

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE PATTERN OF CHANGES
IN SOVIET SYSTEM, SINCE THE
BREZHNEV YEARS**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

VIDYA SHANKAR AIYAR

**CENTRE FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067**

1991



जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

CENTRE FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOLS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled,
"AN INQUIRY INTO THE PATTERN OF CHANGES IN SOVIET SYSTEM,
SINCE THE BREZHNEV YEARS", submitted by Vidya Shankar
Aiyar, in partial fulfilment of the requirements (of 6
credits out of the total requirement of 24 credits), for
the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY, is his
original work and has not been previously submitted for
any other degree of this or any other University.

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

Chairman
Prof. Zafar Imam

Supervisor
Prof. Zafar Imam

NEW DELHI
1991

CONTENTS

Preface	i - iii
Chapters	
I. Towards a Framework	1 - 23
II. The Brezhnev Era	24 - 43
III. The Interregnum Period	44 - 60
IV. Gorbachev and Perestroika	61 - 85
V. Conclusion	86 - 94
Bibliography	95 - 108

PREFACE

PREFACE

This study is an inquiry into the pattern of changes in the Soviet system, since the Brezhnev years. It is emphasizing the obvious that the Soviet system has been continuously changing since its very birth, and in recent years, the entire panorama of those changes, is truly astounding. How should one try to understand these changes? Is there a pattern to them? These are precisely the problems this study seeks to deal with. As an inquiry, it has to be less than definitive.

Our study is divided into five chapters. Since there were no definite answers in the present, one turned to the past. The results of this form chapter I. With the tools of analysis thus developed, one then seeks to systematize the changes of the Brezhnev era. This results in chapter II. And then there is a hiatus. Andropov and Chernenko could not last long enough. Chapter III seeks to understand their significance. With the ground prepared, an open mind, and a silent prayer on ones lips, one seeks to take the bull by its horns in chapter IV. Only, it wasn't just a bull. One had started from a serpent's tail, moved up to a goat's body and finally reached a lion's head. When one put it all together in chapter V, we see the Chimera of Greek mythology.

This inquiry is based on published primary sources available in English, as well as, on relevant books and

articles on the subject.

My deepest and most sincere gratitude is due to my supervisor, Prof. Zafar Imam. Without his clear vision and sober influence, I might never have translated my excitement into cogent thought. Our discussions always ended up stirring the creative in me.

Dr. S.K. Jha proved very resourceful in tracing some of the "absconding" material. It was nice to hear him disagree with me.

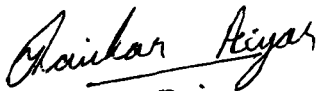
Mr. K.S. Krishnan and Mr. D. Ramanan, I think, are the best typists in the world.

My friends nearly disowned me for thinking, talking and dreaming of the Soviet Union, all the time. However, Sujata Banerji made everything that much easier.

Last but not the least, without my parents and my sister, this dissertation would have been impossible. Thanks to them for believing in me, though they still don't know why.

Let us hope that this study may help in understanding these momentous changes now taking place in the Soviet Union.

Now that you know where to lay the blame, "Read on, Gentle Reader".


(VIDYA SHANKAR AIYAR)

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER I

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

The fast and furious changes undergoing in the Soviet Union today, are fodder for any scholar's cannon. Scholars usually adopt a framework within which to analyse their area of interest. However, in the present case, the nature of our study makes the adoption of any definite framework a little difficult. After all, the scope of the current changes has left nothing untouched - polity, economy and society. Moreover, traditional frameworks become ineffective in analyzing their true depths. Perestroika itself has not been completed, though over five years have passed since its adoption. While the time for stock-taking is ripe, it can in no way be complete. That is essentially why our study is an inquiry, and the main purpose of this chapter is to work out an effective framework that can help in identifying a pattern.

CONTINUITY VS CHANGE

Nothing could be more true about the Soviet Union today than what de Tocqueville had once noted, "The most perilous moment for a bad Government is when it seeks to mend its ways".¹ The Soviet Union is caught between

1 Robert F. Byrnes, "Change in the Soviet Political System: Limits and Likelihoods", Review of Politics (Notre Dame), vol. 46, No. 4, Oct. 1984, p. 503.

Scylla and Charybdis, as it finds moving both forward or backward equally fraught with dangers. Maintaining status quo is nearly impossible, for it means an inevitable social, economic, and political decline. Perestroika and glasnost are attempts of the CPSU to bring the Soviet Union out of this mess. Whether these measures are the initiative of Gorbachev and the CPSU, or an inevitable response to the demands of a developing civil society, is a separate question altogether. The point, however, is that today the Soviet Union is undergoing a struggle of continuity versus change. This struggle is not unique to the Soviet Union. Many other countries have been through or are undergoing this struggle. An example of the latter could be India itself. However, what makes the situation in the Soviet Union unique and interesting for a study, is the kind of continuity pitted against the kind of change.

Broadly, there are two streams of continuity in the Soviet system today. One stream arises from the legacy left by the Russian Empire. The other arises from the legacy left by seventy three years of Soviet rule. An example of the legacy left by Russian history is the vicious circle of three basic problem areas, namely the military, the peasant or economic development, and the minorities or nationalities.² Even today Russian history

2 William E. Odom, "Future of the Soviet Political System", PS: Political Science and Politics (New Jersey), vol. 22, no. 2, June 1989, pp. 193-5.

dictates these three structural inputs. An example of the latter stream of continuity that adds to these dictates of Russian history is bureaucratization, single party dominance of the political system, and a largely centrally planned economy. It is clear that both streams of continuity come as a legacy of the past and the latter is much more a part of the former, than a distinct stream.

Change in the Soviet system today seeks to end these perpetual problems. It is not merely limited to a realignment of its constituent elements, but seeks to overhaul and redefine the system itself. Today's Soviet Union is undergoing change both in the system and of the system. The apparent contradiction in the simultaneity of two mutually exclusive processes disappears the moment one realises that the ultimate direction of change is not very clear. Ronald Amann has attributed this uncertainty to "the politics of hesitant modernization", in an essay of the same title.³ For the purposes of our study then, 'change' would imply both changes of and in the Soviet system, with the emphasis put on one or the other as required.

3 Ronald Amann, "Searching for an Appropriate Concept of Soviet Politics: The Politics of Hesitant Modernization", British Journal of Political Science (Cambridge), vol.16, no. 4, Oct. 1986, pp. 475 ff.

WAYS OF IDENTIFYING CHANGE

Historically then, in the Soviet Union, change has been variously understood at different periods as reform, radical change and/or revolution. One can, therefore, seek to study change in the Soviet system by studying Soviet reformers from Lenin to Gorbachev, as e.g. Theodore Draper has done.⁴ This would be one way of doing so. However, there is a more general problem in any study concerning change in the Soviet system. How does one identify change in the Soviet Union? Or, putting it another way, what measures taken in the USSR would constitute a change in the system? This question has been raised by Thane Gustafson.⁵ To Gustafson, there has been a change in the Soviet system if there is an alteration in the relationship between knowledge and power. For William E. Odom, change is identifiable if any measure succeeds in curtailing the three structural problems of military, economic development and nationalities.⁶ Thus, there do exist different ways of identifying change.

The picture that emerges from the foregoing argument on change is as follows. There exists a historically

4 Theodore Draper, "Soviet Reformers: From Lenin to Gorbachev", Dissent (New York), summer 1987, pp. 287 ff.

5 Thane Gustafson, Reform in Soviet Politics: Lessons of Recent Policies on Land and Water (Cambridge, 1981), pp. ix, 161.

6 Odom, n. 2.

identifiable process of change in the Soviet Union. The history of the evolution of the Soviet system is identifiable with such a history of the process of change in the Soviet Union. Further, given the uncertainty of the ultimate direction of change, one must assume that an aggregate of measures that realign the constituent elements of the Soviet system, constitutes or would lead to a change of the system itself. This inquiry does not seek to pass a final judgment on change in the Soviet Union. Our purpose is to seek a pattern of change, to understand the very dynamics of change operating in the Soviet system today.

GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

While it is obvious why one needs to understand the dynamics of change, one needs to explain why one seeks a pattern. Here, two main reasons stand out. For a student of Soviet affairs, the first reason is obvious, namely, the persistence of the struggle between continuity and change in the Soviet Union. "Continuity and change has been the main recurring theme of Soviet society since its very inception. Indeed these two ingredients have comprised a deterministic model of development and advance of Soviet society."⁷

7 Zafar Imam, "The Genesis of the CPSU Programmes", in Imam, ed., Restructuring Soviet Society (New Delhi, 1987), p. 25.

The second is pari passu, the occurrence of a gap between Soviet theory and practice. This needs elaboration.

The Soviet Union has long been observed to leave a yawning gap between its words and deeds. This is manifest in many apparent contradictions found in the Soviet system. For instance, the Soviet State was founded on principles of Marxism-Leninism. One of the main tenets of Marxism, which made his critique of capitalism go beyond economics, was the exploitative role of the market in a capitalist system. The idea of profit was central to this. Marx demonstrates, scientifically in Das Capital, using a theory of value, a theory of wages, and finally surplus value, that profit for an entrepreneur in a market comes at the expense of the worker. "The rate of exploitation is defined by the relation between surplus value and wages paid."⁸ It is easy to see how "this same analysis lent itself to a denunciation and vituperation of capitalism, since it showed that the worker was exploited, that he worked part of his time, for himself and the other part of his time for the capitalist or the entrepreneur".⁹ In a biting critique of the market and the "modern bourgeois", Marx declares:

Meantime the markets kept on growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed... [Industrial production got revolutionised] ...The place of manufacture was taken by... [among others]...

8 Raymond Aron, "Marx", in Main Currents in Sociological Thought (Penguin, 1967), p. 130, vol.1.

9 Ibid, p. 129.

the modern bourgeois....

It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless direct, brutal exploitation.¹⁰

The criticism leaves one breathless. It was natural thus that Soviet socialism would envision a marketless economy.

"In his last work, Stalin wrote that the fundamental law of capitalism was pursuit of maximum profit, while the fundamental law of socialism was satisfaction of the needs of the masses, and raising of the cultural level."¹¹ "As for the communist ideology, basic elements of the marketless concept of socialism remained embodied in the programme documents; these presented any utilization of the market mechanism as a temporary concession only (e.g. NEP), to be justified mainly by the immaturity of the socio-economic conditions, which required a longer transition period between capitalism and socialism, especially in under-developed countries with a dominant peasant agriculture and

10 Marx & Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (Moscow, 1975), a reproduction of the trans. made by Samuel Moore in 1888 from the original German text of 1848 & Frederick Engels, ed., pp. 42, 44-5, Emphasis added.

11 Aron, n.8, p. 127.

other types of 'petty commodity production'."¹² This is how central the idea of exploitation was to a market economy, and thus an anathema to socialism. Yet, today there is a widespread acceptance in the idea of private enterprise going under the banner of Market-Socialism(MS). The justification given is that "the concept of MS shaping up towards the end of the century retains the belief in the existence of an overall interest of society which cannot just be reduced to a sum of individual self-interest".¹³ Yet, the 1977 constitution of the USSR in Article 14 declares, "The labour, free from exploitation of Soviet people is the source of the growth of social wealth and of the well-being of the people, and of each individual".¹⁴ Without going into a detailed argument over the relationship between market and socialism, here lies an excellent example of the gap between Soviet theory and practice and of its recurrence, for not only was the market used at the time of the NEP but is also being widely used now.

It has been somewhat necessary to digress in detail on this specific example, for it goes to the heart of the

12 Wlodzimerz Brus & Kazimierz Laski, From Marx to the Market: Socialism in Search of an Economic System (Oxford, 1989), p. 51. For the clearest general statement presenting the ML position on the relationship between socialism and the market see the 'Programme of the Communist International' adopted at its VIth Congress 1928 ch. 4, English edn., (London, 1929), pp. 31-3.

13 Ibid, p. 151.

14 Emphasis added.

struggle between continuity and change. This example highlights the willingness in the Soviet Union to not only realign constituent elements of its system, but also overhaul and redefine the system itself. In other words, the gap present in yesteryears on this issue has been forced out into the open today in a manner that necessitates change. Here is then, an important factor that contributes to change. Once again, in this specific example, it is difficult to conclude whether MS is a change in or of the system because, "the distinctions between capitalist and socialist economic systems, become under MS thoroughly blurred. If therefore marketization is accepted as the cure for the economic ills of 'real socialism', not only the original marxist promise has to be cast aside as anachronistic, but also the very concept of transition from capitalism to socialism".¹⁵

Another piquant example of a gap between, theory and practice, lies in the Republics right to secede. Article 72 of the 1977 Constitution says explicitly that "Each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR". Before, that, Article 70 declares that "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral multinational state formed as a result of the free self determination of nations and the voluntary association of equal Soviet Socialist Republics".¹⁶

15 Brus & Laski, n. 12, p. 151.

16 Emphasis added.

Today it is clear that both these articles mean absolutely nothing and have never meant anything. A new treaty is being signed by 9 of the 15 Republics. One just has to look at the declaration of independence of a few Baltic Republics and their reasons for doing so, in order to realize the need for a new treaty and a totally new constitution.

Thus, to pick up the main threads of our argument once again, there is a need to seek a pattern of change in the Soviet system because of the persistence of the struggle between continuity and change on the one hand, and on the other, the recurrence of a gap between Soviet theory and practice.

One can thus see a possibility of a close connection between three things. First, the history of the evolution of the Soviet system. Secondly, the history of the process of change, i.e. the pattern of change, in the Soviet system. And finally, the recurrence of a gap between Soviet theory and practice that becomes a dynamic factor motivating changes.

CONSTRAINTS OF CHANGE

Our next task must now be to briefly give a historical account of the pattern of change upto the Brezhnev era. So far, this pattern of change upto and including the Brezhnev era, has been operating under two constraints. These two constraints are a product of the formation of the Soviet State and its stated ultimate objective. Firstly, since the Soviet Union came into being as a result of a "Socialist

Revolution" led by Lenin, based soundly on the principles of ML, every change therefore is sought to be projected as adhering to Leninist principles and socialism. Secondly, again, the *raison d'être* of the October Revolution dictates (arguably even today) the direction of change and indeed all of Soviet society, to lead ultimately towards communism, if the identity of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as it existed in 1917, is to be retained. "The Supreme Goal of the Soviet State is the building of a classless Communist Society in which there will be communist social self-government".¹⁷ These two constraints functioned as the lower and upper limits to change, even upto the present.¹⁸

Several scholars have pointed to these limits to change. Seweryn Bialer, while commenting on "factors that inhibit the party's development towards a performance-oriented, 'rational', managerial institution", says that "Central to these is the position occupied by Lenin in the legitimating apparatus of the party. The most clearly apparent manifestation of this is in the régime's political rhetoric; the party and its leaders at any time are obliged to prove -

17 Preamble to the Constitution of 1977.

18 Since the constitution of 1977 (amended in 1988), is still valid pending the formation of a new one, and one does not know yet whether and how the word communism will find mention in it.

or at least to assert - their fidelity to Lenin".¹⁹

"However, the cult of Lenin also means that customs and practices introduced or endorsed by Lenin have acquired a level of sanctity that makes their abandonment extraordinarily difficult".²⁰ To Robert F. Byrnes, "ideological restrictions upon internal change appear powerful". "For them [i.e. the Soviets], change can proceed only through the party and its central control of planning and management. Reform and changes within the political system are therefore philosophically unthinkable."²¹ In fact, he goes further to say that "The principal and abiding opponent of innovation is the system itself, the most conservative one and the least tolerant of change..... it lacks a reform mechanism that those who seek innovation can utilize".²² Upto 1987 the commitment to communism has been regularly emphasized by the CPSU. "The party worked out its long-term policy aimed at over-throwing the dominance of the exploiters and at building socialism and communism. This line was enshrined

19 Seweryn Bialer, Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability, and Change in the Soviet Union (Cambridge, 1980), p. 224. Emphasis added.

20 Ronald J. Hill, "USSR: Social Change & Party Adaptability", Comparative Politics (New York), vol. 17, no. 4, July 1985, p. 465.

21 Byrnes, n. 1, p. 507.

22 Ibid, p. 512.

in three party programmes."²³ They have been the first three party programmes adopted respectively in the Second Party Congress in 1903, the Eighth Party Congress in 1919 and the Twenty-Second Congress in 1961. The Twenty-Seventh Congress in 1986 approved a new edition of the Third Party Programme. "The point, however, is that a programme may be side-tracked or change, but the potentials and resilience of the Communist movement in the USSR develop and persist."²⁴

CHANGE OR REFORM?

Given all the above, it becomes obvious to see the limitation of change upto the end of the Brezhnev era, and, therefore, strictly guiding and confining change to within the system. We now trace the historical background of the pattern of change in this perspective.

There are six phases of what Draper calls, the history of reforms in the USSR. These are:

1. War Communism for about three years from 1918-1920;
2. The first reform period of the NEP for about seven years from 1921-1928;
3. The Stalinist period of about twenty five years from 1928 or 1929 to 1953;
4. After a brief interregnum or struggle for

23 Dictionary of the Soviet Constitution (Moscow, 1986), English trans. p. 47. Original Russian in 1982.

24 Imam, n. 7, p. 25.

succession, the second reform period, under Nikita Khrushchev, for about eight or nine years, from 1955 or 1956 to 1964;

5. The reaction headed by Brezhnev, for eighteen years from 1964 to 1982;
6. After another interregnum headed by Andropov and Chernenko, the third reform period, inaugurated by Gorbachev in March, 1985. This period is still in progress.²⁵

Two things stand out in this enumeration of the history of reforms. Firstly, each phase of reform is identifiable with a Soviet leadership. Secondly, the periods of reform though, occur only thrice, i.e. at the time of Lenin (and the NEP), Khrushchev and finally Gorbachev. The sixth one is in progress.

One immediate pattern of change that emerges from the above is that change in the Soviet Union has been in fits and starts; advance and retreat; reaction and compromise. This pattern is consistent with the view that change upto and including the Brezhnev era has strictly been operating within its lower and upper limits. At first glance, the history of reforms in the Soviet Union also tells us that each reform period (Lenin, Khrushchev and Gorbachev) had a large part of its attention focussed on shedding the shackles of the past. These two features of the pattern of change

25 Draper, n. 4, p. 287.

are perhaps borne out by the way in which "new Soviet leaders invariably tear down old ones - Stalin tore down Lenin's closest workers, who opposed him [e.g. Troksky], though not Lenin himself; Khrushchev tore down Stalin; Brezhnev tore down Khrushchev; and Gorbachev is busy tearing down Stalin and Brezhnev".²⁶ To this one might add, that Lenin tore down the Mensheviks, and point out that Gorbachev is silent on Khrushchev.

This situation seems to contain a special meaning for two reasons. Firstly, it coincides with the six reform phases listed above and the three reform periods specified in the list. Secondly, the situation is not exactly comparable to successive governments in other lands tearing down previous governments. The reason for this is the complete absence, upto the years of Gorbachev, of a credible opposition. The denunciation of successive Soviet leaders is directed at members of their own party.

What of the issues of continuity and change in this history of reforms? And what role has the gap between theory and practice played in necessitating change in the process? For this, let's take a closer look at the history of reforms.

26 Ibid, p. 295

While historians generally agree that the history of the Soviet Union is a history of these various phases of reforms, there are differing views on the timing of the reform periods, arising out of differing perceptions of the nature of continuity and change. It is also interesting to see the simultaneous occurrence of a gap between theory and practice.

THE PATTERN IN AN HISTORICAL SETTING

Gerner and Hedlund argue that in the period of War Communism, the seizing of the State Bank, expropriation of private property, and the repudiation of foreign debt, which led to the collapse of the currency in an attempt to introduce a money-free state budget, in the financial area for instance, were basically ad hoc policy measures presented ex post "as logical steps in an allegedly premeditated strategy".²⁷ They base their arguments on two foundations. Firstly, the admission by Lenin of the ignorance of "the knowledge of the organisation and distribution of commodities".²⁸ Secondly, according to the "April Theses" of 1917, Lenin's aim had been "not introduction of socialism at once; but

27 K. Gerner & S. Hedlund, Ideology and Rationality in the Soviet Model: A Legacy for Gorbachev (London, 1989), p. 35.

28 Lenin quoted in, E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923 (Middlesex, 1952), vol. 2, p. 365.

the immediate, systematic and gradual transition of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies to control over social production and distribution of products".²⁹ Here then lies one of the earliest gaps between theory and practice when the Soviet Union was confronted with a choice between continuing the earlier economic system wherever necessary, and radically changing it.

Oskar Lange noted the above while describing War Communism; "such methods of war economy are not peculiar to socialism because they are also used in capitalist countries in Wartime..... The difficulty starts when the methods of war economy are identified with the essence of socialism and considered to be essential to socialism".³⁰

Considering the impasse that Soviet society had reached by the end of War Communism, a measure such as the NEP acted more as a corrective. For example, the earlier idea during War Communism of doing away with currency completely, was found to be unrealistic. This obviously was a change in perception. However, the impact of War Communism was not only on the economy, but also on the polity.

29 V.I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of the April Theses", written on 16 April 1917, Collected Works (Moscow, 1966), vol. 36, p. 432. Emphasis in the original. Cf. Carr, n. 28, p. 270.

30 Oscar Lange, "The Role of Planning in a Socialist Economy", in M. Bronstein, ed., Comparative Economic Systems: Models and Cases (Illinois, 1965), pp. 200-1.

The impact on the two was qualitatively different. As Draper points out, "There were two faces of NEP - one opened the Soviet regime to temporary, limited economic experiments of a quasi-capitalist nature, the other imposed a full totalitarian, monolithic political order by officially wiping out all types and degrees of political opposition or driving it underground".³¹ The reference is obviously to the banning of factions within the party by Lenin. "By 1922, little or nothing remained of opposition, in or out of the party and it was in that year that Stalin systematically put his henchmen in key posts in the party apparatus, an advantage that stood him in good stead during the internal party struggle later in the decade."³² So while an economic corrective was introduced through the NEP, a political corruptive followed simultaneously. This is understandable from the standpoint that policies were ad hoc and that the essential purpose was control. Need for control was obviously exacerbated by the fact that Lenin had admitted that the NEP was a step backward though temporary, which was tantamount to an admission of failure, of having been wrong in the ideas used during War Communism. This was found to encourage factions, and which was seen as anathema by Lenin at the time of crisis.

31 Draper, n. 4, p. 289.

32 Ibid.

STALIN'S ERA

Thus, going on to the next phase, mass collectivization and the emergency of a central planning system were the economic hallmarks, and they too left deep political scars on the Soviet system. Mass collectivization has been characterized by Arthur Wright as a "sudden desperate lunge to extricate the leadership from a deep economic and political crisis, a crisis which was largely of its own making".³³ This is, of course, a reference to the false picture projected that the shortage of grain was because of increased peasant consumption. The real situation was that since the terms of trade went against agriculture resulting mainly in a fall in grain prices, the peasants shifted out of grain and into livestock. This crisis could easily have been predicted, yet it was ignored.

Yet again, following the line that policy measures were ad hoc, here is again a manifestation of contradictions left unresolved in a previous age taking a more violent form in the succeeding one. It is in this scenario that planning came into being. However, Gerner & Hedlund point out that "the model that was introduced, however, was not the one of alleged central planning. It was simply one of centralized political control over the economy, which is a

33 Arthur Wright, ed., Jerzy F. Karcz: The Economics of Communist Agriculture (Bloomington, 1979), p. 6.

very different matter".³⁴ Similarly, Zaleski quotes the head of the Polish Gosplan in the late 1940s as having remarked that, "Centralization is a substitute for a plan and a bad one. When one is incapable of foreseeing, he reserves for himself the right to intervene at any moment, on any pretext".³⁵

KHRUSHCHEV'S ERA

TH-3843

By the time, Khrushchev came, the Stalinist system was perfected. Alec Nove summarizes Khrushchev's role in Soviet economic development in the following manner, "But in the end he knew only the traditional method".³⁶ Thus, while there exists the popular notion that Khrushchev's Twentieth Congress Secret Speech marks a radical break from the past, one can also argue for a continuity in the foundations of the Soviet system. "Little seems to remain of Khrushchev's policies, for one reason because they were inconsistent and even self-contradictory."³⁷ For example, while Solzhénitsyn could publish "One day in the life of

34 Gerner & Hedlund, n. 27, p. 41. Emphasis in the original.

35 Eugene Zaleski, Planning for Economic Growth, 1918-32 (Chapel Hill, 1962), p. 34.

36 Alec Nove, An Economic History of the USSR (London, 1969), p. 368.

37 Draper, n. 4, p. 290.

DISS
320.947
Ai98 In

TH3843



Ivan Denisovitch" in 1962, Pasternak was persecuted in the same period. One thing is however clear, that "Khrushchev as a phenomenon was indeed necessary, from the simple perspective of survival of the Soviet system".³⁸

A TENTATIVE FRAMEWORK

Thus, the broad themes that emerge from this quick perusal of history upto Brezhnev's time are as follows. Soviet economy and politics shared a close relationship inversely. When the Soviet economy was faring badly, Soviet politics was moderate (e.g. War Communism, and Khrushchev's era) and vice versa (e.g. NEP, Stalin's collectivization drive). In other words, change had a corrective and corruptive role to play. Ad hoc policy measures presented ex post as central to socialism were obvious efforts to keep contradictions under wraps and gain control. This manifestation of a gap between theory and practice was obviously filled by the flexible role of ideology and after Lenin, through Lenin's cult too. This ensured latent possibilities of change in the successive era of Soviet leadership. Ofcourse, this is not equating the role of individuals in history to the history of individuals, but marking individuals as milestones in the course of these changes:

What seems to me essential is to recognize in the

38 Gerner & Hedlund, n. 27, p. 163.

great man an outstanding individual who is at once a product and an agent of the historical process, at once the representative and the creator of social forces which change the shape of the world and the thoughts of men.³⁹

In the next chapter, we will determine; whether the inverse relation between economy and polity persisted or not, and in what form; whether change played a corrective and a corruptive role or not; what were the limits of change; what was the latent potential for change generated by a gap between theory and practice. In the end, it is perhaps ideal to quote Boris Kagarlitsky: "Let us recall - paraphrasing Lenin's words - that it is rather more interesting actually to participate in the process of change than to study it in theory".⁴⁰ Let us attempt to participate in our own little way.

39 E.H. Carr, What is History? (Cambridge, 1961), p. 55.

40 Boris Kagarlitsky, The Dialectic of Change Rick Simon, trans. (London, 1990), p. 333.

CHAPTER II

THE BREZHNEV ERA

CHAPTER II
THE BREZHNEV ERA

Our study now enters a long period of Soviet history, from 1964 to 1982 when Brezhnev died. These eighteen years gave the Soviet leadership ample time and opportunity to "perfect the system".¹ This was a pet theme of the Brezhnev era. It is also in this period that all the inherited Soviet and Russian tradition was brought to bear on the Soviet Union.² It thus provides an excellent period to develop the tentative pattern of change that emerged from Chapter I.

The Brezhnev era has been characterised by scholars both in the West and in the Soviet Union as a period of stagnation.³ This period saw a continued allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future. It saw the introduction of new concepts towards this goal - collective leadership, developed socialism, perfection of the system and stability. The principle of democratic centralism was emphasized. It also saw, the first attempt at major economic reforms.⁴ However, the economy stagnated hopelessly.

The net result of the Brezhnev era was an exacerbation of the latent contradictions within Soviet Society.⁵ An imminent radical break from the past was becoming a far more realistic prospect. We will now seek to analyse this in detail.

1 Boris Kagarlitsky, The Dialectic Change, trans. Rick Simon, (London, 1990), pp. 242-3.

2 Kristian Gerner and Stefan Hedlund, Ideology and Rationality in the Soviet Model; A Legacy for Gorbachev (London, 1989), p.320

3 Examples from within the Soviet Union are Roy Medvedev, Boris Kagarlitsky; from the West, nearly all.

4 Kosygin, 1965.

5 Kagarlitsky, n.1, p.240.

THE AFTERMATH OF KHRUSHCHEV.

Brezhnev was faced with the modernization of the Soviet Union, only partly achieved by Khrushchev, at a time when the United States of America was becoming increasingly involved in Vietnam. "Indeed, one of the characteristics of the Brezhnev era was the militarization of Society, as the party and the military stoked up the fires of patriotism and played on the population's fear of war".⁶ This was straight away borrowing a feather from Stalin's cap.

Brezhnev "learned from Khrushchev's mistakes. He sought to avoid alienating bureaucratic interests and elites. He was a man of compromise not of reform. The Brezhnev era saw the party and state bureaucracies come into their own".⁷ The first step taken by the Brezhnev leadership was to appease the antagonized bureaucratic vested interests, whom Khrushchev had clearly riled by his attempts at making the bureaucracy "a more pliant executor of his policy decisions".⁸ Thus followed a quick reversal of all the changes that Khrushchev had tried to bring about.

It was also not surprising that Khrushchev was ousted from power. Commenting on this, Melvin Croan calls the Soviet Union of that time both "pre-institutional and post-revolutionary". "It is post-revolutionary in the sense that the ideologically motored totalitarian transformation of society as it occurred

6 Martin McCauley, ed., The Soviet Union after Brezhnev (New York, 1983), p.3.

7 Ibid , p.3.

8 Martin McCauley "Leadership and the Succession Struggle", in McCauley, n.6,p.18.

under Stalin, [was] a closed chapter ... Moreover, Soviet Communist ideology no longer [served] as much of a guide to domestic social change. [An amazing thing to say in 1969!] ... the Soviet party dictatorship remains pre-institutional in the sense that it has yet to discover a serviceable mechanism for the effective long-term sharing and the eventual orderly transfer of personal power at the very apex of the political system".⁹ This point is accepted by other scholars too.¹⁰

With this background it is now easy to see the framework within which the Brezhnev leadership operated. This will be our next task.

CONSTRAINTS OF CHANGE

The most significant constraint that one can identify, is the allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and the communist future. This allegiance went a long way in determining the course of events between 1964 and 1982. There is ample material available from Brezhnev's speeches and writings on this score.

On the leadership's commitment to fight capitalist forces, Brezhnev noted that Lenin had dedicated his life to a single cause - "the cause of liberating labour from the oppression of capital".¹¹ And then further, "His revolutionary cause was

9 Melvin Croan, "Five Years After Khrushchev", Survey (London), vol. 72, summer 1969, pp.42-3.

10 McCauley, n.8, p.14 and Rakowska - Harmstone, "Towards a Theory of Soviet Leadership Maintenance" in Paul Cocks et. al., eds., The Dynamics of Soviet Politics, (Cambridge, Mass., 1976) p.52.

11 L.I. Brezhnev, Following Lenin's Course (Moscow, 1972), p.252.

started and is being continued with success on our soil. Lenin's ideals permeate all our achievements and plans".¹² A more complete commitment to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future, is difficult to find.

The Soviet leadership was only too clearly aware that it needed to fulfil its promises. And so Brezhnev said, "The new type of party is, comrades, the supreme embodiment of the indissoluble unity of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice. It is the greatest legacy that Lenin has bequeathed to the world revolutionary movement, to the builders of socialism and communism".¹³ This is a clear acceptance of the Leninist legacy and the recognition of the commitment to match words with deeds.

In a direct reference to the commitment of building communism, Brezhnev said, "We regard the development of the Soviet state and socialist democracy above all as a powerful means of attaining our main aim - the building of communism".¹⁴ This speech, from which the above quotes appear, was one where Brezhnev was at his rhetorical best. However, behind all the rhetoric lay the burden of promising to fulfil the proletarian dream. If Khrushchev got carried away by his promises, Brezhnev, albeit a little more cautious, was no less. In a statement sweeping the entire future course of possible Soviet development, he said:

But whatever stages of transition, the revolutionary masses will have to go through and whatever intermediate programmes and slogans the communists put forward

12 Ibid ,p.272. "Lenin's Cause Lives on and Triumphs: Report at a Joint Celebration Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR on April 21, 1970, to Mark the centenary of the Birth of V.I. Lenin.

13 Ibid, p.256. Emphasis added.

14 Ibid, p.279.

to rally these masses they always remember that ahead of them is the last and decisive battle, the battle for socialism. (Applause) [sic] Communists are what they are because they subordinate their entire struggle to this main, end goal.¹⁵

If the above words are an indication of what the Soviet leadership believed in, then here is one more quote, that should decisively settle the issue at the very top of that leadership. Brezhnev once again :

Whatever I have managed to accomplish in my life - in production, in battle, in political and state work - was done at the call of our Leninist Party whose true son I have been for fifty years and will remain as long as I live.¹⁶

And that is precisely what Brezhnev did till he died on 10 November 1982. That statement is also a commentary on the entire era of Brezhnev.

Certain important conclusions follow from the above.

The Soviet Union was firmly committed to the task of building communism using Marxist-Leninist (ML) principles. There was a growing emphasis on the reliability of the CPSU's word. In other words, emphasis was being laid on how the CPSU has actually put ML theory into practice. Finally, irrespective of the number and variety of detours that the CPSU might take, they will all ultimately lead to communism.

Such firm ideological commitments posed one major problem to the Soviet Union. It limited the scope of reforms

15 Ibid, pp.298-9.

16 Ibid, p.284.

that could be applied, in order to save a degenerating economy. This is one major factor that made the Soviet leadership look towards the perfection of the system instead of overhauling it. In other words, while reform was in the offing, it was to remain strictly within the system. As Boris Kagarlitsky put it, "The Brezhnev leadership endeavored to secure the development of society's productive forces without altering the relations of production".¹⁷ But let us first look at the connection of the constraints mentioned above to the tasks that were to be accomplished by the Soviet collective leadership.

TASKS AT HAND

It is perhaps best to begin with Lenin. "The first task of every party of the future is to convince the majority of the people that its programme and tactics are correct."¹⁸ Here lay the genesis of the CPSU's obsession with declaring its policies as "correct". "The party in the last resort is always right....One can only be right with the party and through the party since there is no other way for correctness to be expressed".¹⁹ This attitude made the adoption of non-conservative measures that much more difficult, just as it

17 Kagarlitsky, n.1, p.240.

18 V.I.Lenin, The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government (Moscow, 1966), p.7. Written between April 13 - 15, 1918.

19 Leon Trotsky quoted in Martin McCauley, The Soviet Union since 1917 (London 1981), p.60.

made the regime that much more critical of dissent.

The economy came to occupy the centre-stage. "The more than half a century of experience in socialist economic endeavour provides convincing confirmation that the direction of the economy is perhaps the most challenging and the most creative task of all those which arise after a revolution.... The most important thing that this requires is acceleration of scientific and technical progress....It is well known that for our society the fulfilment of economic tasks is not an end in itself but a means."²⁰ Once again, the priority to the economy in relation to other areas was accorded by Brezhnev himself:

In all sectors I had to work the problem in the final count was to solve three main tasks: to boost the economy, to carry on ideological-educational work and finally to strengthen the country's defences and fight for a lasting peace.²¹

Notice that the economy is mentioned as the first main task and country's defences at the end. This is Brezhnev's own assessment towards (what turned out to be) the end of his life.

Now, not only did economy assume the centre stage, but the kind of scientific and technical progress became

20 Brezhnev, n.11&12, pp.273-4&276.

21 L.I.Brezhnev, *Socialism, Peace, the Freedom and Independence of the Peoples* (New Delhi, 1982), p.285. Speech at a Reception in the Kremlin on the occasion of L.I.Brezhnev's 75th Birthday.

important. "It will be necessary to improve considerably the management of the economy with due account taken of the best experience gained in the fraternal socialist countries, as well as in advanced capitalist states."²² Justifying economic co-operation with the West, Brezhnev said:

Broad international division of labour is the only basis for keeping pace with the times and abreast of the requirements and potentialities of the scientific-technical revolution. This, I should say, is now axiomatic. Hence the need for mutually beneficial, long-term and large-scale economic co-operation. [And he adds only as an afterthought] Another reason [i.e. it is not the primary reason] why we advocate such co-operation is that we regard it as a reliable means of materially consolidating peaceful relations among states.²³

In other words, the primary reason was "keeping pace with the times".

It is precisely material such as this that led scholars such as, Bruce Parrott and Abraham Katz to conclude that the dissatisfaction with the Soviet Union's own scientific and technological progress made it turn increasingly towards the West.²⁴ Parrott, in fact, views the reforms undergone in this respect as a resultant of the tension between the "traditionalists"

22 Ibid, p.287. Emphasis added.

23 L.I. Brezhnev, Life and Work Dedicated to a Great Cause (New Delhi, 1973), p.258. Speech at the World Congress of Peace Forces, Oct. 26, 1973.

24 Bruce Parrott, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (Cambridge, 1983) & Abraham Katz, The Politics of Economic Reform in the Soviet Union (New York, 1972).

and "non-traditionalists". In the Brezhnev era, he considers Kosygin as a representative of the latter, while Brezhnev begins by supporting the former and finally ends up favouring the latter. In a brilliant sum up of the entire question of the orientation of the development of the Soviet economy, he points to the only possible way out, which of course, was difficult to achieve because of the Soviet Union's political orientation:

As long as the mobilization and redirection of industrialized land and labour could sustain the industrialization campaign, and as long as the political elite was ruthlessly willing to squeeze investment resources out of popular consumption, these technological defects were tolerable. But in the post-Stalin era the supply of underutilized resources [had] gradually declined, and the elite [had] curbed the tyrannical practice of Stalinism largely out of a desire for self-preservation. Under these conditions, the system's technological limitations [had] become more troublesome economically and more salient politically, triggering a long search for effective reforms of science and industry.

The history of this search is a story of marginal successes and large failures. The essence of the failures is that it has proven virtually impossible to make scientific and industrial institutions more innovative without injecting a large dose of market competition into the economy. Yet the political constituency for this sort of reform [had] been very small.²⁵

Katz in the meanwhile, identified six factors, that supported the Kosygin reforms of 1965. Of these, one was the Khrushchev experience, which had thoroughly discredited the

25 Parrott, *ibid*, p.299.

non-economic, party activist, or governmental reorganization solutions.²⁶ He draws a very clear political inference from the Kosygin reforms. The inference is that the reforms amounted to a public assertion that the command system was flawed. "...the people... must think it rather strange after the long road travelled that now the stress must be on profits, material incentives, and even layoffs."²⁷

This argument of Western Scholars is also asserted by those within the Soviet Union, e.g. Boris Kagarlitsky. He agrees that the highest significance was given to the import of advanced technology. However, the problem of technological renovation remained, as appropriate relations of production did not exist. His conclusions are just the same as the other scholars'.²⁸

With the subsequent failures of Brezhnev's reforms of 1973 and 1979, which were the merging of several enterprises under one decision - making authority, and rejigging the bonus mechanism respectively, the painful slow - down in the economy became a veritable crisis.²⁹ Katz described this as the "creeping crisis".³⁰

26 Katz, n.24, p.202.

27 Ibid, p.190.

28 Kagarlitsky, n.1, pp.240-4.

29 Clive Crook, 'Perestroika', The Economist (London), 28 April 1990 p.9.

30 Katz, n.24, p.199.

Thus, the major task on hand that emerged concerned the economy. Politics took a back seat, as far as the internal dynamics of Soviet Society were concerned. We now turn to these.

REFORM, CHANGE OR STATUS QUO

While the Brezhnev era failed in all its reforms, it did succeed in providing extensive amount of social security to its citizens. "One of the greatest achievements of socialism is that every man is assured of his future", in the sense that society provides him with free medical care, old-age pension, security for disability, free education, etc.³¹ The credit for this idea must, however, go to Khrushchev, and for its implementation, to Brezhnev.³² The cost to the state exchequer was obviously too great. With an already burdened economy, these measures proved to be a further strain on its reserves. The importance of these measures lay in the political sphere. After all in the eighteen years of Brezhnev's leadership he had to show some achievements. So, what he found difficult to achieve economically, he achieved in the political sphere. This is where the leadership had its share of reforms and changes. The point to remember, however, is that it all amounted to

31 Brezhnev, n.11&12, p.270.

32 Archie Brown, "Political Developments: Some Conclusions & an Interpretation", in A. Brown & Michael Kaser, ed., The Soviet Union since the Fall of Khrushchev (London, 1978), 2nd edn. (1st edn. 1975), p.265.

maintaining the status quo.

The first change was the pledge "not to permit the concentration of excessive power in the hands of one person".³³ And so the decision to separate the post of First Secretary from the Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers. Thus was born the concept of Collective Leadership. These decisions were taken at the October plenary session of the Central Committee in 1964.³⁴ Leonard Schapiro attacks this concept severely and concludes that collective leadership was only an eyewash, a response to a crisis, i.e. its birth is owing to a negative attitude, not a positive one.³⁵ In an article, "Collective Lack of Leadership", he points to the need for one man ultimately to decide. As a proof of his perspicacious analysis, Brezhnev did precisely that a few years later. He also took over as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1977, to whom the entire Council of Ministers (COM) was answerable. This way, while technically the post of General Secretary was not being combined with the Chairman of the COM, there was, however, concentration of power in the hands of one man.³⁶ The net result of collective leadership was back to square one, with one important difference

33 Roy Medvedev quoted in Brown, *ibid*, p.219.

34 *Ibid*, pp.237-8.

35 Leonard Schapiro, "Collective Lack of Leadership", Survey no.70/71, Winter/Spring 1969, pp.193-200, esp.p.197.

36 McCauley, n.6&8, pp.14-16, and Brown, "Political Developments, 1975-77", in Brown & Kaser, n.32, p.308.

Brezhnev led from the middle, while Stalin and Khrushchev had led from the front.³⁷ This is what Melvin Croan called the "hang-together" policy.³⁸

Democratic Centralism was for the first time incorporated in the Soviet Constitution, in 1977. All these years it was practiced without constitutional recognition. This principle was essentially a method of establishing horizontal and vertical control, by the party over the state. The emphasis now was on the binding nature of decisions of higher organs upon lower organs".³⁹ This has continued to be a paradox that dogs Soviet society. Reforms envisage greater freedom to enterprises, however, through democratic centralism, they would still be under strict party control. This conflict of functions between state and party was to become a major source for generating change later.

Likewise, the idea of developed socialism, a brain-child of Brezhnev, was announced in the Twenty-Fourth Congress of the CPSU. The interesting point is, however, that while Brezhnev claimed that the scientific - technical base for this had been built, Kosygin denied it.⁴⁰

37 McCauley, n.6&8, p.13. Archie Brown, "The Power of the Genl. Secretary", in Rigby, Brown and Reddaway, eds., Authority Power and Policy in the USSR (London, 1980), pp.151-2.

38 Croan, n.9, p.43.

39 Brown, n.36, pp.305-6. For an excellent and concise analysis on the differences between the 1936 & 1977 Constitutions, see pp.300-5.

40 Parrott, n.24, p.186.

Brezhnev's word prevailed and the Soviet Union was deemed to have achieved the stage of developed socialism. This declaration wasn't just an eyewash, it went beyond any pretence. It marked a radical break with Khrushchevian promises of achieving communism in an impossibly short span of time. The first ever dilution of this promise occurred simultaneously with the declaration that "natural, logical stage on the road to Communism" i.e. developed socialism had been achieved.⁴¹ In a perspicacious comment Prof. Zafar Imam noted the following:

Although the term "Developed Socialism" is said to have originated from Lenin, he had not, like Marx and Engels, counted on any "logic" in social development other than in a dialectical framework. The concept of "a Natural, Logical Stage" was thus novel in the Marxist-Leninist theory of the State.⁴²

Thus, developed socialism was a symbol of the desperation of the Soviet regime to show some achievement, while at the same time brushing the shift in theoretical emphasis under the carpet. It was a way of showing achievement without achievement. Here is it in Brezhnev's own words:

...when we speak of the main features of Socialism that has been built [the reference is obviously to developed socialism because

41 Preamble of Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR adopted at the Seventh (special) Session of the SS of the USSR, Ninth Convocation on Oct.7,1977 .

42 Imam, "Current Theory of the Soviet State" International Studies (New Delhi,1986),23(3),p.233, written in April 1985.

the speech was given in 1970). ..what are these features? They are the power of the working people with the vanguard role exercised by the working class and the leadership of social development provided by the ML Party; public ownership of the means of production and, on its basis, the planned development of the national economy on the highest technological level for the benefit of the whole people; the implementation of the principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work"; the education of the whole people in the spirit of the ideology of scientific communism, in a spirit of friendship with the peoples of the fraternal socialist countries and the working people of the whole world; and lastly, a foreign policy founded on the principles of proletarian, socialist internationalism.⁴³

It is in this speech he first declares developed socialism. The emphasized parts show clearly that when Brezhnev was pointing out the specific "features" of developed socialism, all he did was, reiterate some of the theoretical constructs of socialism. He omits to mention a very crucial though simple point - how have these theoretical premises been translated in practice?; how is this amorphous enumeration a precept? Developed socialism for all its "features" is now a part of forgotten Soviet history.

On the economic and social front, Boris Meissner points out three important contradictions in the Brezhnev era.⁴⁴ First, attempts to raise the standard of living by placing more emphasis on agriculture and consumer goods

43 Brezhnev, n.11&12, pp.291-2. Emphasis added, p.269.

44 Boris Meissner, "Brezhnev's Legacy in Soviet Politics" Aussen Politik (Hamburg, 1983), vol.34, no.2, pp.112-13.

industry, concomitant with sweeping arms build-up, which obviously emphasized heavy and arms industry. Second, related to the first, there were differing views held by Kosygin (backed by Podgorny) and Brezhnev over economic policy and the reform of the economic affairs administration. Finally, the leadership, after the events of autumn 1980 in Poland, were responsive to the economic and social needs of the people. However, they simultaneously shortended the leash on ideological and cultural matters, crack-down dissidents and a tougher ethnic policy.

The net result of all these reforms and changes within the system was that, the adaptation of the Soviet state and social order to the demands of a fully developed industrial society, was curbed.⁴⁵

CONSOLIDATION OF THE PATTERN

Let us now quickly draw together the various conclusions in this chapter and see the pattern they form.

The thrust of the Brezhnev era was toward providing political stability. A new constitution was drawn up in 1977 which was supposed to reflect the reality of the '70's. The concentration of the leadership's efforts was in the field of economy. These eighteen years saw a lopsided development of the economy because of several inherent contradictions within the system. The political sphere

45 Ibid, p.113.

was brought to bear upon the "creeping crisis", in an effort to gloss over the ills of the system.

A large measure of responsibility for this must lie on the constraints within which the economy could be reformed. "The market, which presupposes the autonomy of participants in economic relations, seemed politically dangerous."⁴⁶ Political control had been recognised and legalised through the principle of democratic centralism. Short-cuts to economic development were sought through extensive import of Western technology. But, these were incompatible with heightened political control.

Many of the factors that contributed to the economic mess were present in the Soviet Union for a long time.⁴⁷ This obviously meant that the lopsidedness of industrialization achieved through Stalinist means, now set into the economy to beset it perennially. Every successive leadership was faced therefore, in one form or another, with the repercussions of this lopsided industrialization. To Brezhnev fell the task, in addition, of modernization.

This is not to argue that reforms, such as those in 1965, were inevitable. Politics played an important role in defining them.⁴⁸ The irreducible minimum of the interaction between the two seemed to be "political control of

46 Kagarlitzky, n.1,p.276.

47 Katz, n.24,p.128.

48 Ibid,p.128.

the main lines and directions of investment and production"⁴⁹

Here again we find that change in the Soviet Union consolidated the pattern that we tentatively proposed in chapter one. Change was playing a corrective and corruptive role. New principles and policies were touted in an obvious effort to keep the contradictions within the Soviet society under wraps. Ideology and Lenin's cult played a flexible role in bringing this about.⁵⁰ Finally, the most important factor seemed to be the inverse relationship that the economy continued to share with politics. In the Brezhnev era when they concentrated on setting the economy right, they increased their political control. Conservative trends in the economy encouraged its attendant trends in society. However, failure at economic reforms occurred pari passu with the success in maintaining "stability" through political control. Interestingly Sinyavsky and Daniel were arrested in September 1965, the same year as the Kosygin reforms. V.E. Semichastny, then head of KGB called for the arrest of a thousand intellectuals in and around Moscow, however, only these two were arrested.⁵¹ "Standards of living in the Soviet Union [had] risen, but the expectations of

49 Ibid, p.196.

50 Nina Tumarkin, Lenin Lives; The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia (Cambridge, 1983).

51 Brown, n.32, pp.251-3.

Soviet citizens [had] risen even faster. This [was] one of the central problems facing the party leadership."⁵² The crucial aspect was that the latent possibilities of change were becoming more and more powerful.

It now remains to be seen what the interregnum period had to offer to the host of problems it inherited. With the death of Brezhnev the era of stable compromise was over. It was the last decisive bastion of the conservatives in the Soviet Union. We'll end with a quote from Gerner & Hedlund:

...Brezhnev's Food Programme represents a splendid last stand of the stubborn refusal to abandon control, in spite of the fact that the price for maintaining the old system was growing rapidly, as more and more resources had to be devoted to covering up its malfunctions.

In overall terms, it is a striking feature of the Brezhnev era that inefficiency and a lack of internal dynamic forces was compensated for by a steadily increasing reliance on external sources. [The reference is obviously to agricultural subsidy, import of Western technology and emphasis given to the weapons industry.]⁵³

The rest was all up to Andropov and Chernenko.

52 Brown, n. 36, p. 326.

53 K. Gerner & S. Hedlund, Ideology and Rationality in the Soviet Model: A Legacy for Gorbachev (London, 1989), pp. 263-4.

CHAPTER III
THE INTERREGNUM PERIOD

CHAPTER III

THE INTERREGNUM PERIOD

The Brezhnev era had bequeathed to its successors a mature Stalinist tradition and an era of stable compromise. Brezhnev's two successors, Andropov and Chernenko were old and infirm, and therefore none could make an appreciable contribution to Soviet development. These few years, however, gave the reformist elements within the Soviet leadership sufficient conviction to drive the point home, that young and capable hands were required with the courage to stand up and call a spade, a spade. This short period of Andropov and Chernenko, therefore served merely as an interregnum. It however, gave the Soviets sufficient time to grasp the full implications of Brezhnev's legacy.

In this chapter, we will therefore seek to bring forth these implications in addition to our usual points of inquiry. They constitute, Andropov's and Chernenko's allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future. We will also see the brief attempts at reform made by the two. Finally, we will trace the development of our tentative pattern, in preparation for using it to systematize the plethora of changes introduced by Gorbachev and his policy of perestroika.

THE COST OF STABILITY

Brezhnev's legacy, at one level, was obvious. There

was the economy to worry about. Moreover, the additional problems of a large and corrupt bureaucracy and a powerful military lobby, were major stumbling blocks for any reform. Brezhnev had also given a new constitution to the Soviet Union. One which declared the CPSU to be "The leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all government and non-government organisations...."¹ This was an onerous image for any succeeding leadership to maintain, if one were to match ones words with ones deeds. But there wasn't much of that in the Brezhnev era anyway. More on that, in a moment. In a moment of uninhibited self praise, Brezhnev felt that the new constitution "epitomises the whole sixty years' development of the Soviet state".² By that he meant the social, economic and political changes carried out in that period. In a sense, it was true. No other comparable country had in a brief span of sixty odd years undergone so many changes, with three constitutions and three Party Programmes. Yet, the Soviet Union at the time of Andropov's accession did not have much to show for it.

1 Ar. 6. Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR Adopted at the 7th (Special) Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 9th Convocation, on Oct. 7, 1977, in Boris ... Topornin, (Moscow, 1987), revsd. edn.

2 L.I. Brezhnev, Pages from His Life, (Oxford, 1982), p. 87. Address to the Special Session of the SS.

Meanwhile, the gap between theory and practice in the Soviet Union had assumed near - alarming proportions. "Thanks to the consistent pursuance of the Leninist nationalities policy we have, simultaneously with the construction of socialism, successfully solved the nationalities question, for the first time in history."³ Either Brezhnev was blind or he chose to ignore the problem. The best way to do that is to assume that it is solved. And he wasn't referring to a theoretical solution to the problem alone:

The formation of a historically new social and international community - the Soviet people - has become an important symbol of developed socialism in our country, an indicator of the growing homogeneity of Soviet society, the triumph of the nationalities policy of the CPSU. This means that the common features of Soviet peoples behaviour, character and world-view which do not depend on social and national distinctions are gradually assuming decisive importance in our country.⁴

He was clearly talking of its practical aspect. With hindsight, the kindest remark one can make is that Brezhnev was so wrong. It is in this context that one finds his statement that, "The deeds of the Leninist Party match its words", made simply because CPSU declared so "in" its "three party programmes", absurd, to say the least.⁵

-
- 3 Brezhnev, Pages from His life (Oxford 1982), p. 88. Speech at the extraordinary Session of the SS of the USSR which adopted the new Constitution. Emphasis added.
 - 4 Brezhnev, Socialism, Peace, the Freedom & Independence of the Peoples (New Delhi 1982), p. 5. "Soviet People" cf., New Soviet Man.
 - 5 L.I. Brezhnev, Following Lenin's Course (Moscow, 1972), pp. 282-3. On Lenin's birthday, 21 April 1970, Anniversary.

Triumph (or failure) of socialism is not "real" simply because the party or the constitution says so. It needs to be experienced by the people.

Nevertheless, why would Brezhnev assert such a thing? The logic again harks back to Lenin. In Brezhnev's own words, "Lenin held the connection of theory and practice, philosophy and politics to be a law governing the activity of the whole party".⁶ And since the party was "the guiding force" and "the nucleus" of Soviet society, who was to challenge the party's declaration that its "deeds" match its words? The nationalities question is one specific area where the gap between theory and practice was palpably evident.

The same policy was applied to other areas. For instance, Dyker says that "it was part of the mythology of the Brezhnev period that the budget was always balanced."⁷ Again with hindsight, one can clearly see that the current problem of huge budget deficit is not just because of Gorbachev's anti-Vodka drive and the collapse in 1985 of the international price of oil - Soviet Union's main export.⁸

6 Brezhnev, n. 5, p. 257.

7 David A. Dyker, "The Challenge of Perestroika", in Martin Wright, ed., Soviet Union: The Challenge of Change (Essex, 1989), p. 81.

8 Ibid, p. 81.

From the foregoing an interesting point urges itself. The Soviet leadership upto (and in fact, including), the interregnum period, was clearly aware of the problems that their society faced. At the same time, they avoided taking the requisite solutions in full measure, for various reasons. This obviously left a gap between their theory and their practice. Again, they were clearly aware of their commitment to bridge this gap. Unable to do so in reality after the abandonment of Stalinist repression, they resorted to exploiting the constitutional status of the CPSU, to declare that a match between the two had been achieved. This entire process was made possible through their monopoly of political control. But, problems don't get solved by wishing them away. So, in the absence of proper solutions, they accentuate. And so long as the Soviet leadership was unwilling to undertake fundamental changes, a gap became inevitable, and a vicious circle was brought into force.⁹ The major achievement of this process was that it projected stability through the maintenance of the status quo.

We will now look at other identifiable patterns and the constraints of change operating in the interregnum period.

Martin McCauley notes that upto the end of the Brezhnev era, each new leader inherited his power over policy, consolidated and increased power in the middle, and lost the ability to force through his policies by the end

9 Brown, "Political Developments: Some Conclusions & an Interpretation ", in Brown & Kaser, ed., The Soviet Union since the Fall of Khrushchev (London, 1978), 2nd edn. p.232.

of his term. It was in the middle, i.e. at the height of his power, that he was identifiable as the national leader. With the exception of dictatorial Stalin, "The periods of collective leadership [were] those during which there [was] a succession struggle (between 1922 and 1929, 1953 and 1957, and 1964 and 1969)...."¹⁰ He further notes that "economic innovators [had] always lost in the struggle for power."¹¹ Thus the leader faces a paradox. He needed to be economically conservative and yet offer solutions. "The task of the party leader [had] been to devise programs that synthesize new goals with traditional values."¹² The solutions however, had only unorthodox answers.

George W. Breslauer identifies seven factors that strike a pattern.¹³ First, programmes that rely heavily on party activism, political intervention and pressure, were the constant winners. Second, these programmes came with highly ambitious goals that strained resources and fostered unbalanced growth. Third, reliance on political mobilization had been at the cost of economic and administrative efficacy and genuine initiative. Fourth, the

10 Martin McCauley "Leadership and the Succession Struggle", in McCauley, ed., The Soviet Union after Brezhnev (New York, 1983), p. 13.

11 Ibid, p. 23.

12 G.W. Breslauer, Khrushchev & Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics (London, 1982), p. 269.

13 Ibid, pp. 278-83.

conservative impulse encouraged by the above competed with a persistent reform impulse. Fifth, the conservative impulse had emerged stronger in this competition. Sixth, the political system persistently generated urge for reform and perhaps because of the contradiction between newly defined goals and the existing political, economic and administrative structures, also limited its scope and obstructed its implementation. And finally, one could thus conclude, that Soviet leaders behaved as if authority-building was a very important matter. This tentative pattern proposed by Breslauer, reinforces the logic of the process that leads to a gap between theory and practice, explained earlier in this chapter.

Further, the post-Stalin leadership seems to have had decided on increasing consumer satisfaction, rationalizing the administrative structure, and expanding political participation, as the new goals.¹⁴ As has already been pointed out, the Soviet Union was still operating within its constraints.

CONSTRAINTS OF CHANGE

Brezhnev died on 10 November 1982, at the age of 75, whereupon Yury Andropov succeeded him both as party General Secretary and seven months later, as head of

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 269.

State.¹⁵ He died after less than a year in office in February 1984, at the age of 69. Konstantin Chernenko succeeded him both as, party General Secretary in April 1984 and 2 months later, as President.¹⁶ He died on 10 March, 1985.

Both Andropov and Chernenko did not last long to be able to make their individual marks on Soviet history. Andropov though, took more initiative than Chernenko. This was understandable considering that Chernenko was a conservative Brezhnev protégé. Chernenko was the first "number 2" man of an earlier leadership to survive politically and become leader in another period. This showed his greatest qualities - patience and persistence. Andropov had risen from the ranks of the KGB. Both of them promised a communist future. This is something one can take for granted, because both of them were old and belonged to the old guard.

An evidence, however, let us turn to Chernenko:

15 McCauley, "The Post-Brezhnev Era", in McCauley, ed., n. 10, p. 1. Ian Gorvin, "Before Gorbachev", in Martin Wright, ed., Soviet Union: The Challenge of Change (Essex, 1989), p. 15 and J.F. Crowley & Dan Vaillancourt, Lenin to Gorbachev: Three Generations of Soviet Communists (Illinois, 1989), p. 181.

16 Ian Gorvin, *ibid*, pp. 15-16, and Crowley-Vaillancourt, *ibid*, p. 185.

He [i.e. Lenin] bequeathed to us loyalty to the revolutionary theory of Marx....This Leninist approach to theory and practice keyed the atmosphere of the Twenty-Sixth Congress and the character of its conclusions....The Congress... thereby made a substantial contribution to Marxist-Leninist (ML) theory and practice of communist construction.¹⁷

At one stroke one can see the continuation of the constraints of change, well into the interregnum period. It was evident therefore, that the conservatives' hold would continue. The question was, how long?

Lenin was also being freely interpreted by every leadership to support or justify its cause.¹⁸ Lenin himself had given rise to this possibility by warning that the road to socialism "will never be straight; it will be incredibly involved".¹⁹ This increase in the free interpretation of Lenin was slowly decreasing the regime's compulsion to opt for the conservative impulse. It is no wonder then, that Andropov took over and with a zest, to end the rampant corruption which had become a hall-mark of Soviet society since the Brezhnev years.

-
- 17 Konstantin Chernenko, Selected Speeches and Writings S. Shirkov, trans. (Oxford, 1984), reprint, p. 4. Speech entitled "Following Lenin's Behests", on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of Lenin's birth, 22 April, 1981.
- 18 Nina Tumarkin, Lenin Lives: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia (Cambridge, 1983),
- 19 Brezhnev, n. 5, p. 266, Quoted here from V.I.Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1966), vol. 33, p. 130.

THE CONSERVATIVES' LAST BASTION

Andropov was seen by the masses as arguing for a radical break from the past. He was also, interested in a mopping up operation and an acceleration in economic progress. None of this was really new. Even the debates, on Market-Socialism (MS), albeit at a low level, had started during the time of Kosygin's reforms.²⁰ Being from the KGB, he came down on corruption with a heavy hand. And, he was no Brezhnev protege unlike Chernenko.

Andropov began cautious economic reforms. This was concomitant with his major anti-corruption drive. So, he campaigned to improve industrial productivity by penalizing drinking on the job.²¹ This was a measure that Gorbachev would pick up later. Andropov fired thousands of elderly, poorly educated apparatchiki, replacing them with young blood.²²

In foreign affairs Andropov however, continued with Brezhnev's detente. There was not even the adventurism that Brezhnev had displayed in Afghanistan in 1979. However, when in September 1983, a Soviet jet downed a Korean (allegedly) commercial airliner, which had strayed heavily into Soviet air-space with 269 people aboard, the party

20 Abraham Katz, The Politics of Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union (New York, 1972), pp. 194-6.

21 Crowley-Vaillancourt, n. 15, p. 181.

22 See, Zhores Medvedev, Andropov: His Life and Death (Oxford, 1984) revsd. paperback edn.

elite refused to recognize the event for nearly a week!

Nevertheless, Andropov's coming to power was a major defeat for the conservatives. He had honestly admitted that the plans for the first years of the Five Year Plan had not been fulfilled, called for a serious analysis of the economic problems, and also admitted the lack of any ready solutions. However, he was for a "significant change in the political and ideological superstructure as well".²³

There were two factions at the time of Brezhnev's death. The Andropov faction and the Chernenko faction. Despite the fact that Chernenko was projected constantly as the number two leader in the Kremlin, it was Andropov who won. The speed with which he took over also showed the mood prevalent in the Kremlin. It was in marked contrast to the slow pace of decision-making in the Brezhnev era. The Andropov faction was clearly reformist, while the Chernenko faction was conservative.

The death of Andropov brought the conservative faction in power. The style of succession also seemed to point that the party was beginning to think it customary to combine the post of General Secretary with the head of state.

23 Andropov cited in, Boris Kagarlitsky, The Dialectic of Change Rick Simon, trans., (London, 1990), p. 315.

The point, however, is that issues were never important in the succession.²⁴ Otherwise, why would Chernenko's candidacy be rejected in 1982 and accepted in 1984?

With the coming of Chernenko, Brezhnev's legacy was in full control. As a result, reform was impeded further. "The fourteen months of Chernenko's 'neo-Brezhnevism' were characterized by stagnation in the economy and political life."²⁵ As one Soviet source remarked, "What they were looking for when they picked Chernenko was a quiet life".²⁶ He continued with Brezhnev's policies; Andropov's limited reforms were being continued but at a more cautious pace and without any major new initiatives. Chernenko was advocating better contacts with the people.²⁷ A clear sign that the party leadership was acutely aware of its distance from the people.

Altogether, the economic reforms brought about by Andropov and Chernenko were quite inconsequential. Their short tenure only added to the problem. Further, at this time a "gerontocracy with an average age of 70 ruled the country".²⁸ This age factor made the need for fresh young blood very

24 Baruch Hazan, From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Infighting in the Kremlin (Boulder, 1987), p.8.

26 Quoted in Newsweek (New York), 27 Feb. 1984, p.33.

25 Kagarlitsky, n.23, p.315.

27 Hazan, n.24, p.8.

28 Dyker, n.7, p.179.

acute. Most importantly, it showed that Chernenko's rule was really a last ditch attempt by the party to follow the Brezhnev principle of living in cultural isolation, trying desperately to maintain status quo. After all, it was status quo that encouraged vested interests to get entrenched in the system. The desperation of the leadership showed in Chernenko's attempts to restrict contact with foreigners, as an "aggressively isolationist" mood prevailed.²⁹ However, his attempts failed. The age factor had become a joke by the end of Brezhnev's time itself, when people were actually³⁰ waiting for him to die.

In the spring of 1985, Gorbachev came to power, with the support of Andropov's coalition. Conservatives in the Brezhnev mould were removed from the political stage. Brezhnevism could not stave off the changes, it could only delay them. The policy of stability had generated problems that did not exist in the early 1970's. The social situation and economic environment had changed. Brezhnev had created a mass of difficulty for his successors. He had simultaneously made efforts at radical solutions unavoidable.

29 The Times (New York), 28 June 1984, p.12.

30 See, Boris Kagarlitsky, "The Dialectic of Reform", New Left Review (London), no.169, 1988.

THE PATTERN SO FAR

At the beginning of this chapter we had identified certain patterns upto the end of the Brezhnev era. Let us extend the pattern to the end of this interregnum period.

On the leadership front, it became usual practice now for the General Secretary to also assume the post of President. In the interregnum period there was hardly any time for the leadership to consolidate and increase its power. With an ageing leadership, a wholesale leadership turnover was now in the offing.³¹

"A recurring pattern of vacillation between the reformist and status quo positions [was] evident in the USSR."³² Every topical issue was seen in terms of black and white: "in the Leninist tradition there [was] only one correct answer to any question: wrong answers [were] not only incorrect but dangerous and [were to] be eliminated."³³ This monolithic approach continued upto the end of the interregnum period. The manifestation of a gap between their theory and practice, presented itself in a series of contradictions. Moreover, the manner of this manifestation too, shows remarkable continuity. Gordon Smith

31 Bruce Parrott, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (Cambridge, 1983), p. 301.

32 Gordon B. Smith, Soviet Politics: Continuity and Contradiction, (Houndmills, 1988), p. 325.

33 Sir Bryan Cartledge, "The Political Future", in Wright, ed., n. 7, p. 70.

identifies some of these to be the contradictions between the need for reform and resistance to change; the divisions between authorities at the center and those in the periphery; mass society and class society; the paradox of being a superpower, and yet, constantly being insecure of its position in the world; reformist rhetoric versus bureaucratic reality.³⁴

One can again, we clearly see, that when Andropov tried to innovate in the economic sphere, it was accompanied by strict discipline. He died before its outcome. Similarly, Chernenko had a conservative approach to the economy and he accompanied it with increased political control. It too died before its outcome. Yet, one trend was becoming more and more identifiable. Not only were conservative and partially innovative attempts at reform failing, political control was slowly slipping out of the hands of the leadership. "The Soviet Union's problem was not the instability that leads to revolution, but the stability that makes necessary change difficult."³⁵

The Brezhnev era and the interregnum period had delayed change, which could now be implemented only by a

34 Smith, n. 32, p. 335.

35 Mark Frankland, Sixth Continent: Russia and the Making of Mikhail Gorbachev (London, 1987), p. 235.

leader who was himself a part of the forces of change.
"Mikhail Gorbachev faced a task that had been set no
other Russian leader: to bring about fundamental change
by consent."³⁶ This now brings our analysis to the
present. We will now examine the Gorbachev era of
Perestroika in detail and develop our pattern further.

36 Martin Walker, The Working Giant, (London, 1986),
pp.xxviii and xxix.

CHAPTER IV

GORBACHEV AND PERESTROIKA

CHAPTER IV

GORBACHEV AND PERESTROIKA

The coming to power of Gorbachev in this cycle of change and status quo, suggests that he "enjoyed a mandate to undertake meaningful reforms in the USSR. There is much evidence to support this".¹ The expectation was bound to be greater, as he was coming into office after a conservative and antireformist leader - Chernenko. Till then, the USSR had "chosen to remain a prisoner within the confines of the Sixth Continent, When it did venture out its face was usually suspicious".² The important point is that the Soviet Union was now prepared to change.

When Chernenko died on 10 March, 1985, Gorbachev was declared General Secretary, merely 4 hours after his death. This was the swiftest transfer of power ever.³ Gorbachev was also the first party leader born after the Revolution, the first from the post World War II generation and the first since Lenin with a law degree. Fresh young blood had not just come into the leadership, but

1 Gordan B. Smith, Soviet Politics: Continuity and Contradiction (Hounmills, 1988), p.327.

2 Mark Frankland, Sixth Continent: Russia and the Making of Mikhail Gorbachev (London, 1987), p.272.

3 J.F.Crowley and Dan Vaillancourt, Lenin to Gorbachev: Three Generation of Soviet Communitis (Illinois, 1989), pp.185-6.

come at the very top of the leadership. The swift transfer of power clearly points to two things. First, that there must have been a compromise between Chernenko and Gorbachev in the former's time, such that the former would be the party leader and the latter, the undisputed successor.⁴ Second, a sense of urgency had gripped the leadership to quickly hand over charge to young and capable hands.

In the process of taking charge, Gorbachev had already broken traditions. Unlike his predecessors, he did not immediately take up the post of President. He was, however, sponsored by Gromyko in an extraordinary plenary meeting of the Central Committee (CC), at the age of 54.⁵ This in itself did not mean much. Brezhnev did the same, but changed his mind later. Gorbachev has ended up becoming President, and executive President at that, though there are time limits set on holding office.

In this chapter we will first examine the legacy for Gorbachev in its political, economic and social ramifications. We will then see how Perestroika took its present day shape. Finally, we will try and discern a pattern from the full blown crisis faced by the Soviet Union today.

4 Baruch A. Hazan, From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Infighting in the Kremlin (Boulder, 1987), p.9.

5 Ian Gorvin, "Before Gorbachev", in Martin Wright, ed., Soviet Union: The Challenge of Change (Essex, 1989), p.22.

A word of caution though, is in order. Unlike the earlier chapters which dealt with eras that are dead and gone, the period of Gorbachev and Perestroika is still alive and continuing. The fury of the changes are therefore difficult to keep pace with. Therefore, the pattern at the end can only be a tentative one. But first, it is necessary to take stock of the situation.

LEGACY FOR GORBACHEV

Gorbachev had inherited severe problems on all the three fronts - economic, political and social. It would be no exaggeration to claim that he had inherited nearly 70 years of Soviet misrule. Let us deal first with the economic leviathan.

In simple statistical terms, there was wide consensus among scholars on both sides of the now defunct "Iron Curtain", that the growth rate of the Soviet economy had stopped. It is interesting to note that the "gloomiest estimates of growth ..., and probably the most accurate [came] from Soviet economists..."⁶ Abel Aganbegyan agrees with Grigori Khanin and Vasili Selyunin on this point.⁷ The economy had also been beset by shortages. In such a case, access to inputs has been the enterprise managers obsession. Thus, resources were

6 Clive Crook, "Perestroika", The Economist (London), 28 April 1990, p.5.

7 Abel Aganbegyan, The Challenge: Economics of Perestroika, Alec Nove, introduced; Pauline M. Tiffen, trans., Michael Barratt Brown, ed., (London, 1988), pp.1-3.

being converted into stocks of raw materials. Incredibly, then, surplus sat alongside shortage. The waste was colossal. Another problem was the inefficient switch over from extensive to intensive development attempted since the days of Brezhnev. In other words, quality was attempted to be improved instead of quantity. However, this was to no avail.⁸ In the meanwhile Soviet military spending increased.

The economics of shortage presented a curious phenomena. "If the material allocation system is to be abolished only after shortages have been overcome, then it will be necessary to wait for ever since the allocation system itself generates and reproduces shortage."⁹ This implied that central planning itself had to be replaced by some sort of market mechanism. Janos Kornai, noted Hungarian economist strongly criticizes the central planning mechanism.¹⁰ He calls it the "soft-budget constraint" and shows that it operates in four ways by which profitability at the end is nill. These are, through increased prices fixed by Monopolistic enterprises to fit income shortfall; through state subsidies that bail out wasteful enterprises; through an infinitely flexible tax system that change at the whim

8 Cf. Martin Walker, The Waking Giant, (London, 1986), pp. 160-163.

9 Aganbegyan, n. 7, p. xx.

10 Cf. Janos Kornai, The Economics of Shortage, (Amsterdam, 1980), 2 vols.

of a minister; and in the absence of legal protection to suppliers, the states credit system can start a chain of bankruptcy, even if only one enterprise goes bust.¹¹ This obviously led to rising inflation. The budget deficit soared from 3% of GDP in 1985 to 10% GDP in 1988.¹²

Alec Nove quotes Nikolai Shmelev to sum up the position. "We now have an economy that is ... unplannable"¹³ Nove agrees with Kornai on the question of shortages generated by plans, whereas he disagrees on the point that there is no third way or alternative to Western capitalism in one way or another. Kornai expresses these views in The Road to a Free Economy.¹⁴ Nove disagrees and trusts that Market Socialism (MS) would work. These are broadly the problems that Gorbachev inherited on the economic front.

Let us now turn to political front.

It is not as if the economic and political problems were unconnected. Indeed, "an economic reform involving administrative decentralization cannot be sustained unless there is a corresponding political reform."¹⁵ Gorbachev had not only

11 Clive Crook, n.6, p.14.

12 Ibid, p.17.

13 Alec Nove, "The Problems of Perestroika", Dissent (New York), fall 1989, p.462.

14 Kornai, The Road to a Free Economy, (New York, 1990)

15 Ronald Amann "The Empire Strikes Back: The Interplay of Economic and Political Change in the Soviet Union", World Today, (London) vol.43, no.8-9, Aug.-Sept.1987, p.135.

inherited a mature Stalinist political system, he had also inherited with it, a stale and lifeless ideology. Commenting on it, Christel Lane feels, that "ideology [had] now been transformed into a myth and its role [was] to justify the system and not to provide a future-oriented guide for action. It [became] a conservative set of rationalizations which [supported] or even [made] sacred the existing order."¹⁶ The essential point that comes across is that while economy and polity got enmeshed inseparably, with the decay of the economy there was also a gradual irrelevance of ideology. This was a direct product of the Stalinist tradition and the incredible gap that Brezhnev left between theory and practice. Let us look at a Soviet source to confirm the above. In the words of Georgy Shakhnazarov:

While fully recognizing the fundamental role of economics and politics in human affairs, we must recognise that ideology is today in the forefront of social life. [The discussion in the Soviet Union revolved around the following]. Should we confine ourselves to a thorough updating of the existing ideology, bringing it into conformity with the realities and requirements of the present time, or should we create a new ideology conforming to the present level of scientific and social consciousness and spirit of the time?¹⁷

16 Christel Lane, "Legitimacy and Power in the Soviet Union Through Socialist Ritual", British Journal of Political Science (Cambridge), vol.14, no.2, p.213. Emphasis in the original.

17 Georgy Shakhnazarov, "Renovation of Ideology and the Ideology of Renovation", Communist (Moscow), issue 17, no.5, supplement, Mar-April 1990, p.14.

Ideology that Gorbachev inherited was left with the bark without the bite.

Under these circumstances, to be saddled with a constitution that makes the CPSU the "guiding force" and "nucleus" of Soviet society, was to live with an anachronism. The result was that the party was politically distanced from reality. This meant that political participation of the people in decision-making was at a low ebb. "Certainly, the political system marginalized citizen influence over such choices [leadership selection and policy decisions], and empirical evidence from the USSR in the mid-1980s suggests that people were not optimistic about their ability to influence government decisions."¹⁸ This carried with it a terrible implication. If the party was the "guiding force" and "nucleus" of Soviet society, and its ideology, based on Marxist-Leninist (ML) principles, was the party's guide, then by transitivity, ML ideology was the society's precept too. Moreover, the party's legitimacy depended on its ideology. So, if the ideology became anachronistic leading to decreased mass political participation, then the very legitimacy of the party was under attack.

¹⁸ Donald Bahry and Brian D. Silver, "Soviet Citizen Participation on the Eve of Democratization", American Political Science Review (Wisconsin), vol.23, no.2, July 1990, p.825.

This was nothing short of a political crisis. Gorbachev, therefore, faced the additional task of salvaging the party's image. Here again politics and economics went hand in hand. Decentralization, with increasing autonomy to enterprises, was doomed to failure under these circumstances:

In sum, if the party, dominated by the central leadership, continues to insist that it is the ultimate interpreter and dispenser of all truth, dependent upon mass mobilization for successful reform, how can a new socialist work ethic evolve where the central element is to be initiated and self-reliance? ¹⁹

Such was the contradiction between economics and politics that Gorbachev inherited.

There were veritable skeletons in the cupboard that held the potential of coming out into the open, given a chance. A prime example is the Soviet Nationalities problem. Any loosening of political control could force it in the open. Since the legitimacy of the regime was under attack, it was also likely to lose a bit of its political control.

19 Roy D. Laird and Betty A. Laird, "Glasnost, Perestroika and Gorbachev's policies: The Built-in Contradictions of Soviet Socialism", Studies in Comparative Communism (Los Angeles), vol.23,no.2, Summer 1990,p.119.

This is where the societal aspect comes in. We will now see the dynamics of the interaction of politics and economy on the society that Gorbachev inherited.

With shortages plaguing the economy, a flourishing black market, on capitalist lines, developed.²⁰ So was the large bureaucracy corrupt. With a discredited party and a floundering ideological stalemate, such forces of modernization as the urbanization of Soviet Society, the vast expansion of the Soviet educational system, and the proliferation (despite government efforts to curb them) of methods by which citizens can communicate with each other, led to the creation of a civil society.²¹ Frederick Starr has been a strong proponent of the idea of a civil society forcing the hand of Gorbachev. And in a classic tie-up of the economy with a growing civil society, he says, "Economic stagnation, like its kin, corruption, occurred because the system failed to adjust to the emerging value of the populace, especially its best educated and technically most competent elements."²²

In a far more sinister way, Soviet society was deeply affected by its repressive past. It was felt that peasants,

20 Cf. Konstantin Simis, The Corrupt Society: The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism Jacqueline Edwards and Mitchell Schneider, trans. (New York, 1982).

21 S. Frederick Starr, "Soviet Union a Civil Society", Foreign Policy, no. 70, Spring 1988, pp. 26 ff.

22 Ibid, p. 28.

for instance, lacked the psychological prerequisites to take initiatives. Elaborating on this, the eminent Soviet rural sociologist, Tatyana Zaslavskaya, had the following to say:

...in 70 years of Soviet power, ... 60 years ...of state-run agriculture, generations have changed, and the people who today work in the kolkhozes and sovkhozes not only were never independent peasant farmers, but their parents were not independent peasants, and their grand-parents even joined the kolkhozes.²³

Thus, even the Soviet society that Gorbachev inherited was ridden through and through with problems. This was a trend that had even begun to worry Andropov. Shirking and slacking off from work became a habit. It is interesting to note in this respect that, Gorbachev followed Andropov's footsteps with his anti-Vodka drive.

The system was crying for change in every respect. The question that now arises is, whether these changes constitute a change in or of the system? We will now turn our attention to this aspect.

CHANGE IN OR OF THE SYSTEM

It has been necessary to digress in detail over the legacy for Gorbachev if any understanding of the current changes is to be arrived at. Here we will briefly see the

23 T.Zaslavskaya quoted in Laird and Laird n.19,p.123.

development of the changes brought about in the Soviet Union.

Our first concern is whether Gorbachev has been loyal to Lenin and Lenin's dream or not. Here, there has been a gradual change in Gorbachev's stance. In a speech entitled "Restructuring - a Vital concern of the People", given at the Eighteenth Congress of the Trade Unions of the USSR, on 25 February 1987, he said, "we already have vast and rich experience, which has not yet been assessed to the full, in building socialism - experience to which we must constantly turn as we learn to solve in the Leninist way the problems that arise".²⁴ The point to note here is, that Gorbachev sounds a little cautious in his allegiance to Lenin, and seems to suggest a re-interpretation of Lenin. Let us take a look at the new revised edition of the Third Party Programme approved at the Twenty-seventh Congress of the CPSU on 1 March 1986.²⁵ The introduction defines the purpose of the programme as the "all-round perfection of socialism, for Soviet society's further advance to communism... [And describes it as] a programme of the struggle for peace and social progress."²⁶

24 M.S.Gorbachev, Speeches and Writings (Oxford, 1987), vol.2, p.164. Emphasis added.

25 CPSU Documents and Resolutions: Twenty-seventh Congress (New Delhi, 1986)

26 Ibid, p.238. Emphasis added.

It identifies communism as a goal, but not in the manner Khrushchev did in 1961. Khrushchev said communism would be achieved in 20 years. The new party programme is silent on the time-frame. Part II of the Programme talks of the "consistent implementation of the Leninist principles of management and above all, of the principle of democratic centralism...."²⁷ This point was also made forcefully by Gorbachev.²⁸

However, taking all the above into account as A.K. Damodaran has noted, "The most important difference in the content...[was]...the pre-occupation of the present leadership with the nuclear threat"²⁹ In the words of the party Programme, "The most acute problem facing mankind is that of war and peace."³⁰ Again it is clear that the main concern of the party was not the implementation of Leninist principles, though it was an important aspect. The main concern was "peace". There are obvious practical overtones to this. Gorbachev was perhaps preparing the ground for reduced military expenditure, a traditional sap on the reserves of the Soviet economy.

27 Ibid, p.272. Emphasis added

28 M.S. Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World (London, 1987).

29 A.K. Damodaran, "The New Soviet Party Programme in Historical Perspective", in Zafar Imam, ed., Restructuring Soviet Society (New Delhi, 1987)p.9.

30 Documents and Resolutions, n.25, p.256.

As the programme says, "...World war is not fatally inevitable."³¹ Equally the programme only argues for a "consistent" implementation of Leninist principles. This, in other words meant a free interpretation of Lenin, so long as it was consistent, based on the practical tasks to be accomplished. With hindsight again, one can see the significance of the difference between the revised Party Programme and its original.

The idea was perhaps, to use traditional arguments to convince the conservatives to take bold steps required for dealing with the current crisis. What better way to do it than to invoke the name of Lenin? Thus, and this is the moot point, the first discernible change that one can identify is the watered-down emphasis on the leaderships allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future.

Keeping the context of the above discussion in mind, let us read between the lines just once more, from the party Programme's last lines:

Under the leadership of the Party, under the banner of Marxism - Leninism the Soviet people have built socialism.

Under the leadership of the Party, under the banner of Marxism-Leninism the Soviet people will build a communist society.³²

31 Ibid, p.258

32 Ibid, p.325. Emphasis added.

Notice the choice of words. On the face of it, the statement is standard rhetoric. It reiterates the party's belief in socialism and promises a communist future.

Let us take a second look, keeping the context of the discussion above in mind. The promise of a communist society seems to rest on two premises. One, that the party leads the Soviet people, and two, that it leads the Soviet people under the banner of Marxism-Leninism (ML). In other words, the promise of a communist society seems conditional. A slight element of ambiguity remains in the promise. The programme does not state unambiguously, that "the Party will lead the Soviet people to a communist society." It seems to say, "if the Party retains the leadership of the Soviet people, and that too under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, then it will lead them to a communist future." This seems like a watering-down of the Party's allegiance to a communist future, considering that Gorbachev seems to have hinted at a re-interpretation of Lenin, and that the main emphasis throughout the Programme had been on "peace" - a measure aimed at reducing military expenditure. Of course, it would have been too much to conclude this with certainty at the time when the Party Programme was adopted. However, with the blessing of hindsight, and the radical changes brought about today, such as, the emergence of new and legitimate political parties; the abrogation of the leading role of the party (Ar.6) from the Constitution,³³ conco-

33 Done in Feb.1990.

mitant with the silence following the question, what is socialism?, and the unabashed privatization of the economy, all this must have been presaged by a free and utilitarian interpretation. Further these changes wouldn't directly go against the Party Programmes, conditional promise. This is because of two reasons. One, after the abrogation of Ar.6 of the Constitution, and the decision taken to "separate the functions of party and government" at the 19th All-Union Party Conference in June 1988, the CPSU is no longer the sole leader of the Soviet people.³⁴ Two, nor are the Soviet people led solely under the banner of ML. Thus, unfettered by the traditional ideological ideological constraints, Gorbachev could go ahead and introduce any amount of radical changes required to meet the crisis. By doing this, he had the advantage of not having to take the direct responsibility for the erosion of the communist ideal, because his actions would be seen as a result of situation which demanded change in status quo. In this manner, the shift in emphasis on the allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future, would not threaten the legitimacy of the party. If his reforms succeeded, then it may even enhance the legitimacy of the party.

34 The Economist 10 Feb.1990, p.48. Gorvin, n.5.p.28.

This prime motivation in all this being the practical need to tackle all the problems, his next strategy would obviously be to make this process of change irreversible. Gorbachev emerges from all this, above all, as a pragmatist, rendering the labels of "capitalist" or "socialist" irrelevant. It is to this aspect that we shall now turn our attention.

Rasheeduddin Khan points out that:

Refuting the tendentious twist given to Perestroika by certain Western commentators that it amounts to restoration of capitalism and capitalist market-focus, Gorbachev underlined that Perestroika is not a revival of private enterprise, but the use of methods for building a skilful pattern of socialism. He said that the problem of emulation and competition is central for activating motive forces of socialism...In short there is need to renovate the notion about economic forms of society producing from the requirements of Soviet society's development at the first stage, so as to execute a thorough economic overhaul.³⁵

This is an excellent sum up of all the arguments that urge Gorbachev to take a pragmatic approach to problems, shedding his ideological shackles.

In order to make his reforms irreversible he first had to discredit the conservatives. The ideal way was to expose

35 Rasheeduddin Khan "Perestroika: An Overview", World Focus (New Delhi), 9th annual no., nos.106-8, Oct.-Dec.1988, p.5. Embpasis added.

the gap between theory and practice, between the party and reality. Dev Murarka highlights this:

His first move... was a visit to Krasnoyarsk. Generally, that visit has been interpreted as the one which shook up Gorbachev because of the frankness with which people spoke to him about the hardship of their day-to-day existence. This is a facile explanation. Gorbachev was well aware of the prevailing conditions there. His object in bringing this to the attention of the nation was to demonstrate the underlying discontent with the conduct of the Party and the Government, and to show them that there was no alternative to deep-going reforms.³⁶

In a speech to a Writer's Conference, in June 1986, Gorbachev reiterated the gravity and urgency of this need for change when he posed the question: "If not us, who? And if not now, when?"³⁷

So, what did Gorbachev do to set the Soviet Union right? His answer came in the triumvirate of perestroika (or restructuring), glasnost (or openness), and democratisation. These three were supposed to simultaneously tackle the problems in the economy, society and poli y

36 The visit was in Aug-Sept.1988. Dev Murarka, "Struggle Against Stalinist Legacy",n.35,p.7.

37 Quoted in Ian Gorvin, "Perestroika; If not us Who? If not now, when?",n.5,p.33.

respectively. Perestroika was the general name for this entire process. This was because, success of the necessary economic reforms called for mass political participation. This called for democratization. Mass political participation would be effective only if there was free discourse and competition of ideas. This meant glasnost. The elaborate details for all three came slowly in stages. The major milestones in the pursuance of Perestroika have been, the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in early 1986, the 19th All-Union Party Conference in June 1988, the amendment of the 1977 Brezhnev Constitution in Dec.1988, direct elections in March 1989, the formation of the Congress of Peoples Deputies in May 1989, the abolishment of Ar.6 of the Constitution in February 1990, national referendum on keeping the USSR federally intact, and the first directly elected executive Presidents of various Republics in 1991.³⁸

The major milestones purely on the economic front have been, the Law on State Enterprises in 1987, the Law on Co-operatives in 1988, the New Economic Mechanism in 1987, the decree on leasehold arrangements in 1989, the Shatalin Plan, a new-property law including shareholding property, a new land law envisaging perpetual hereditary leases and

38 Compiled from Gorvin, n.5, pp.23-40; The Economist 16 Sept.1990, pp.53-4; Rasheeduddin Khan, n.35; Devendra Kaushik, "Political Reforms; a Balance Sheet", n.35.

the law on republican and regional autonomy.³⁹

It is very difficult to record the specific milestones in glasnost. However, some of the important ones definitely include the Chernobyl disaster coverage in 1986, the Armenian earthquake catastrophe coverage in 1988, the announcement of rehabilitation at the speech given on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, the release of virtually all dissidents by 1986, the review designed to "humanize" the penal code, in 1987, the legal remedies to stop misuse of psychiatric treatment, the national referendum, and the growth of many new political parties.⁴⁰

A DISCERNIBLE PATTERN

We need not detain ourselves with any analysis of these specific measures and the problems faced in implementing them. For our purposes it is sufficient to know the ills-inherent in each sphere and the steps proposed to redress them. We also need to know whether the constraints of change, as developed in our tentative pattern, persists or not. Having done all this we are now in a position to abstract a pattern from all these changes. Here, one must reiterate again that this is an "inquiry" and so the pattern must remain tentative, as Perestroika is still an on-going process.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

Barrington Moore Jr. had long ago identified three factors that would play a crucial role in determining the future course of Soviet development. According to him, this will be determined by the interplay between: "power" (the need of the political elite to retain control), "tradition" (security of official tenure and privilege) and "rationality" (the need of the system to adapt to technical change).⁴¹ Viewed in this context, one finds that "rationality" dominates the other two variables today. Gorbachev has been accused of making several immediately contradictory statements in quick succession that defy rationality.⁴² However, this is understandable as on the one hand, Gorbachev has proved himself to be a master tactician, and on the other, his contradictory statements in no way detract from the significance of his reforms.

We have been interested specifically in the inverse relation between politics and economics in the Soviet Union. We had so far discerned that, when the regime tried its hand at economic reform, it made a mess of the political health of the state, and vice-versa. Gorbachev has now done the unprecedented, Khrushchev's limited

41 See Barrington Moore Jr., Terror and Progress: USSR (Mass., 1970)

42 The Economist n.34, p.10 and p.54.

efforts notwithstanding. He has tried to simultaneously reform the two. He hopes to keep a balance between Perestroika and Glasnost by using democratisation effectively. The question is, will he be successful on any front with this approach? Only time will tell. But if our pattern is anything to go by, then much will depend on the balance-sheet on the corrective and corruptive role of change. This will in turn influence the process of change through either an advance or a retreat.

The first five years saw nearly an unmitigated advance in terms of official initiatives. There were, therefore, bound to be retreats. The recent crackdown on Lithuanian protesters by the military, is one such example. Another, and perhaps a more ominous one, is the warning that Shevardnadze gave upon his resignation. He feared a dictatorship overtaking Soviet Union. Now with Gorbachev enjoying tremendous power as an executive President, he is very much in a position to misuse it if he so pleases. Thus, signs are there of at least a temporary cave-in to conservative demands. The people themselves prefer a strong man at the centre to hold the Soviet Union together. "This built-in contradiction could be its 'Achilles' heel." ⁴³

Robert V. Daniels feels that ever since Khrushchev's ouster, the ultimate supremacy of a bureaucratic group got

43 Sir Bryan Cartledge, "The Political Future in Wright., ed., n.5, p.68

established.⁴⁴ Since 1964 then, a sort of balance between power and consensus - seeking, set into the leadership. Daniels calls it "participatory bureaucracy". This system of inducting members and distributing power to lower levels "bears analogy with the bureaucratic politics that go on in every heirarchically organized entity in modern society"⁴⁵

Bureaucratic self-interest notwithstanding, much of the way for reform has been paved by recurrent resort to ideological factors. For instance, though the Revised Party Programme and the amended Constitution of 1977 are archaic, it was still necessary for Gorbachev to go through those stages before reaching the limits of one-party rule. Through all the changes, one can see that pluralism in the Soviet society has been steadily increasing, almost to alarming proportions. The point however is that both ideology and a growing pluralism which were used by Gorbachev to enhance his reform policies, are now turning around to bite him.

In an expressive interview to the Newsweek, Stanislav Shatalin said, that "They'd [the left would] hang his [Gorbachev's] portrait in an honourable place - whereas the right would just hang him period"⁴⁶ And this coming

44 Robert V. Daniels, Is Russia Reformable? Change and Assistance from Stalin to Gorbachev (Boulder, 1988), pp.93-96.

45 Ibid, pp.95-96.

46 Newsweek (New York), 1 April 1991

from a man who had been the architect of the 1990s crash programme to install a private market economy in 500 days. The remark clearly shows the ideological no-man's land that Gorbachev has reached. His own nominee for Vice-President, Gennady Yanayev, lost in the first round of elections - a sign of Gorbachev losing his standing in the party.⁴⁷ Both the conservatives and radicals rally behind Gorbachev for different reasons. Conservatives don't have a substitute to replace Gorbachev, while radicals are worried about the fate of Perestroika if Gorbachev is not at the helm of affairs.⁴⁸

The next stage according to our tentative pattern should now be a compromise, such that the dialectic of change can continue. The current phase of Perestroika has seen serious attempts made at bridging the gap between theory and practice. This time the leadership is not only aware of its problems and their solutions, but is also discussing them in the open and implementing them.

Considering that the Soviet Union might drop the name socialist from the USSR and replace it with sovereign, and considering that the very shape of the Soviet Union might change in a pluralistic environment, the very

47 Rupert Cornwell in Hindustan Times, 30 Dec.1990, p.15.

48 Hindustan Times, 12 Dec.1990, p.18.

foundation of our pattern may have to be applied at two levels, One, upto the break up of the Soviet Union (if it happens), in which case the pattern would give an alternative history, Or two, for the period after the break up, in which case the pattern would again become the basis to begin a new history. "... (74) years after the revolution the Soviet public still has only one freely available commodity to rely upon - hope."⁴⁹ And hope springs eternal in the human breast. Let us hope the best for the future of the USSR.

49 Zhores Medvedev, Gorbachev (Oxford, 1986), p.224.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER V

CONSLUSION

To undertake an inquiry into the pattern of changes in the Soviet system, since the Brezhnev years, upto the present has indeed turned out to be problematical. So many changes have taken place in the interim that, to try and systematize them can prove complicated. This is especially true when one sees the fast and furious pace of change today. Yet, the changes upto the moment have come about gradually, accelerating in nature and scope as time passes. The most striking feature of these changes upto the moment of writing has been the fact, that all of them constituting perestroika, have been brought about institutionally, using the institutional access to reform.

We will now briefly sum up our position chapter-wise.

In chapter one we tried to evolve a framework with which to identify and understand a pattern. The theoretical base for this was first enumerated. Equipping ourselves with this framework, we launched into the Brezhnev era.

In chapter two, on the Brezhnev era, we found that Brezhnev had operated within very powerful ideological constraints which limited the scope of Kosygin's reforms, and later, his own efforts in 1973 etc. He was also faced with the task of modernization of the Soviet Union. However, the reaction to Khrushchevian adventurism was a desire for status quo. Thus, the gap between theory and practice

become enormous. In the meanwhile the changes undergone in the era put Soviet economy and polity in a strait-jacket. The first signs then arose of an exacerbation of the universal relation between Soviet economy and polity.

In chapter three, we first analysed the Brezhnevian legacy inherited by Andropov and Chernenko. We felt that the economy was given preferential attention. There had also seemed to be a close relation between the dialectics of technological development and the politics of the Soviet Union. The ideological strait-jacket remained in this era. The difference was that none of the leaders survived long enough for reforms, or the urge for it, to take decisive effect. It was thus the continuation of the Brezhnev era with the difference that it was virtually without a leader, and that complicated matters. The advance and retreat aspect of Soviet change became evident. Andropov marked the advance while Chernenko quickly beat a retreat. The time had become, with a venerable gerontocracy ruling in the Politburo, ripe for fresh young blood to take over.

And it did. We then analysed in the fourth chapter the entire legacy, now compounded, left for Gorbachev. Through this we projected the steps required to be taken, and the problems that they were likely to face. We then examined the radical changes in the light of our traditional ideological constraints. We discerned a shift in emphasis on the allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future.

This was the most important and significant change in the the pattern so far. Ideological and traditional institutional symbols were used to pave the way for urgent reforms. This era began as an era of pragmatism. Having successfully utilised pragmatism in the traditional mould, the next step came in proceeding to make these reforms irreversible. Thus, the system kept changing rapidly, as the triumvirate of perestroika, glasnost and democratisation, were unleashed.

The process was on for the first time to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to unshackle ideological fetters and balance the relation between Soviet polity and economy. The pattern so far also showed that, the initial phases of advance were followed by a brief period of retreat to conservatism. A compromise, therefore, is in the offing. The result has also been palpable on the corruptive role of change. The corrective measure has also lead to a largely corruptive polity, to the point where the very form of the Soviet Union is under threat.

Thus, in each chapter, we have concentrated on one era of leadership. Within each era we have identified the operation of systemic constraints on the need for reform. This we have done by checking each leadership's allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future. Next, we have identified the specific changes that took place in each era. This would now obviously throw up the gap between theory and practice in each era. We have then examined the nature

and scope of this gap. By comparing this with succeeding eras, we have attempted discovering a pattern of change.

Yet, these reforms have completely changed the complexion of the Soviet Union including the Soviet system. It is perhaps, one of the first examples of a system overhauling itself almost beyond a point of recognition. Most Western scholars have missed this point, treating these changes as merely changes of the system. And this overthrowing of the Stalinist form of communist rule highlights an important aspect of the Soviet system. This system is capable of mobilizing its motive forces to bring about dramatic changes within itself. There is undoubtedly a self-regulating mechanism that the system offers, inspite of its classic limitations dictated by the allegiance to Lenin, Leninism and a communist future. The prime implication of our analysis therefore is that, there is an urgent need to reappraise the Soviet system. There is a need to resolve the contradiction between the changed system and its original form.

Our study has been based on an assumption of a positive and close relationship between theory and political practice. The reason that a relationship between these two factors have been identified for our study, stems from the general understanding that Marxist theory may be realised in practice. However, the appropriate moment for such a realisation of theory has never been specified. It is thought to lie in

the distant future. Within the Soviet Union, however, such a moment started since November 1917.

The leadership had a sound theoretical base to constantly re-examine its theory and practice. "Alongside an emphasis on social and political practice as some sort of 'mechanism of verification' we will also find that the question of the theory - practice relationship within Marxism has remained both ambiguous and problematical, although a tendency to accord priority to the political dimension, to political practice, has remained a consistent feature of Marxist discourse."¹ It is this "mechanism of verification" that has prompted us to see if there is a gap between theory and practice. And it is against this that we sought to explain the recurrence of such a gap between theory and practice. In other words, Marxist discourse had provided for a recurrence of such a gap; we merely sought to identify it and relate it to the course of changes taking place in the Soviet Union, since the Brezhnev years.

The second assumption of our study is that we have not established a functional dichotomy between socialism and modernity. On the contrary we assume that the very meanings of socialism and modernity are entwined closely in Leninism. Several studies interpret the evolution of the Soviet system in terms of the tension between the conflicting

1 Barry Smart, Foucault, Marxism and Critique (London, 1983), p. 5.

imperatives of utopia and development, and trace the gradual erosion of initial commitments to a classless, egalitarian and democratic society in the face of pressures for systematic adaptation to the functional requisites of modernization. "While this perspective points to suggestive issues in the development of Communist system, in important respects it obscures more than it clarifies", as it ignores the Leninist understanding of modernization.² Perhaps, the crucial problems in the development of the Soviet system involve less the conflict between socialism and modernity than conflicting elements in the definition of both.³

The situation is still desperate, as perestroika has not produced a single economic result. Yevgeni Yevtushenko, a famous poet said:

"One could describe glasnost metaphorically as the air above and the national economy as the earth below. It is easier and faster to refresh the air than it is to turn and fertilize the earth, yet purified air is necessary before healthy change can be made in the earth. So it is too early for us to speak of economic triumphs, and unlike the old days, nobody is making any messianic promises. We must wait for the earth to absorb the air, and be enriched."⁴

This is an excellent analogy of the entire problem.

2 Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Socialism and Modernity: Education, Industrialization, and Social Change in the USSR", in Paul Cocks and others, eds., The Dynamics of Soviet Politics (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 195.

3 Ibid, p. 195.

4 Quoted in Time, 9 Feb. 1987, p. 7.

The important point, however, is that an enquiry into the pattern of changes is necessary at this point, for it can't wait for an indefinite period. The fascinating changes in the system scream for attention. It is a fact that, within four years of touting rhetoric at the 1986 Congress, the USSR today is at a very crucial crossroad that questions its very identity.

Secondly, - and more portentous in the long-term is - who or what will now carry on the process of change? Earlier, the party had an instrumental function in the process of change. Now, with the loss of its political monopoly, the writ of the party no longer runs. Further, the party is splitting up and other new parties are forming every day. Therefore, the instrumental function of the party, has now become obsolete. Perhaps, the onus is now expected to fall on the newly created democratic institutions, such as the Congress of People's Deputies and the refurbished legal system. But that is easier said than done. For instance the 15 Union Republics can't seem to solve the problem of their federal union, as they don't seem to agree on anything. Perhaps, the onus will rest on the new, directly elected executive Presidents and Gorbachev. Again, there are too many differences between them for one to be sanguine. In addition to all this there is Western pressure to carry on the momentum of change. They are thus urging the transformation of the traditional framework of change. For the

Western powers this transformation simply means change. However, for the Soviet Union, this is adding confusion to the process of change.

One can only hope that our study would contribute towards some understanding of the larger trend amid all this chaos of change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Documents, speeches and writings.

Brezhnev, Leonid I., Following Lenin's Course :Speeches & Articles(Moscow: Progress Pub., 1972)

- - - - - , Pages From His Life (Oxford ; Pergamon Press, 1982)

- - - - - , Socialism, Democracy and Human Rights (Oxford : Pergamon press, 1980)

- - - - - , Our Course: Peace and Socialism (Moscow: Novosti, 1982)

- - - - - , Socialism, Peace, the Freedom and Independence of the Peoples (New Delhi : Allied Pub., 1982)

- - - - - , Life and Work Dedicated to a Great Cause (New Delhi :Peoples' Pub.House, 1973)

Collection of Brezhnev's speeches.

- - - - - , How It Was (Oxford: Pergamon Press,1979)

Chernenko, Konstantin, Selected Speeches and Writings Y. S. Shirkov, trans.,(Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1984) reprint, first edn. 1982.

Gorbachev, M. S., Peace Has No Alternative :Speeches,Articles, Interviews (New Delhi: Patriot Pub., 1986)

- - - - - Time for Peace (New York: Richardson & Steirman, 1985)

- - - - - , Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country & the World (London: Collins, 1987)

- - - - - , Toward a Better World (London: Hutchinson,1987)

- Gorbachev, Mikhail S., Speeches and Writings (Oxford: Pergamon Press), vol. 1 (1986), vol. 2 (1987)
- - - - - , "Restore Lenin's Image of Socialism", Mainstream 26(32), May 21, 1988, pp. 29-34.
- - - - - , "Revolution and Perestroika", Foreign Affairs 66(2), Winter 1987/1988, pp. 410-25.
- - - - - , "Practical Work to Implement the 19th All Union Party Conference", Socialism: Theory and Practice (11) (184), Nov. 1988, pp. 4-15.
- - - - - , "Role of Party Within Perestroika Process", Party Life 25(5), May 1989, pp. 25-30.
- - - - - , "Political Report to the 27th Congress", Current Digest of the Soviet Press 38(8), 26 Mar. 1986, pp. 1-40.
- Krushchev, N.S., On the Communist Programme: Report on the Programme of the CPSU to the 22nd Congress of the Party, 18 Oct. 1961 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub., House, n.d.)
- Lenin, V.I., The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1966)
- - - - - , Collected Works (Moscow: Progress Pub.,) vol.27 (1965), vol.33 (1966), vol.36 (1966)
- Marx, Karl & Engels, F., Manifesto of the Communist Party (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1975)
- Shevardnadze, Eduard, "Our Goal is to Guarantee Human Rights", Reprints from the Soviet Press (Moscow) 49(3), 15 Aug. 1989, pp. 23-33.
- Yakovlev, A.N., "Moral Aspect of the Restructuring", Reprints from the Soviet Press (Moscow) 45(6), Sep. 1987, pp. 5-18.

Topornin, Boris, The New Constitution of the USSR
(Moscow: Progress Pub., 1987), Revsd. edn.
contains 1977 Constitution of the USSR.

CPSU Documents & Resolutions.

27th Congress, (New Delhi: Allied Pub., 1986)

Party Programmes, First (1903), Second (1919), Third (1961),
Third revsd. (1986), in Zafar Imam, ed.,
Restructuring Soviet Society (New Delhi:
Panchsheel Pub., 1987)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books.

Aganbegyan, Abel, The Challenge: Economics of Perestroika
(London: Hutchinson Education, 1988)

Amalrik, Andrei, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?
(London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1970)

Aron, Raymond, Main Currents in Sociological Thought
(Middlesex: Penguin Press, 1967)

Bialer, Seweryn, Stalin's Successors: Leadership, Stability,
and Change in the Soviet Union (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1980)

- - - - - , ed., Politics, Society and Nationality
Inside Gorbachev's Russia (Boulder: Westview
Press, 1989)

Bialer & Gustafson, ed., Russia at the Crossroads: The
26th Congress of the CPSU (London: George
Allen & Unwin, 1982)

Bronstein, M., ed., Comparative Economic Systems: Models
and Cases (Illinois; Irwin, 1965)

- Breslauer, G.W., Khrushchev & Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982)
- Brown, A, & Kaser, M., ed., Soviet Policy for the 1980s (London: Macmillan, 1982)
- - - - - , The Soviet Union Since the Fall of Khrushchev (London: Macmillan, 1978), 2nd.edn.,
- Brus, W.& Laski, K., From Marx to the Market: Socialism in Search of an Economic System (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
- Byrnes, R.F., ed., After Brezhnev: Sources of Soviet Conduct in the 1980s (London: Francis Pinter, 1983)
- Carr. E.H., A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, (London: Macmillan, 1952)
- - - - - , What is History? (Cambridge: Penguin, 1961)
- Carter, R.E., ed., Reconsiderations on the Russian Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica, 1976)
- Chotiner, B.A., Khrushchev's Party Reform: Coalition Building & Institutional Innovation (London: Greenwood Press, 1984)
- Crouch, Martin, Revolution & Evolution: Gorbachev & Soviet Politics (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India, 1990)
- Crowley, J.F. & Vaillancourt, D., Lenin to Gorbachev: Three Generations of Soviet Communists (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1989)

- Daniels, R.V., Is Russia Reformable? Change and Resistance from Stalin to Gorbachev (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988)
- Djilas, Milovan, The New Class (New York: Praeger, 1957)
- Dornberg, J., Brezhnev: The Masks of Power (Delhi, Vikas Pub. House, 1974)
- Duverger, Maurice, The Idea of Politics: The Uses of Power in Society, North & Murphy trans., (London: Croom Helm, 1987)
- Frankland, Mark, Sixth Continent: Russia and the Making of Mikhail Gorbachev (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987)
- Friedberg, M. & Isham, H., eds., Soviet Society Under Gorbachev: Current Trends & the Prospects for Reforms (New York: ME Sharpe, 1987)
- Fromm, Erich, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart, 1941)
- Gerner, & Hedlund, Ideology and Rationality in the Soviet Model: A Legacy for Gorbachev (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Guha, Pradyot, Russia's Second Revolution: An Inquiry into the Roots of Perestroika (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1990)
- Gustafson, Thane, Reform in Soviet Politics: Lessons of Recent Policies on Land & Water (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981)
- Hazan, B.A., From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Infighting in the Kremlin (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987)

- Hazard, J.N., Managing Change in the USSR: The Politico-legal Role of the Soviet Jurist (Cambridge Univ.: Goodhart Lectures, 1982)
- Hill, R.J., Soviet Union: Politics, Economy & Society from Lenin to Gorbachev (London: Francis Pinter, 1985)
- - - - -, & Dellenbrant, U.A., ed., Gorbachev and Perestroika: Towards a New Socialism? (Hants, U.K: Edward Elgar Pub., 1989)
- Hough, Jerry, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1980)
- Imam, Zafar, ed., Restructuring Soviet Society (New Delhi: Panchsheel Pub., 1987)
- - - - -, Ideology and Reality in Soviet Policy on Asia (New Delhi: Loiall Pub., n.d.)
- Kagarlitsky, Boris, The Dialectic of Change, trans. Rick Simon (London; Verso, 1990)
- Katz, Abraham, The Politics of Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union (New York: Praeger Pub. 1972)
- Kaushik, D., Soviet Political System: Perceptions and Perspectives (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1983)
- Kelley, D.R. ed., Soviet Politics in the Brezhnev Era (New York: Praeger Pub., 1980)
- Mandel, Ernest, Beyond Perestroika: The Future of Gorbachev's USSR, trans. Gus Fagan (London: Verso, 1989)
- McCauley, Martin, ed., The Soviet Union After Brezhnev (New York: Holmes & Meier Pub., 1983)
- Medvedev, Z., Andropov: His Life & Death (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984) revsd. pbk. edn.

- McCauley, Martin, Soviet Union, Since 1917 (London: Longman, 1981)
- Medvedev, Zhores, Gorbachev (New York: W.W.Norton, 1986)
- Miller, R.F. etc., ed., Gorbachev at the Helm: A New Era in Soviet Politics? (London: Groom Helm, 1987)
- Nove, Alec, An Economic History of the USSR (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969)
- Parrott, Bruce, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983)
- Potichnyj, Peter J., ed., Soviet Union: Party & Society (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988)
- Shlapentokh, V., Soviet Ideologies in the Period of Glasnost: Responses to Brezhnev's Stagnation (New York: Praeger Pub., 1988)
- Simis, Konstantin, The Corrupt Society: The Secret World of Soviet Capitalism, trans. J.Edwards & M.Schneider (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982)
- Smith, Gordon B., Soviet Politics: Continuity and Contradictions (Houndmills: Macmillan Education, 1988)
- Steele, J.&Abraham,E., Andropov in Power: From Komsomol to Kremlin (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983)
- Tumarkin, Nina, Lenin Lives: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983)
- Urban, G.R., ed., Can the Soviet System Survive Reform? 7 Colloquies about the State of Soviet Socialism 70 years after the Bolshevik Revolution (London: Pinter, 1989)

- Veen, Hans-Joachim, ed., From Brezhnev to Gorbachev: Domestic Affairs and Soviet Foreign Policy (Leamington Spa: Berg Pub., 1987)
- Walker, Martin, The Waking Giant (London: Michael Joseph, 1986)
- Wright, Martin, ed., Soviet Union: The Challenge of Change (Essex: Longman, 1989)
- Zaleski, Eugene, Planning for Economic Growth, 1918-32 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1962)
- Zaradov, K., Leninism and Contemporary Problems of the Transition from Capitalism to Socialism (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1972)
- Articles.
- Amann, R., "Searching for an Appropriate Concept of Soviet Politics: The Politics of Hesitant Modernization", British Journal of Political Science (Cambridge), 16(4), Oct. 1986, pp. 475-94.
- - - - -, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Interplay of Economic & Political Change in the Soviet Union", World Today (London), vol. 43, no.8-9, Aug.-Sep. 1987, pp. 132-37
- Ambartsumov, Y., "On Reforming the Socialist Political System", Socialism: Theory & Practice (Moscow) (2) (187), Feb. 1989, pp. 26-35.
- Arbatov, G., "New Political Thinking in the USSR: Notions & Reality", Review of International Affairs (Belgrade), 39(925), Oct. 20, 1988, pp. 8-10.

- Bechtoldt, H., "Gorbachev: Initiatives or Reactions",
Aussen Politik, (Hamburg), 38(4), 1987 pp.319-30.
- Beissinger, Mark R., "Political Reform & Soviet Society",
Current History, (Philadelphia), 87(531), Oct.1988,
pp. 317-20, 45.
- Byrnes, Robert F., "Change in the Soviet Political System:
Limits and Likelihoods", Review of Politics,
(Notre Dame, Indiana), 46(4), Oct. 1984,
pp. 502-515.
- Cohen, S.F., "The Friends and Foes of Change: Reformism &
Conservatism in the Soviet Union", Slavic
Review (Mass.), June 1979.
- Croan, Melvin, "Five Years After Khrushchev", Survey
(London), no. 72, Summer 1969, pp. 42-3.
- Crook, Clive, "Perestroika", The Economist (London),
28 April, 1990.
- Draper, Theodore, "Soviet Reformers, from Lenin to Gorbachev",
Dissent (New York), 34(3) (144), Summer 1987
pp. 287-301.
- Harasymiev, Bohdan, "CPSU in Transition from Brezhnev to
Gorbachev", Canadian Journal of Political
Science, (Ottawa), 21(2), June 1988, pp. 249-66.
- Hough, J., "The Brezhev Era: The Man and the System",
Problems of Communism, (Washington, D.C.),
Mar - Apr, 1976.
- Hill, R.J., "USSR, Social Change & Party Adaptability",
Comparative Politics, (New York), 17(4),
July 1985, pp. 453-71.

- Imam, Z., "Current Theory of the Soviet State", International Studies, (New Delhi), 23(3), July - Sep. 1986, pp.225-38.
- Ignatenko, V., "Reform of the Political System in the USSR, Principle Message of the 19th Conference of the Soviet Communist Party", Review of International Affairs, (Belgrade), 39(920-21), Aug.5-20, 1988, pp. 9-12
- Kabir, Mohd.H., "Gorbachev & Perestroika in USSR, Adjustment of the System or Systemic Change?", Bliss Journal (Dhaka), 8(3), July, 1987, pp. 261-89.
- Kagarlitsky, B., "The Dialectic of Reform", New Left Review, (London), No. 169, 1988.
- Khan, Rasheeduddin, "Perestroika: An Overview", World Focus, (New Delhi), 9th Annual No., nos.106-8, Oct - Dec. 1988, pp. 3-6, p.23.
- Kudryatsev, V., "Thrust of Political Reform in the USSR", World Marxist Review(Toronto), 31(9), Sep. 1988, pp.57-65.
- Laird, R.D. & Laird, B. A., "Glasnost, Perestroika and Gorbachev's Policies: The Built-in Contradictions of Soviet Socialism", Studies in Comparative Communism(Los Angeles), vol.23, no.2, pp.115-24.
- Lane, Christel, "Legitimacy and Power in the Soviet Union Through Socialist Ritual", British Journal of Political Science & Politics(Cambridge), 14(2), April 1984, pp.207-17.
- Mann, D.& Gustafson T., "Andropov's First Year", Problems of Communism (Washington, D. C.), May - June 1986, pp. 1-18.

- Meissner, Boris, "Brezhnev's Legacy in Soviet Politics",
Aussen Politik(Hamburg), 34(2), 1983, pp.107-22.
- , "Gorbachev's Perestroika : Reform or Revolution?"
Aussen Politik(Hamburg), 38(3), 1987, pp.211-30.
- Nove, Alec, "The Problems of Perestroika", Dissent(New York),
Fall 1989, pp.462-74.
- - - - -, "Market Socialism and Free Economy", Dissent
(New York), Fall 1990, pp. 443-6.
- Odom, W. E., "The Future of the Soviet Political System",
PS:Political Science & Politics(New Jersey),
22(2), June 1989, pp.193-8.
- - - - -, "How Far Can Soviet reform Go ?",
Problems of Communism(Washington,D.C.), 36(6),
Nov. - Dec. 1987, pp.18-33.
- One Year of Andropov, "More Continuity Than Change",
World Focus(New Delhi), 4(10), Oct. 1983, pp.3-38.
- Murarka, Dev, "Struggle Against Stalinist Legacy", World
Focus(New Delhi), 9th Annual no., nos.106-8,
Oct.-Dec. 1988, pp.7-11.
- Rigby, T. H., "Political Patronage in the USSR From Lenin
to Brezhnev", Politics(Bedford Park, Australia),
18(1), May 1983, pp.84-9.
- Rakowska - Harmstone, "Towards a Theory of Soviet Leadership
Maintenance",in Paul Cocks et. al., eds., The
Dynamics of Soviet Politics(Cambridge:Harvard
Univ. Press,1976),pp.51ff.
- Schapiro, Leonard, "The Collective Lack of Leadership",
Survey(London),no. 70/71, Winter/Spring 1969,
pp.193 - 200.

- Silver, B. D. & Bahry, Donna, "Public Perceptions and the Dilemmas of Party Reforms in the USSR", Comparative Political Studies (California), vol.23, no.2, July 1990, pp.171-209.
- Starr, F. S., "Soviet Union a Civil Society", Foreign Policy no.70, Spring 1988, pp.26-41.
- Tismaneanu, V., "Neo-Stalinism and Reform Communism", Orbis (Pennsylvania), 30(2), Summer 1986, pp.259-80.
- Tyler, A., Jennisch, L. A., & Grey, R., "Soviet Public Opinion and the Gorbachev Reforms", Slavic Review (Mass.), vol.49, no.2, Summer 1990, pp.260-71.
- Ulam, Adam B., "The Historical Role of Marxism and the Soviet System", World Politics (New Delhi), vol.8, Oct. 1955.

Magazines and Newspapers.

Economist (London)
Hindustan Times (New Delhi)
Newsweek (New York)
Time (New York)

Journals and Periodicals.

Aussen Politik (Hamburg)
Bliss Journal (Dhaka)
British Journal of Political Science (Cambridge)
Comparative Politics (New York)
Comparative Political Studies (California)
current History (Philadelphia)
Dissent (New York)
Foreign Policy

New Left Review (London)
International Studies (New Delhi)
Orbis (Pennsylvania)
PS: Political Science & Politics (New Jersey)
Politics (Bedford Park, Australia)
Problems of Communism (Washington, D.C.)
Review of International Affairs (Belgrade)
Review of Politics (Notre Dame, Indiana)
Slavic Review (Mass.)
Socialism: Theory & Practice (Moscow)
Studies in Comparative Communism (Los Angeles)
Survey (London)
World Focus (New Delhi)
World Marxist Review (Toronto)
World Politics (New Delhi)
World Today (London)



1607