision to reconstruct the Party leadership in conformity with the requirements of production alone as

80 Roy Medvedev, 'Khrushchev', p.10.

opposed to those of both territory and production. In essence the Obkoms were split into two - one incharge of agriculture and other for industry. There was immense duplication of work at the implimentation level and further increase in confusion at the working level. This reform stirred up resentment amongst the Obkom Secretaries. While the intention behind the reforms was good, it did not work in practice.

K.G.B.

Khrushchev did not leave even the KGB untouched. Although the structure and functioning of the KGB remained untouched Khrushchev did not hesitate to purge the K.G.B. In 1959 officials were retired, others were transferred. The new cadres of the KGB were drawn from Komsomal.

Army

Khrushchev was bold enough to recommend cut down on expenditure on the army. At the end of 1959, at a session of the Central Committee's plenum, he advocated reduction in the armed forces by one-third. It was second such measure in two years. In January 1958 a decision had been taken to reduce the armed forces by 300,000 men; so between 1954 and 1958, the armed forces had been shrunk by 2 million men. Khrushchev, undaunted by opposition from the armed forces, had his proposals ratified at the January 1960 special plenum of the C.C.

Militia

Militia also did not escape from Khrushchev's scrutiny. Under Khrushchev's scheme the officers of

the militia and the MVD organs were to be paid less pay and pensions.

All told, Khrushchev's reforms had wide repercussions. Most of these reforms were resented by bureaucracy.

Economy

Dissolution of Machine-Tractor Stations and encouragement to the collective and state farms to buy and own the agricultural equipment so released was a sound reform which failed because it was not well thought out and was implemented in haste. The scheme about crop-rotation failed because Khrushchev was unable to decide between good and bad advice. The virgin lands and maize-scheme failed for similar reasons - the schemes were not well planned and were implemented in haste, without flexibility. All the organisational changes in the Agricultural set-up was merely administrative in nature which could not tackle the fundamental problems of economy. In essence, Khrushchev tried to bring about changes in economy through administrative methods. While these changes caused much administrative re-organisation, no fundamental changes took place. Similar fate befell the industrial reforms too.

While the failure of Khrushchevian reforms was striking, it cannot be said that there were no achievements. During this time, USSR exploded hydrogen bomb, put a satellite into space and its international prestige soared-up considerably.

Looking at the shortcomings of his methods, it must be kept in mind that Khrushchev was strongly conscious

of the need to give to the common man, harassed throughout Stalinist decades, something tangible and urgently too. This would partly explain his impatience and haste which led to the failures. "It all reflected the quest for his own paths and solutions, his repressible social energy", writes Burlatsky.⁸¹

Cultural Renewal

The 20th Party Congress and the campaign for destalinisation could not but have echoes in the cultural sphere. For the cultural developments in the USSR, the 22nd Party Congress (1962) was very significant. In the Congress Stalinist cult once again turned out to be the main topic of discussion. This congress gave a powerful fillip to the process of Destalinisation begun by the 20th Congress. Stalin's crimes were discussed openly at the 22nd Congress. In a symbolic but significant gesture, the Congress decided to remove Stalin's remains from his Mausoleum to a nearby grave. The change in the official attitude towards Stalin was reflected in the Soviet press. There was increasing demand for thorough analysis of Stalinist crimes and period. While in 1956, Stalin stood condemned, in 1962 it was 'Stalinism' which was denounced.

The winds of change affected the Soviet arts and science also. In a momentous development, Movy Mir was allowed, on Khrushchev's intervention, to publish Solzhenytsin's 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich'. This marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Soviet literature. In December 1962, Pravda published

81 Op.cit, F.Burlatsky.

excerpts from Solzhenytsin's short story 'Incident at Krechetovko Station'.

The years 1956 - 62 also saw a number of works which echoed the spirit of times. This period is known as the period of cultural thaw. Some of the important works were: Nazim Hikmet's 'But Did Ivan Ivanovich Exist?', Dudintsev's 'Not by Bread Alone', A. Yashin's 'Lever', D. Granin's 'Private Opinion', G. Troyepolsky's 'Candidate of Science', V. Ovechkin's 'A Difficult Spring', Galina Nikolayeva's 'The Battle on the Way', V. Solonkhin's 'Vladimir Roads', P. Nikin's 'Cruelty', V.F. Tendryakov's stories called 'Potholes' and 'Not Wanted', Bruno Tasienski's 'Conspiracy of the Indifferent' etc. A number of young poets - Voznesensky, Okadzhava, Yevtushenko, Akhmadullina, Slutsky, Levitantsky, Rezhdestvensky, etc. shot into prominence.⁸²

While liberalist trends began to appear in the cultural sphere, the official reaction was not all that enthusiastic. However, Khrushchev himself had contradictory views towards liberal trends in culture. While on the one hand he liked and appreciated some of the upcoming writers and poets like Tvardovsky, Yevtashenko, Solzhenitsin etc., he, on the other, was severely critical of abstract arts. The influential officials very often succeeded turning Khrushchev against a particular artist or a work of art.

82 Madvedev's 'Khrushchev', pp. 100-101

The Cultural thaw petered out with Khrushchev's decline. During Khrushchev's times, there was no attempt at re-organising the cultural establishments and their functioning. Like in other areas, destalinisation in cultural sphere also remained incomplete.

Failure of Khrushchev's reforms:

Khrushchev was removed from power in October-1964, in a Secret Session of the Party Central Committee Mikhail Suslov, in his report, read out the charges on account of which Khrushchev was held guilty. According to Medvedev, he was found guilty on about 15 counts.⁸³ These included some frivolous charges like his cruelty in diplomatic gatherings, his arrogance, obduracy etc. The more substantial ones concerned about his agricultural policies, political reforms etc. The Suslov report said nothing about his achievements. This itself was significant as Khrushchev's as it showed the uneasiness of the new leadership in talking about such important Khrushchevian initiatives like destalinisation.

Why did Khrushchev's reforms fail? This is an extremely important question in today's context. Broadly the reasons were:

Khrushchev's own personality: His bluntness and forthrightness plus the novelty of approach had

⁸³Medvedev, Ibid

won him a lot of enemies in influential circles.

Haste, impatience also led to wrong decisions.

Apathy of the Bureaucracy: This is perhaps one of the most important reasons for the failure. No section of bureaucracy could remain permanently happy with Khrushchev as there was always a lot of uncertainty about Khrushchevian decisions.

Destalinisation: The process of Destalinisation in the USSR has neither been complete nor an easy one. Khrushchev himself was a product of Stalinist system; his effectiveness to destalinise USSR was therefore limited. Destalinisation continues to be a relevant issue today. The fact that Khrushchev became an unmentionable name in the USSR only indicates partial reversion to Stalinism under the Brezhnev regime - increasingly being mentioned as neo-Stalinist regime. Rejection of Stalin and Stalinism also means rejection of a substantial part of the country in which millions perished. The rulers would find it hard to justify these sacrifices for questionable gains. Therefore, destalinisation was bound to be a complicated phenomenon, which would limit the effectiveness of any new reforms.

Changes from above: Khrushchevian changes were directed from above. There was no grass-root involvement of the people in their formulation. The method of command and instructions could not enthuse people for further work in making the reforms successful.

Reforms did not Affect the State: No doubt there was cultural thaw during Khrushchev's times. But, it was not supported by the State. The State remained hostile and at best indifferent to it. When Khrushchev was removed, it quickly moved to suppress the thaw.

These are only broad reasons why Khrushchev could have failed. But so far at least in the USSR, there has been no thorough public debate on the Khrushchevian years. There is increasing realisation of this now in USSR. Anatoly Butenko, writing the 20th CPSU Congress, says,⁸⁴

"The decisions of the 20th CPSU Congress were not someone's personal affairs, but a line achieved by our Party through much suffering. Therefore, Soviet social scientists, especially the historians of the CPSU are yet to make an in-depth study and give a scientific answer to the question; who shelved, if not reduced to nought, many of the changes directly proceeding from the resolutions of the 20th CPSU Congress and how, by what ways and means, relying on what social forces and for what purposes? They are to sort out the role the bureaucracy played in the decades - long continuity of structures despite the changes of the leaders."

Butenko raises an extremely relevant issue of such "Marxist approach to the problem of leadership and struggle for

84 "Political Leadership and the Struggle for Power under Socialism", Anatoly Butenko, MN, 9, 1988.

power under socialism." While recognising that under socialism, there is no clash of antagonist classes, he maintains that the vested interests of inter-class groups and strata, bureaucracy, technocracy, etc. are relevant to the question of power struggle under socialism. Further, rise of a particular leader to power leads to 'shift in the functioning of power from some socio-political forces to others'. "Was Khrushchev's removal from the post of the political leader due to 'health reasons' and not the result of actions of definite political forces dissatisfied with his leadership and his policies?", he asks.⁸⁵

All these issues are relevant today to assess the kind of problems and their impact on the future of Perestroika.
Gorbachev's Own Assessment of Obstacles in the Path of Reforms:

Are there obstacles in the path of Perestroika? A few quotes from Gorbachev himself would answer this question:

"There are those who get creeps when watching the scope of the process of democratisation".....

"Some get nervous and warn us lest democracy should turn into chaos....."

"We must not allow it (i.e. the Law on State Enterprises) to be emasculated out of departmentalism or other issues...'

- Gorbachev's Report at the Feb'88 Plenum.

"Let us put it bluntly - we cannot be satisfied today with the level of activeness of the Party ranks, Party bodies and Party cadres...."

-Gorbachev's Speech at the CPSU Conference, Nov 20'87, TASS

"...but as soon as this renewal began drastically to affect deeds...we saw surfacing of the contradictions between the instant, narrowly understood, even egoistic motivations of separate individuals and groups and the interests of the whole of society, the long-term interests of working people.

We see distinctly the difficulties with which the restructuring is taking place in the party, government and the economic bodies, and don't we feel how painfully it is being received in some central agencies?"

(Gorbachev, June '87 CPSU Plenum)

This is only a sampling of Gorbachev's remarks about the difficulties being faced in implementing reforms. It is being increasingly realised that restructuring has turned out to be more difficult than expected. The economic reforms have not become a reality in all corners of the country. There are efforts to 'squeeze' Glasnost, as Gorbachev lamented at the February '88 plenum. In case of difficulties, the people instinctively return to old methods of functioning i.e. command-administrative method. Moreover, people are afraid of some of the unpleasant readjustments they have to make as well as uncertain consequences of the reforms - the spectre of increased prices, unemployment, change of jobs, inflation, etc. The democratisation is also feared lest there should be chaos. Leaders like Ligachev have voiced concern over unrestrained criticism of the past.

Even Gorbachev, who is for maximum Glasnost and thorough re-examination of history, was compelled to defend collectivisation, industrialisation of the country under Stalin whom he described as the "guiding nucleus of the Party".⁸⁶ On the other hand, there are people like Yeltsin who are dissatisfied with the soft attitudes of the Party leaders towards the need for rapid restructuring.

All in all Perestroika, Glasnost have led to emergence of various shades of views in USSR. It is difficult at this stage to make an accurate assessment of the opposition to current campaign for reforms and to predict whether Gorbachev would succeed. The Soviet press is full of references to the kind of opposition to reforms.

Defenders of Stalinism: Principal opposition to Reforms

Who are the people who are opposed to reforms? Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, a Soviet historian and sociologist, in an article in Izvestiya's sister publication Nedelya, summarised by Dev Murarka, has analysed the nature of this opposition.⁸⁷ He feels that it is Stalin's defenders who form principal opposition to reforms. The defenders of Stalinism are of two kinds:

- i) Those, who want Stalin's 'contributions' to be noted. In this context, it is interesting that President Gromyko, in his conversations with a visiting Polish dignitary, referred to Stalin as 'the Lion of Soviet Union'.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Gorbachev's Speech of Nov.2, 1987, op.cit.

⁸⁷ Mainstream, Gorbachev's Uphill Task by Dev Murarka, March 26, 1988, p.36.

⁸⁸ Izvestiya, 9th Jan.'88.

- ii) Those who feel that a denunciation of Stalin would condemn a whole generation of the Soviet people.

From these, there are, according to Bestuzhev-Lada, five categories of opposition:

- a) Those who took part in repressions. There are, however, a few of these left.
- b) Those who were shocked by the revelations at the 20th Congress in 1956 and have never recovered from it. They do not want to 'know anything' more about Stalinist days.
- c) Those who feel that it would be serious error to feed the public with information about the Stalinist past, even if it is true. They feel threatened by any kind of radical economic reforms or democratisation of the society. Bestuzhev-Lada feels that "they are the secret and most inveterate enemies of renovation in a society!" This group is deeply entrenched in the middle and high ranks of bureaucracy, management and academies.
- d) There is the idealistic youth which is utterly dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs in the society, but, instead of taking a mature sober view of the situation, turns towards religion, mysticism, narrow nationalism, etc. They conjure an idealised vision of Stalin period where there was no corruption, no blackmarkets, no alcoholism. They are turning Stalin into an icon.
- e) There are those in the defence establishments who hold Stalin as a great military mind who saved the country.

Thus defenders of Stalinism emerge as principal opposition to Gorbachev reforms.

How strong is the opposition to reforms? Is there any political opposition? So far there are no clear cut answers to these questions. But a few general remarks can be made.

i) Party Cadres:

The Soviet press has carried letters voicing concern that Gorbachev may meet the same fate as Khrushchev. Gorbachev, through personnel changes affected over the last three years has changed the composition of the Politbureau, the CC Secretariat, the Central Committee and the regional party committees to his advantage. Gorbachev's support base amongst the local party secretaries at the regional level could prove useful. However, Gorbachev continues to criticise the Party for not responding to Perestroika adequately. The 19th Party Conference in June 1988 the first since 1941, is likely to be important in as much as Gorbachev may try to get a fresh Party mandate for Perestroika.

ii) Bureaucracy:

Bureaucracy would probably ^{be} the most serious obstacle to reforms. It is not clear how Gorbachev is going to deal with it. By sheer inertia, the bureaucracy could thwart the reform process. According to eye-witness accounts, the middle and lower levels of bureaucracy are functioning in old ways. Gorbachev would desperately need to show tangible results fairly soon. Bureaucracy can easily sabotage this.

iii) Intelligentsia:

It cannot be said that the whole of intelligentsia is backing Gorbachev. There are certainly passive layers of intelligentsia who are sitting on the fence. The fact that the new reforms in the cultural organisations are proceeding slowly is evidence of intelligentsia's confusion over the attitude towards new changes.

iv) Security Services:

The attitudes of the KGB, the Army towards the reforms are not known. Gorbachev has tried to restrain the army, as is evidenced by his 'new thinking' on the foreign policy and military matters. (The Defence Minister is not even a member of Politbureau.)

Gorbachev is still not in a position to push the reforms at the pace he desires. However, he is moving forward with circumspection. He is quick to grasp the evolving situation and respond accordingly. The Yeltsin affair has been used by him to his advantage - he could judge the pace at which he should move. The 19th Party Conference to be held in June '88 could also help him to consolidate his position. It is yet to be seen how he is able to handle the Nationality issue which has been thrown-up by the recent developments in Arnians. The Nationality question may turn out to be ^{one of} the most important tests of Gorbachev's democratisation campaign.

Crucial Issue: Will the Party Reform Itself?

The difference between word and deed will in ultimate analysis prove decisive for the progress of Perestroika. We have already seen Gorbachev's dissatisfaction with the sluggish responses of the Party to Perestroika. If the Party is unable to

reform itself, the Perestroika in other fields would not get off the ground. The need to reform the Party has been felt even earlier. For instance, Malenkov, in his report to the 19th Party Congress (1952) said,⁸⁹

"Not in all Party organisations, and nowhere by any means in full measure, have self-criticism, and especially criticism from below become the principal method of disclosing and overcoming our errors and shortcomings... The importance of criticism and self-criticism in the life of the Party and the State is not fully appreciated by some of our Party organizations...The Party cannot close its eyes to the fact that wherever criticism and self-criticism are suppressed and control by the masses over the activities of organisations and institutions weakened, such ugly features as bureaucracy and degeneration, and even the corruption of individual, sections of the Party, invariably appear".

This diagnosis of maladies affecting the Party is very similar to that by Gorbachev. Malenkov's criticism remained criticism on paper. Precious little was done to change the Party functioning. We will have to wait and see whether Gorbachev would be able to transform the Party and State.

Glasnost and the Current Debate over Perestroika: the 19th All Union Party Conference and Implications for Future course of Reforms in the Soviet Union

The February '88 plenum of the CPSU should be seen as a kind of watershed in the course of development of Perestroika. The debate on the course of Perestroika, particularly democratisation

⁸⁹ G.Malenkov, Report to the 19th Party Congress of CPSU(B) Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow 1952, p.113.

has become sharp. In fact, Gorbachev, speaking at the Central Committee of Uzbek Communist Party, said that real 'struggle' in the Soviet Union over the reforms has begun. He said that the present situation is that the discussions have given way to struggle. "...Therefore, at the present the discussions are not mere discussions. Around this central question (i.e. Democratisation) real struggle in everyday life - in the party and Soviets, work collectives, in all spheres of social life has begun"*.

Gorbachev's speech at the February 1988 plenum renewed call for the radical restructuring and indicated a come-back by Gorbachev after a relative observance of quiet by him after the Yeltsin episode. However, the conservatives also became more open, more vocal after the February plenum. They also used the atmosphere of Glasnost to step-up the criticism of how the restructuring is proceeding, particularly the democratisation of the society.

The Sovetskaya Rossiya Article & the Pravda Rejoinder

On March 13, Sovetskaya Rossiya carried a letter to the editor, written by a Leningrade chemistry lecturer Nina Andreyeva.⁹⁰ The letter was a scathing attack on Perestroika as it is proceeding today, and a defence of heroic achievements of the Soviet Union under Stalin. Within a matter of weeks, the entire country, particularly the intelligentsia was to be rocked by the boldness of this attack on Perestroika. The implications of the publication of such an article were

90 Nina Andreyeva's: "I cannot waive principles, Sovetskaya Rossiya March 13'88. For translation, see BBC SWB, SU/0119B/1-6, SU/0124B/1-3.

* Gorbachev: "Uspekhi Perestroiki v Rukakh Naroda", Pravda, 10 April, 1988, p.2.

considered so serious that Pravda came out with a full page editorial on 5th April denouncing the Sovetskaya Rossiya article and re-asserting the Party's faith in Perestroika.

Let's consider the main points in the Sovetskaya Rossiya article:

- No matter how controversial Stalin might be, his genuine role in the building and defence of socialism will have to be given an objective and unambiguous assessment - an assessment detached from short-term considerations.
- Stalin was greatly appreciated by such historic contemporaries like Churchill and De Gaulle.
- The present attacks on the state of the dictatorship of proletariat and "our country's leaders" have not only political, ideological or moral causes but also a social substratum. Along with the professional anti-communists in the West, who are anti-Stalinists, the offsprings of 'classes overthrown by the October Revolution' in USSR are still alive. In addition to these, also active today are "the spiritual heirs of Dan & Martov, ... the spiritual followers of Trotsky or Yagoda, and the offspring of NEP-men, Basmachis and Kulaks with grudges against socialism..."
- People like Shatrov are bent upon distorting history. "In covering a most crucial period in our country's history, he absolutises the subjective factor in social development and clearly ignores the objective laws of

history as displayed in the activity of classes and masses. The role played by the proletarian masses and the Bolshevik Party is reduced to the 'background' against which the actions of irresponsible politics unfold".

- The central question is, "which class or stratum of society is the leading and mobilising force of restructuring? ... The first and most swollen ideological current which has already manifested itself in the course of restructuring is.... some sort of Left-wing liberal intellectual socialism which allegedly expresses the most genuine humanism, "cleansed" of class accretions. The champions of "Left-wing liberal socialism" falsify the history of socialism; they allege that what has so far been built up is not proper socialism. They, instead counter 'proletarian collectivism' and pay homilies to 'democratic' charms of contemporary capitalism, laying stress on "intrinsic value of the individual". The views of the 'Left-wing liberals' are akin to those held by Trotsky - they promote some kind of "non-national internationalism". They are also inclined to look upon 'refusnikism' as some sort of manifestation of 'democracy'.

- In addition to the pro-West 'neo-Liberal' supporters of Perestroika, the other social current gaining prominence these days are the 'Conservationists and traditionalists' who are fascinated by the "peasant socialism" variety of Czarist Russia days. These people lack an understanding of October's importance, make a one-sided assessment of collectivisation as a "terrible atrocity against the peasantry".
- As if 'neo-Liberals' and 'neo-Slavophiles' were not enough. Today associations are being formed in the wake of these ideas. A politicisation of these informal organisations often leads to demands for "power-sharing on the basis of parliamentary system, free trade-unions, autonomous publishing houses and so on".
- In the present atmosphere of ideological debate, the doubts are being raised whether or not to recognise the leading role of the Party and the working class in building socialism and therefore in restructuring.

It would be seen from the above that Andreyeva challenges almost everything that Perestroika particularly the campaign of democratisation stands for. It stoutly defends the role of Stalin in building up of socialism in the USSR. Although it does not criticise Gorbachev directly/ ^{but attacks} that section of intelligentsia, which stands for Gorbachev's policies like

re-examination of past, humane socialism, emphasis on the intrinsic value of the individual etc. (e.g. Andreyeva's attack on Shatrov).

In the present atmosphere of open debate in the USSR, the appearance of Andreyeva's article should not have evoked such a response as it did. And yet, Pravda, as mentioned earlier, thought it fit to come out with a full page editorial on 5th April, severely denouncing the Sovetskaya article and stoutly defending Perestroika.⁹¹ Why? There is increasing speculation that the Sovetskaya article was inspired by a section of the CPSU leadership, probably Ligachev himself. Therefore, Gorbachev and his supporters, it is believed, thought it appropriate to demolish this anti-Perestroika piece in the Sovetskaya Rossiya by publishing a rejoinder in Pravda. The Pravda rejoinder was not only used to re-affirm Party's faith in Perestroika but also to warn the anti-Perestroika men that no opposition to Perestroika would be brooked. After the publication of Pravda editorial, there was an upsurge of pro-Perestroika sentiment in the Soviet Union. The leading writers, personalities in the cultural field, a number of institutions all issued statements denouncing the Sovetskaya Rossiya article and supporting the Pravda editorial. The Pravda itself published a number of letters from the readers supporting Perestroika. It also got a number threatening phone calls denouncing

⁹¹ PRAVDA: For the 19th Party Conference: Principles of Perestroika: Revolutionary Ideas and Actions April 5, 1988, p.2

the Pravda editorial, but nothing in writing. Even the Sovetskaya Rossiya reproduced the Pravda article. The context of this polemical debate raging countrywide in the Soviet Union makes it clear that the ideological conflict over Perestroika is the reflection of what Gorbachev described in Tashkent as 'struggle' over Perestroika.

The points made by Pravda editorial were as follows:

- All those who love their country realise that there is no alternative to Perestroika. There can be no return to past. Such a return would be fatal.
- Glasnost has shown that our discussions sometimes lack political culture, an ability to listen to each other... sometimes we lack information and arguments.
- Some regard Perestroika as another skin-deep reform, others see as means to 'dismantle' socialism and still others play with radical phraseology. There are people who are afraid of scale of changes envisaged under Perestroika.
- While the sharpening debate over Perestroika is welcome, "one cannot fail to notice a very particular tilt" in these: Some are trying to slow-down Perestroika by shouting out habitual formulas. "The conservative resistance to the Perestroika is born of a load of habits...out of

militant egoistical interests of those who got accustomed to living off others..." There are people who want us to go back to where we were. The Sovetskaya Rossiya article of March 13 was a reflection of such sentiment.

- The Sovetskaya Rossiya article raised serious questions on an ideological platform, "a manifesto of the forces opposed to Perestroika". Many people ask: "How should one understand the fact of the article's publication and the manner in which it was done? "Is it not a sign, as happened in the past, heralding the return to a well trodden path?"
- The article is not constructive. It takes "a positively conservative", dogmatic position. It challenges Perestroika asking whether we "haven't gone too far in furthering democracy and Glasnost?" It equates "socialism with outdated thinking"...The article is dominated by a fatalistic view on history which has nothing to do with how it is seen by genuine scholars".
- Repressions under Stalin did take place. This truth cannot be hidden. It is futile to seek eulogies for Stalin amongst the bourgeoisie sources. Stalin's guilt was unpardonable.
- One can understand the nostalgia for the past but it is wrong for a press organ to spread such sentiments without making a proper assessment of them, and even creating an impression that a "new political platform is being offered to them".

- Yes, a 'class-based' approach is needed to analyse differences. But such an approach should be used as an instrument of scientific analysis.
- The Sovetskaya Rossiya article is "an attempt at revising Party decisions on the sly....The Soviet press is not a private shop and Communists writing for the press and editors must have a proper sense of responsibility for their articles and publications. In this case, Sovetskaya Rossiya... has departed from this principle."

The polemical debate over Perestroika, described by Gorbachev as a "struggle", has intensified and provides a background for the holding of the 19th All Union Party Conference in June 1988. This Conference, is likely to decide the further course of Perestroika.


The 19th All Union Party Conference

Gorbachev speaking at the February 1988 plenum gave an outline of what the 19th Party Conference should consider.⁹² He inter alia stressed that the prime need of the moment was 'to overhaul the political system'. The main problem, as Gorbachev saw it, was to create a mechanism of power and government with precisely regulated effective democratic control and corresponding legal procedures which would drastically diminish and even reduce to naught the element of chance in handling major political, state issues and preclude the possibility of subjectivity at all

92 Gorbachev, Feb'88 Plenum, op.cit. p.28-30.

"floors" of our political system. Gorbachev emphasised the role of the Soviets, urged that these should be made "the core of the political system" and stated that the Supreme Soviet should not be by-passed, as is the case today. He also asked for decentralisation of power, making out a case for the reduction of the powers of the 'salaried functionaries'. Mikhail Gorbachev also described the objectives of a Party Conference as follows:

"to analyse the results of Perestroika, to take decisions on updating of the political system and on the Party's role as the political vanguard at the new juncture in the nation's development".



The public is actively participating in the debate over the central questions of Perestroika, over the scope of the 19th Party Conference. It is keenly felt that the outcome of the Conference will ultimately depend upon the views of the majority of the Conference delegates. The fate of Perestroika, says APN commentator Poltoranin,⁹³ is being decided to a certain extent now, in the process of the initial stages of the election of the delegates to the Conference. Pravda reported on May 13 that the elections of the delegates to the Conference in accordance with the resolution of June 1987 plenum of CC CPSU had already begun. The delegates, according to this resolution, are to be elected by secret ballot at the plenums of the Central Committees of the Party at republican, regional and area levels.⁹⁴ Such elections have already begun -

93 M. Poltoranin, Where will the Perestroika Go After June?, APN Moscow, April 6, circulated by the USSR Embassy in Delhi.

94 Pravda, Trust in the Supporters of Perestroika; the Elections to the 19th Party Conference Begin; May 13, 1988, p.1.

for instance in Kalinin Obkom one delegate per 3.780 members of the Party will be sent to the Party Conference. The title of the Pravda article makes it clear that the delegates for the Conference are expected to support Perestroika. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the June '87 plenum made clear the mode of election of the delegates, the newspapers continue to debate over the issue. Another issue under discussion is about the number of delegates to the Conference. It is expected that 5,000 delegates would attend, but there is so far no clarity on this.

There is a fierce discussion on the powers of the Conference. What is its relation to a Congress, can it revise the decisions of the Congress? Is it more powerful than the Central Committee? Are its decisions purely advisory in character? One view is that the recommendations of the Conference can become laws only if endorsed by the Central Committee.

There are wide-ranging suggestions as to what the Conference should do. Specific proposals being made by the readers of the Soviet press include: imposition of age limits on the top leadership of the Party, only two terms of 5 years each for the members of the Politbureau and the Central Committee, the primary Party organisations who have no independent budget to operate to be given 20 per cent of the monthly membership dues for disposal at

their own will. Direct elections of Party functionaries from top to bottom are also being suggested. In short, given the present atmosphere of Glasnost, the suggestions for the political reforms are sweeping. It is noteworthy that Gorbachev, having sensed that the conservatives would try their best to thwart Perestroika, has already begun to meet the local Party Secretaries with a view to seek support for the Perestroika. He met the First Secretaries of the Republics, territories and districts on 11th, 14th and 18th April, but the press did not give details of what transpired in these meetings. (This indicates the extent of permitted Glasnost on crucial, sensitive subjects.)

The current debate over Perestroika is a reflection of ^{the} extent of Glasnost which is being used both by the protagonists as well as the antagonists of Perestroika to their own ends. People are freely speculating both in the USSR as well as abroad whether the 19th Party Conference would prove to be Gorbachev's Waterloo. The reading of the latest Soviet press indicates that the intelligentsia, after the Pravda editorial of 5th April, has closed its ranks in support of Gorbachev and his policies. The conservative onslaught is less visible though not eliminated. Gorbachev had a plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU held on 23rd May, 1988 to consider the question of "draft theses of the Central Committee of the CPSU for the 19th All Union Party Conference". A resolution of 23rd May, 1988 adopted by the Central Committee resolved to adopt these

theses, published them for wider discussions and also authorised the General Secretary to address the 19th Party Conference. However, the Soviet media did not immediately publish either the speech by Gorbachev at the plenum or the precise theses adopted by the Central Committee Plenum.⁹⁵

The political reforms being suggested are likely to strike at the very roots of the power of the Party. This is reminiscent of the Khrushchevian days. Even if Gorbachev pushes through radical reforms in the Conference, the conflict in the Party as well as in the Soviet society may further sharpen. If Gorbachev's wings are clipped at the Conference, this would also have far-reaching consequences for Perestroika. Either way, the 19th Party Conference is likely to prove the day of reckoning for Gorbachev.

It may be mentioned that the current debate is really over the ideological aspect of Perestroika - mainly democratisation, Glasnost, the political system, etc. The debate over the economic reforms which deeply affect the common man has not so far begun in earnest. That would be the next stage when Gorbachev would have to defend the economic performance under the conditions of Perestroika. In ultimate analysis, it is

95 Pravda, Resolution of 23rd May 1988 adopted by Central Committee regarding the theses of the CC CPSU for the 19th Party Conference, 24th May, p.1

the economics of Perestroika which would influence its course, though the first task to which Gorbachev is devoting attention to is to prepare the political grounds for carrying out the Economic reforms. The importance of the 19th Party Conference cannot therefore be over-estimated.

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