

# **SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN RUSSIA DURING PERESTROIKA**

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Dated .....

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, **Socio-Cultural Changes in Russia During Perestroika**, submitted by **Samarendra Narayan Jena** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University has not been previously submitted for any degree of this University or any other University. To the best of our knowledge, this is an original work.

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

  
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*Dedicated*  
*to*  
*my*  
*Baba*  
*and*  
*Maa*

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# Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

Every innovation, whether it be a new mechanical device, a new form of human relationship, and addition to the stock of knowledge, or a theory is at once a utilisation of established cultural elements and change of some aspect of the social status quo. It may be relevant, therefore, to analyse the processes and conditions of social change before an examination of ideas, old and new, concerning desirability of social change, the ways it comes about, and its consequences to the welfare of mankind.

Through many of recorded social history of men have apparently considered that change *per se* is undesirable and that the ideal social condition is stability, no society, however, is static and change is always a universal phenomenon, throughout the history (Richard T. Lapiere, *Social Change*, New York, 1965). Dynamic and static are the two features of a social system, which develop from the process of establishing a balance between these two. Social dynamics mainly relates to social change, while social statics features are related to social continuity and stability.

Social institutions and organisations change with the changes in human needs. The system of production and technology changes according to the economic needs of man. As a result the mutual relationship between man and machine also changes. Culture, working procedure, value system and organisation also change with the changes in population, generation needs and relation between man and machine. Thus social change is an inevitable process



and a social reality. It has been held that social change means an important and long-term change either in social structure or cultural characteristics or in both. Change mainly influences the three aspects of society such as; change in the behaviour of group, change in social structure and change in the cultural characteristics. Any process of social change brings change in all these three aspects. Hence, both social and cultural changes are closely related and interlinked with each other and can not be separated.

The nineteenth century thinkers analysed social change in a number of ways. August Comte laid stress on ideational and intellectual factors in analysing social change (M. Francis Abraham, *Modern Sociological Theory: An Introduction*, Delhi-1993). According to Marx economic factors are at the root of social change. Spencer has tried to explain the process of social change through social evolution. Durkheim believes that social change is a consequence of the division of labour (Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, New York, 1947). However, this broad theoretical perspective can be divided into two broad currents. One is the evolutionary theory of social change and the other one is the historical interpretation of social change or it can be called as the revolutionary theory of social change. According to the evolutionists, society continuously advances further. Theories of evolution and progress are based on Darwin's theory of biological evolution from simpler organism to the more complicated organisms (Robert Bierstedt, *The Social Order* New York, 1974). Revolutionary theory is based on the principle of dialectical approach. Karl Marx tried to analyse and explain the

whole history as a struggle for a revolutionary reconstruction of society (T.B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Harmondsworth, 1963).

There are certain sources and conditions for change in any society. These sources and conditions may be found in the inner structure of society or these may be occasioned through external causes. Influences, sources and conditions may be divided into two parts: Internal or Endogamous causes and External or exogamous causes.

In every Social System there are certain factors that quicken change. The theory of inherent cause, according to Sorokin, is very important where the inner linkages and conflicts cause a change in a particular society (Pitirim, A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, New York, 1937). Following are some of the internal causes that play special part in bringing about change in society.

- Internal pressure, stress and conflict in society.
- Conflict between the ideals and realities of society.
- Change in individuals.
- Planning.
- Cultural base.
- Discovery and invention.
- Tendencies and values.
- Intellectual capacity.

A group, society or country also changes because of the influence of other groups, societies or nations which are called the exogenous factors. Exogenous cause includes social and cultural conditions. These external causes are like; urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, domination, trade, means of communication, social, religions, political movements of other societies and their influence, etc.

In this context, the emergence of USSR and its developments in the subsequent period, marked a special feature in the study of socio-cultural change. Soviet society was also no more an exception to the process of change. With the publication of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto in 1848, scientific socialism or modern communism came into existence and made a deep impact on subsequent history of the world. Unlike previous Fabian socialism it believed in revolution instead of evolution.

The Great October Revolution of 1917 established for the first time in history a state based on Marxist Socialism. According to Marx socialist revolution follows close on the heels of mature capitalism and its concomitant contradictions where as Lenin led a revolution in Russia when capitalism was still in its infancy. Since, Lenin did not live long after the October Revolution. The kind of socialist society that he had in mind could not take a concrete shape and it was left to his successor, Stalin.

Soviet socialism came to be associated with the concept of ownership by the state of the means of production and distribution and the rejection of the

free market economy and its replacement with a command economy regulated through physical controls. The glorious period of socialism as the ideal form of social organisation and the panacea for all the ills of society was between the 1920's and the 1930's. It was during those years when people believed that all progressive thought was socialistic. The Soviet Revolution and the apparent success in the setting up of socialism in that country gave a great incentive to those ideas, and people began to look towards the new society that was being created in that state as the ideal society. At that time socialism became an alternative to capitalism and many people of the world saw a ray of hope in it. The October Revolution, thus, brought a significant radical change in Soviet society with a major influence on the outside world.

✓The experience of socialism in Soviet Union, however, shows that the social structure and system was not just a product of a unique ideology. It changed according to the ideology of its leaders during different periods. Under the broad banner of socialism, there were lot of changes and the nature of changes were different. After many years of apparent stability the Soviet polity was in ferment. Long established traditions and assumptions were being challenged widely. There were calls for an unambiguous end to the monotonous regimentation of economic and political life which had for so long characterised the Soviet system. The Stalinist command economy, centralised political system and social engineering which had sat upon society for sixty years was no more welcomed by the reformers. The stagnation of Soviet

economy and bureaucratisation had a strong influence on the people and change became inevitable.

After the decades of efforts to set up an egalitarian society, the Soviet leaders in the 1980's decided it was time their people had liberty. Soviet society then engaged in a conscious attempt to turn into a technocratic state. The man behind this movement was Mikhail Gorbachev, who introduced his policy of "*Perestroika*" (Restructuring), "*Glasnost*" (openness) and "*Demokratizatsia*" (Democratisation). *Perestroika* became the vehicle of this transition and it was then regarded as the beginning of a second Russian Revolution. It was assumed that *Perestroika* will make Soviet society more democratic without undermining either Leninism or the Socialist System.

The beginning of the *Perestroika* was complimented, above all, by the introduction of *glasnost* which gradually evolved into genuine freedom of expression. The doors opened not only to the Western critical thought but also to all other ideas. Marxism, which became a target of active criticism, soon lost its former status as the 'one true' theory of society. The dethroning of Marxism in turn gave rise to a methodological crisis in the social sciences (Tatiana I. Zaslavskaja, "The Role of Sociology in Russia's Transformation", *Sociological Research*, Jan-Feb, 1997).

There is always a big question before us "Was Soviet Union emerging into a new era of economic affluence and social and political tolerance?" Can one call Gorbachev's *perestroika* was after all a logical and evolutionary

development or a product of his own ideas? It can be interpreted as an irresistible product of a genuinely new and farsighted leadership, which is determined to achieve an economic transformation domestically and an end to the Cold War between East and West. At the same time it was also a response to significant long-term needs for change in Soviet Society, which became much more articulate and demanding than ever before. But, taking another view, the problems that *perestroika* faced were daunting. The Russian tradition has been noted more for its drama and violence, for occasional revolutionary upheavals followed by long periods of repression, than it has for any qualities of long-term evolutionary development. Will Gorbachev Years prove to be an all too easily reversible phase, merely a brief throw that soon freezes over again?

The present study, “The Socio-Cultural Changes in Russia During *Perestroika*” is, thus, an important subject for discussion at this juncture. The transition period or the period of Gorbachev’s *perestroika* was very crucial and complex. The present crisis in independent Russia has its roots in the developments made during the transition. Therefore, the analysis of ‘Russia during *Perestroika*’ basically refers to the Soviet period under Gorbachev. The reforms made by Gorbachev had a significant impact on the socio-cultural aspect. The economic and political reforms of Gorbachev has a close link with the socio-cultural arena. Change in one sphere leads to the change in other part. In the whole process of transition, one can see a disequilibrium in the Soviet Society along with the basic cultural trait of the Soviet people.

This study consists of four chapters including the conclusion. The first chapter deals with the historical background. It analyses the society and culture of the USSR and discusses more about the nature of socialism in Soviet Russia, by taking into account various socio-cultural aspects.

The second chapter reflects on the concept of “*Perestroika*” and “*Glasnost*”. Here analysis is made on the issues relating to the causes and motives behind the introduction of “*Perestroika*”. Various policies and plans of Gorbachev have also been discussed. The economic, political and socio-cultural reforms, initiated by Gorbachev, are the central theme of this chapter.

The third chapter gives an insight into various changes in the socio-cultural sphere of the soviet society. All these changes occurred due to the restructuring policy of Gorbachev. Here, special emphasis is given to certain socio-cultural parameters, such as, class structure and stratification system; media and culture with special reference to art, cinema, theatre etc.; gender relation with more importance to the status of women; youth status and the youth subculture; the ethnic relations. However, this chapter is basically related to the changes brought into the soviet society during the *Perestroika* period. Both the positive and negative consequences of the “Perestroika” are also discussed.

The Last Chapter summarises the main findings of the study.

# Chapter I



## SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN RUSSIA BEFORE PERESTROIKA

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was an event of fundamental historical significance, not only because of the transformation brought about in the Soviet society, but also because it made ideology a major component of national and international policy. The historical significance of the emergence of USSR in 1917 can hardly be overestimated. The historic uniqueness of the phenomenon has many dimensions. Deutscher has indeed aptly argued that the Soviet history of the period had not only been “most crowded and cataclysmic”, but also it raised profound and fundamental issues and “unleashed forces far deeper than those that have been involved in the greatest upheavals of the past.”<sup>1</sup> It cleared the way for the emergence of a unique social organisation.

The Soviet Union was a country, which atleast ostensibly, was devoted to the achievement of a particular goal – the building of a communist society.<sup>2</sup> To achieve this goal, the Soviet rulers had employed different methods of gaining compliance of the population. “Ideology”, in Mannheim’s term is a “pattern of beliefs which justifies the social order and which explains to man his historical and social setting.”<sup>3</sup> The dominant political institution in the USSR was the Communist party of the Soviet Union, and its ideology was based on Marxism-Leninism. At the outset, even in Soviet political theory, it did not bring socialism but a transitional phase under ‘the dictatorship of proletariat’. After 1936, the country was proclaimed to be ‘socialist’.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The unfinished Revolution* (New York: Oxford Press, 1969) p.3.

<sup>2</sup> David Lane, *Politics and Society in the USSR* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948), p.239.

Socialism by definition means that no antagonistic social classes exist based on private property and that, therefore, human relationships are harmonious. This does not mean that there is complete harmony; there remain certain contradictions or opposing forces; but antagonistic contradictions which are based on class exploitation have been obliterated.<sup>4</sup> “Socialism” as Lenin pointed out, “would bring about a redistribution of the human population, thus putting an end both to rural backwardness, isolation and barbarism, and to unnatural concentration of vast masses of people in big cities.”<sup>5</sup>

Socialism is characterized by the absence of private property, and consequently, the mechanism of market and profit in the interest of private property does not play any role in the organisation of economic and social activities.<sup>6</sup> The state as the regulator of economic and social life and planning is the basic instrument for the conscious use of the economic Laws. The Soviet view of socialism gives the worker control over the means of production and does not make him alienated from his work. That is, the fruits of his labour are owned by him, not by entrepreneurs, and are controlled by him. Under socialism, wages are paid ‘according to one’s work’. In socialist society, no hostile ‘antagonistic’ social groupings are said to exist and harmony prevails between social strata.<sup>7</sup> However, the present discussion on Soviet socialist experience needs a deep analysis, by taking into account different variables

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<sup>4</sup> David Lane, *Politics and society in the USSR* op. cit., p.7.

<sup>5</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Collected works: Vol.1* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1929), p.453.

<sup>6</sup> Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia: Between Modernity and Tradition* (Delhi: Konark. Publishers, 1996), p.1.

<sup>7</sup> David Lane, *Politics and society in the USSR*, op. cit., p.7.

such as; class structure and stratification, notion of equality, media and culture, youth, women, ethnic relation, etc.

“Stalin defined classes in terms of their relations to the means of production, property relations.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, by 1936 it was held that there were only two basic classes in Soviet Society, the working class and the collective farm peasantry. These were two distinct classes because, while the workers were dependent on the sale of their labour power and did not as individuals own the means of production the collective farmers held their property collectively and still operated small individual plots from which they received a substantial proportion of their income. The working class was divided into two segments, manual workers and mental workers, according to the nature of their work. Those engaged in mental labour were known as “*Sluzhashchie*” (employees or white collar workers).<sup>9</sup> The better-qualified members of the employees were referred to as intelligentsia. The intelligentsia was not considered to be a class, as it had no special relations to the means of production.

Sociologists define the concept of class and distinguish between its distributive and relational aspect. Distributive aspects of class refer to the quantitative and qualitative attributes of various strata, that is the level of income, the standard of living, and the more intangible style of life of the rich and the poor. Relational aspects have to do with interpersonal or interclass

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<sup>8</sup> L.G. Churchward, *Soviet Socialism: Social and Political Essays*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

relations; essentially, the aspects of authority or power between class groups.<sup>10</sup> Soviet society was composed of unequal social groups in a distributional sense, but in relational sense there was no major antagonistic division between dominant and sub-ordinate classes.

The social stratification system in the traditional Soviet society was not so complex. Social strata including the classes of workers and collective farm peasant enjoyed mutually cordial relationship.<sup>11</sup> Collective farmers used to own the seeds, produce, and the equipment of the collective farm, but were deprived of selling the land because the land was nationalized. The life of the peasant was determined by the organization of the collective farm. Soviet workers belonged to a different political culture. That political culture had a revolutionary tradition and a proletarian basis. Soviet trade unions always played a significant role to integrate Soviet workers into industrial society. Soviet working class was wholly employed in state enterprises and it operated in an economy which had not been subjected to market conditions for over fifty years.<sup>12</sup>

The absence of market conditions and of long-term unemployment had produced less sectional bargaining by particular groups of Soviet workers and the Soviet working class remained less differentiated. Furthermore, Soviet factory managers were largely recruited from the ranks of the skilled workers and were not seen by the workers as belonging to a separate social class.

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<sup>10</sup> David Lane, *Soviet society under Perestroika* (London: Unwin, Hyman, 1990), p.124.

<sup>11</sup> A. Inkeles, and F.W. Grupp, *The Soviet Citizen* (Cambridge: Mass, Harvard University Press, 1959), p.59.

<sup>12</sup> L.G. Church ward, op. cit., p. 32.

According to L.G. Churchward, 'The Soviet working class had a greater unity between manual and non-manual; between managers and workers; between union and party; than is the case under capitalism.'<sup>13</sup>

There were various forms of social security being guaranteed by the state. In the case of sickness or accident the worker used to receive immediate benefit that would vary in amount according to the nature of work. Moreover, sickness in the family was covered by the same scheme as that which provided against his own personal misfortunes. Allowances were graded in accordance with the workers term of service in his place of work. The funds from which the payments were made were supplied entirely by the industrial enterprise in which the worker was employed, and the insurance fund was based on a percentage of the wages paid out. The worker, therefore, made no direct contribution.<sup>14</sup> There were also other type of insurance funds such as funeral benefits, maternity benefits old age and widows' pensions, etc., during the Soviet period.

It is quite pertinent that the strategic objective of a socialist society is to realise full social equality. It is believed that the founders of scientific socialism also regarded equality as a social condition which eliminates forced differentiation between one man and another. This ideology can be examined properly, if we take the example of Soviet society and constitution of 1977. The constitution of 1977 treated the Soviet society as an example of

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<sup>13</sup> L.G. Churchward, op.cit; p.32.

<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Gibberd, *Soviet Russia: An Introduction* (Toronto, Bombay, Melbourne, Capetown: Oxford University Press, 1946), p.90.

“developed socialism”.<sup>15</sup> It was based on the premise of elimination of antagonistic classes. Distribution of income, in proportion to work, was based on the social ownership of the means of production. Guarantee of full legal equality to all Soviet citizens was made. The legal basket of constitutional rights had been further enhanced.

According to R.R. Sharma, “A large reduction in the difference between physical and mental labour was observed. The impact of scientific and technical revolution, had increasingly interlinked the industrial and agricultural activities. A variety of inter and intra-class differentials (as between the mental and manual labour, between town and country, occupational and income disparities) had been considerably narrowed down; that the unevenness in the educational level of different social classes and groups had greatly declined.”<sup>16</sup>

The sharp decline in income and wage differentials had been clearly noticed by more perceptive western scholars of Soviet society. Peter Wiles, for example, aptly observes, “the statistical record since Stalin is very good one indeed. I doubt if any other country can show a more rapid and sweeping progress towards social equality.”<sup>17</sup>

It is, however, a fact that inequality as a social phenomenon did persist even in the socialist society. The actual Soviet society’s condition has only proved the theoretical formulations of Marxism-Leninism. The crucial question

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<sup>15</sup> R.R. Sharma, "Parameters of Soviet Constitution", *International Studies*, vol. 18, no.2, 1979, p.209.

<sup>16</sup> "Reports of Brezhnev and Kosygin to 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> CPSU, Congress" as cited in *Social Sciences*, vol.6, no.3 (21), 1975, pp.5-7.

<sup>17</sup> P. Wiles, *Distribution of Income*, (Amsterdam: East West, 1974), p. 25.

therefore, is to ascertain the parameters of the structure of inequality, the nature of division of labour in a socialist society. It will be our endeavour now to examine these, as also the policy inputs which have brought about major shifts in the Soviet social structure.<sup>18</sup>

The Soviet society mirrored a variety of disproportions, which gave rise to significant contradictions, problems and difficulties. The period of 1917-22 which was obviously marked by the abolition of private property in the means of production – agriculture, however, remained outside this framework for some more years. Significantly this was also a period of civil war (war-communism) in which a hasty and unrealistic policies had influenced the process wrong.

The second instance came to the lime light during the period of 1931-54 which witnessed a profound and far reaching structural transformation in which agriculture was collectivised, and a programme of rapid industrialization launched. In order to ensure the success of these two, Stalin introduced a new scheme of incentives in 1934, and this policy widened the wage and income differentials. He asserted that “the consequence of wage equalisation is that the unskilled workers lacks the incentive to become a skilled worker and is thus deprived of prospect of advancement.”<sup>19</sup> This movement, despite of having many positive aspects, however, added to wage inequality.

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<sup>18</sup> V.A. Levada, "Social Structure", *International Journal of Sociology*, vol.3, no.2, 1974, p.3.

<sup>19</sup> J.V. Stalin, *Problem of Leninism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1929), p.362.

The unequal distribution of earned income under Soviet socialism has always been legitimated on the basis of reward for labour performed: “to the worker according to his work.”<sup>20</sup> This is an attractive slogan, but in practice it is extremely difficult to measure the skill and complexity of work effort and the differential contribution of different kinds of labour to society. Thus it paved the way towards inequality. Despite the very great differences in income due to the Soviet policy of rewarding skill and achievement at every level, there was economic equality in the sense that economic advantages were open to all and that all were working as servants of the state.<sup>21</sup>

Information is generally recognised as a major source of power in any society. This realization is certainly a part of the Soviet consciousness, as it was in Tsarist Russia. It is obvious that both the young and old generations were quite influenced by the media, in the erstwhile Soviet Union. Controlling information through propaganda, censorship, and inordinate amounts of secrecy was a practice stretching far back into Russian history, long predating the Soviet era. Yet, use of modern technology and ideological commitment combined to give Soviet leaders a formidable capacity to control what their people should know. The Soviet era showed the way that manipulation of communication by a state monopoly ensured the isolation and exploitation of the individual. Such social regulation may be exercised in modern societies through control of information, suppression of facts and opinion, through their biased selection and manipulation, thus exposing the population to a constant

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<sup>20</sup> David Lane, *Soviet society under perestroika*, op. cit. p.124.

<sup>21</sup> Katherine Gibberd, op. cit., p.99.



stream of “politically approved” messages and prohibiting other views and opinions.<sup>22</sup>

During the Stalin regime, media used to be controlled by the state. There were three main constraints operated to determine the content of mass media. First, ideologically the message had to reflect socialist value. Secondly, controls were exerted through committees and censors to gauge the ideological and political correctness of newspapers, radio, books. Messages having mass currency were restricted to organs having the approval of the dominant political power.<sup>23</sup>

Soviet authorities also used censorship as a major tool to control information. No official publication or broadcast was free of censorship. Every book, articles, journal, radio broadcast and television script were scrutinized before publication. Soviet writers and broadcasters familiarized themselves with a list of thousands upon thousands of forbidden topics that were to be published only with special permission. Soviet writers had to belong to a trade union and membership in the party was also advisable. Soviet writers were extremely cautious about the materials to be submitted to official censors for approval. Hence, self-censorship assured that a good deal of the spontaneity and breadth of coverage was absent from Soviet publication.

In the mass media, socialist realism involved staunch support to the political line, the suppression of conflicting opinions, and the portrayal of the worst aspects of life under capitalism. The media sought to portray a

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<sup>22</sup> David Lane, *Soviet society under perestroika*, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

homogenous society based on social harmony. Heroes were positive, imbued with socialistic goals. “A black and white world was depicted: all things Soviet and communist were good and all things capitalist, imperialist, and American were bad.”<sup>24</sup> Timely and complete information about natural disasters, crime, and even personal details about the leadership often did not appear in Soviet publication.

The Soviet press was among the most extensive in the world. Soviet newspaper circulation was around 400 for each 1,000 people while the ‘United States’ figure was only 282 per 1,000.<sup>25</sup> There were two major news services, thousands of newspapers and hundred of periodicals, journals, and magazines. The two news services, “TASS” (Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union) and “Novosti” (News), had correspondents throughout the world. TASS, a government agency, was the more authoritative news service. Novosti was ostensibly not a government agency, but was clearly subject to the same checks and constraints as TASS or any other Soviet publication. As for the Soviet press, ‘Pravda’, the party paper, and “Izvestia”, the Government’s mouthpiece, were practically the same with minor differences of nuance and emphasis. Both were boring, had long columns filled with official handouts and party propaganda.<sup>26</sup>

The press was simply another instrument for shaping public attitudes and motivating the masses to accomplish the goals set by the nation’s leader.

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<sup>24</sup> Ellen Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public* (New York: Praeger, 1981), p.105.

<sup>25</sup> Ellen Mickiewicz, "Policy Issues in the Soviet Media", in Erick. P. Hoffman (ed.), *The Soviet Union in the 1980s* (New York: The Academy of political science, 1984), p.113.

<sup>26</sup> T.N. Kaul, *Stalin to Gorbachev and Beyond* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), p.153.

Speaking on this point, Viktor G. Afanasyev, the editor of Pravda, the party's official newspaper, said that their job was to help organize the masses to fulfil, the party's wishes, to shape and reflect the public opinion. In the Soviet Union, however, much of the daily news was treated as a secret and was portioned out strictly on a "need to know basis."<sup>27</sup>

The most authoritative magazine on ideological questions was "Kommunist". This magazine was a major vehicle by which the party expressed its ideological interpretations on current affairs. Soviet intellectuals sometimes complained that government prevented a sufficient discussion of views and sharing of information by censoring their academic writing. Soviet press never viewed itself as an independent check on the government, rather it was counted as a major auxiliary to the party and government in their efforts to socialize the people and to mobilize them to accomplish the public goals set by the authorities. Feeling no obligation to print information for its own sake, the press published only those stories that would motivate further mobilization.

Crime and public tragedies (such as epidemics or train derailments) were usually either reported incompletely or ignored altogether. Evidence was sometimes picked up by shrewd observers, indicating that public suspicion about a tragic mishap was indeed true. Soviet method of journalism was quite frustrating and irritating in the extreme. It must be kept in mind, however, that Soviet people had never enjoyed a free press.

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<sup>27</sup> Hedrick, Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Ballantine, 1976), p.474.

Soviet literature was the natural successor of all the best and progressive that had been created in the culture sphere mainly by Russian people. Although Soviet literature was multinational and multilingual in nature, it was essentially one. Because the guiding principle of depiction of reality were one and the same were based on Socialist Realism.<sup>28</sup> The distinguishing features of Soviet literature were the revolutionary perspective, social commitment and deep-rooted, optimism. Being an effective weapon for social progress, Soviet literature gave and continued to give a helping hand to the party and the Government.

Stalin was very much concerned for the revival of Soviet culture. However, the truth was that he was responsible for suppressing the Russian writers and destroying the best of Russian culture, especially poetry and literature. He even bent science to serve his narrow concepts.<sup>29</sup>

Khrushchev brought a little more freedom to writers in the beginning but became more strict later on. He banned the books of Sinevsky and Daniel. They were published abroad and the two writers were prosecuted and convicted of anti-Soviet propaganda. Pasternak was not allowed to receive his Nobel Prize unless he was prepared to renounce his Soviet citizenship.<sup>30</sup>

Cinema played a very crucial role in the Soviet Union. The development of Soviet cinematography was closely linked with the life of the Soviet people and it reflected the diversities of phenomena and processed the development of

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<sup>28</sup> C.N. Chakravarti, and A.K. Basu, *Soviet Union: Land and People* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1987), p.77.

<sup>29</sup> T.N. Kaul, op. cit., p.157.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.158.

the society. During the Krushchev period, many people's artists were rehabilitated after being released from labour camps. The government used to sanction special budget for the enhancement of cinema and music. Music in the Soviet Union was developed under the condition of growing interactions among national cultures. The distinguishing features of Soviet music were ideological depth, diversive in national form, genre and modes of expression.<sup>31</sup> Theatre was also an integral part of the Soviet society. The main aim of theatre was not only to entertain people but the spiritual upbringing of the millions of spectators.

Alcoholism as a problem was a major part in the Soviet culture. The proportions of alcohol abuse in the Soviet Union were simply overwhelming. One third of all consumer spending in food stores, was said to go towards the purchase of alcohol. Nearly 15 percent of the average family budget was spent on drink and the figure climbed to as high as 40 percent for families with alcoholic in residence. The Soviet Union ranked first in the world for the consumption of hard liquor, with the per capita consumption at about 50 litres per year. Between 1965 and 1979, the per capita consumption of alcohol increased by 50 percent and by 1984 the production had increased at twice the rate of the population growth.<sup>32</sup>

The cause for such excess were deeply rooted in the social and cultural system. Boredom, loneliness, depression, crowded living conditions and

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<sup>31</sup> C.N. Chakravarti, and A.K. Basu, op. cit., p.95.

<sup>32</sup> Robert, Gillette, "Romanov to Gorbachev, Vodka Remains the Czar", *Los Angel Times*, June, 6, 1985.

limited sources of entertainment seemed to be major contributors to the problem. The dreaminess among the women was a growing problem and the same for the youth. The social costs of excessive drinking were horrendous. It led towards crime, divorce, and the rising mortality rates among infant and young men.

Quite apart from the personal tragedies, the economic costs of alcohol abuse were enormous. Large sums were spent on police control, sobering up stations and treatment clinics. The problem was more serious in the rural areas. Having little to do on the dreary farms, peasants started to drink. Drunken tractor drivers used to destroy crops, field hands planted uneven rows, and peasants left live stock to starve or freeze while they remained inebriated. Report after report told of whole village going on weeklong binges while crops used to wither and animal used to die of neglect.<sup>33</sup> Alcoholism was thus, a disease that was gripping the Soviet society.

No society in history has done as much as the Soviet Union to liberate women from the second-class status in which they found themselves in 1917. One of the central themes of Marx' Communist Manifesto, which carried over into the Russian Revolution, was the emancipation of women as the precondition of communism. Lenin pressed for creating an environment in which women would be truly free. Believing that the principal ingredient to women's liberation was economic independence, Lenin wrote "In order to achieve the complete emancipation of women and to make them really equal

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<sup>33</sup> Leon P. Baradat, *Soviet Political Society* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Engliwood Cliffs, 1989), pp.395-396.

with men, we must have social economy, and the participation of women in general productive labour.”<sup>34</sup>

The status of women in the Soviet Union was quite a relative issue. It was a matter of both equality and inequality depending upon the nature of work and social provision. There were different provisions made by the soviet government and constitution to enhance the status of women. Article 122 of the 1978 Soviet constitution grants Soviet women equal rights with men in “all spheres of economic governmental, cultural, political and other “Public activity”. According to the 1970 census, women constituted 53.9 percent of the total population of the USSR and 51 percent of the working population. Forty-five and two-tenths percent of all women had completed higher or secondary education.<sup>35</sup>

In the past few years, Soviet sociologists became increasingly concerned with the fact that women in the USSR were not equal to men. Passivity was part of the Soviet women’s response to the constraints imposed upon them by their socio-economic, ideological-cultural, and political environments. Striving to create an industrialized economy, Stalin subordinated the social objective of women’s equality to the production mandates of the plan.<sup>36</sup> During World War –II, women comprised over half of the entire workforce, and because of the enormous number of male deaths during the war, women had remained

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Paul Sacks, "The place of Women" in Pankhurst, Jerry G. and Michael Paul Sacks (eds.), *Contemporary Soviet Society* (New York, Praeger, 1980), p.229.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Wolfe Jancar, "Women and Soviet Politics" in Henry W. Morton, and Rudolf L. Tokes (eds.), *Soviet Politics and Society in the 1970s*, (New York: The free press, 1974), p.118.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Paul Sacks, op. cit., p.234.

numerically dominant in the workforce ever since, except for a brief period after the war. Unfortunately, however, the social goal had never been important as the economic motivations for employing women.<sup>37</sup>

Women in Soviet Union were always engaged in the lowest paying job. In agriculture, for instance, women performed the bulk of the low paying manual labour. In industry, women were found in large numbers among the lowest paid and most physically demanding jobs, although they were prohibited from doing some of the most dangerous jobs, such as coal mining. Women were usually engaged in jobs like public catering, textile manufacturing, and garment production. At the same time, women dominated low level white collar-jobs, and thus made up the bulk of necessary and elementary school teachers, clerks, telephone operators, postal workers, bank tellers, and insurance sales representatives.

In the professions, women represented 25 percent of the judges, 38 percent of the secondary school directors, 44 percent of the engineers, 45 percent of the teachers in higher education, 50 percent of the specialists working in technical institutes, 75 percent of the doctors and dentists, 75 percent of the teachers in secondary grades and lower, 86 percent of the economists and planners, and 98 percent of the nurses. Men dominated the legal profession and accounted for the majority of composers, artists,

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<sup>37</sup> Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.5.



radiotelegraph operators, plumbers, wood workers, transportation workers. machine operators and metallurgists.<sup>38</sup>

Due to “double burden” of looking after house work and job, women were perpetually exhausted and had no time for upgrading skill. As a consequence, female labour was less productive than male labour. Another factor of the wage differences between the male and female was due to the fact that women workers were in low-skilled and low-paid occupations.<sup>39</sup>

With time and energy devoted to domestic chores, women found a little opportunity to prepare for advancement. Women in Soviet society carried a “double burden” of grueling proportions.<sup>40</sup> Working a full day in the clinic, shop, office, factory, or field, the average women used to return home after spending an hour or so shopping. Once home they had to do the housework and cooking.

Women were not proportionately represented in the party, hence many important positions, those on the nomenclatura lists, were denied to them. Female participation in the central committee was proportionately at its highest during the Revolution. It fell to zero percent during the Civil War period, climbed again, suffered a drop starting in the mid-1930's, and reached another low point in 1941. Participation increased during the 50's to decline once more in the early 60's when Krushchev was ousted. Such a pattern showed that

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Paul Sacks, op. cit., p.237.

<sup>39</sup> E.B. Guruzdeva, and E.B. Chertikhina, "The occupational status and wages of women in the USSR", *Soviet Sociology*, vol.26, no.3, Winter, 1987, p.77.

<sup>40</sup> G.W. Lapidus, op. cit., p.194.

female membership in the Soviet Central Committee varied inversely with the degree of political crisis experienced in the country.<sup>41</sup>

However, the above mentioned inequality was compensated by the nature of security women used to get from the state, during the Soviet regime. For example, women's function of child-bearing could not be a handicap in her industrial life, nor could suffer under it. Certain regulations had to be observed by the Soviet-enterprises employing women. A pregnant woman must be given holiday of atleast one month before child birth, followed by another period of one month afterwards, and during the time her wage was to be paid. On resuming work, the mother may leave her baby in the crèche attached to the factory and the management must release her to feed the child at the appropriate intervals. For older children there were the facilities of nursery where the mother did not have to take any risk and in the process her work was never disturbed.

The family as an institution was very strong in Soviet society and the government never tried to weaken it. Stability in the marriage relationship was encouraged. Article 9 made provision that marriages are to be performed in a ceremony.<sup>42</sup> Though divorce was a simpler process but it was not regarded as something to be entered upon lightly. Moreover, a husband could not institute divorce proceedings while his wife was pregnant or for one year after childbirth. No longer did an illegitimate child had to go without a last name on

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<sup>41</sup> Barbara Wolfe Jancar, *op. cit.*, p.141.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134.

the birth certificate. Paternity was determined voluntarily or by court decision. In either case, the father was required to pay alimony for the child.

Women enjoyed many advantages in Soviet society. They benefited from virtually unparalleled educational and employment opportunities, though these were a bit tainted with inequality. The court always favoured women in child custody battles during divorce hearings. In short, women in Soviet society were well protected by the state.

It is very natural that the future of any nation depends more on the youth group. Because, today's young men are tomorrow's citizens. Soviet society was a blatant example of protecting its youth to a greater extent. Young citizens in the USSR enjoyed in full the social, economic, political and personal rights proclaimed in the constitution. These included the right to work, all civic liberties, and broad and open access to cultural wealth, science, culture and education. This provision ensured their growth socially and politically. Party used to pay attention to youth, because children and young people constituted a sizable part of the population. Studies showed that the principal ideological and moral values - devotion to communist ideals, socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, collectivism, duty honour, kindness and unselfishness - to be the basic orientation in life for the bulk of Soviet youth.

Though the schools were not quite adequate to socialize successfully the nation's youth, the Soviets maintained three young groups to complete the job. All children attending the school were inducted into the "Little Octobrists". The organization was providing a variety of out of school activities for youngsters

under the age ten. The children used to learn handicrafts, games, songs, and stories, and they were taken on outings and were shown films. When they entered the fourth grade, the children got into "Young pioneers".<sup>43</sup> The pioneers experienced a more heavily structured and more intensively instructional program. Political training was very explicit and direct among the pioneers.

Under the USSR constitution, young people had the right to form public association. In keeping with this right, the "Komsomol" had been created. Founded in 1918, the Young Communist League, better known as 'Komsomol' is the oldest youth organization. It was an independent socio-political organization in which the best Soviet youth participated.<sup>44</sup>

Whether politically inclined or not, any ambitious person will think twice about not joining the 'Komsomol'. In this context, Hedrick Smith relates an account about a young man who told a friend he did not intend to join the Komsomol. Hearing about it, the boy's teacher called his father in to conference and said, "you are an intelligent and sophisticated father. Tell the boy that he can think what he wants but he can not say what he wants".<sup>45</sup> This candid admonition had the desired effect, for the boy later joined the 'Komsomol'.

Under Article 10 of the 1978 Soviet constitution, the Komsomol was granted the right to socialist ownership. Article 7 of the fundamental law stipulated that it had the right to participate in managing state and public affairs, and in deciding political economic, social and cultural matters. Under

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<sup>43</sup> Hedrick Smith, op. cit., p.225.

<sup>44</sup> Lgor Ilyinsky, "The Rights of Youth in the USSR", *Soviet Review*, vol.25, no.10, October, 1998, p.18.

<sup>45</sup> Leon P. Bardat, op. cit. pp.395-396.

Article 100, the Komsomol had the right to nominate candidates for election to the Soviets discuss their political, business and personal qualities, and to campaign for them at meetings, in the press, and on television and radio. Article 113 granted Komsomol the right to initiate legislation through its central committee.<sup>46</sup>

It was also noticed that the Soviet youth sub-culture took shape during the 1970s, but the first sprouts emerged in the late 1960s. It was then that the hippies appeared, and rock music flooded into the Soviet society from the west.<sup>47</sup> But the fact remained that these hippies were not sufficiently numerous to make much of an impression on Soviet society. They were frequently picked up by the police and sent for brief, detention.

Under socialism, young people were free from exploitation and unemployment. Their right to work was formalized in the constitution. Child labour was abolished. Sixteen to eighteen-year olds were prohibited from working at hard or harmful jobs. Under the USSR constitution, the working people's right to rest was ensured by the introduction of a working week, not exceeding 41 hours. Young workers under 18 years of age had a shorter working day and a longer annual leave of one calendar month. Also at the disposal of Soviet youth were 350,000 libraries, 570 theatres including 155 theatres for children, 1,295 museums, 154,000 film projectors.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Igor Ilyinsky, op. cit., p.18.

<sup>47</sup> John Bushnell, "The History and Study of the Soviet Youth Sub-Culture", *Soviet Sociology*, vol.29, no.1, Jan-Feb, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Igor Illynsky, op. cit., p.19.

It was a matter of great concern for the Soviet government to render all facilities to the youth group. Youths were guaranteed the freedoms of speech; the press, assembly, meetings, processions and demonstrations. Sports facilities, clubs, stadia, printing houses, and other facilities were at their disposal.

The Soviet Union was one of the most varied societies in the world. The boundary was so vast and included over one hundred ethnic groups and about two hundred distinct languages and dialectics. The erstwhile Soviet Union was characterized as a multinational society. All its citizens were members of a supranational Soviet people. In the dominant ideology of the USSR, its defining characteristics were common citizenship of the Soviet State (the USSR); subscription to a unifying ideology (Marxism - Leninism); a common political goal (communism); shared beliefs in patriotism to the Soviet Motherland; and a common language (Russian).<sup>49</sup>

The dominant ideology from Stalin to Brezhenev was one of consensus, collectivity, and social harmony. In terms of national relations, the political and economic foundations of the USSR - the unitary communist party of the Soviet Union and the state owned means of production were held to give rise to a community of interests between the various nationalities.

Towards the end of the Civil War (1918-1921), Lenin realized that no proletarian revolution was imminent in the industrialized west; thus a

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<sup>49</sup> David Lane, *Politics and Society in the USSR*, op. cit., p.162.

consolidation of Soviet power was necessary.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, some minority independence movements were aided by the bourgeoisie states, threatening Moscow. Hence Lenin reversed himself and called for the conquest of the minority states that had established their independence.

Lenin supported the federal system in the USSR by taking a middle path between two extreme thoughts such as "Great Russian Chauvinism" and the separatist impulses of the minorities. He was optimistic of building a 'new human community' united in class solidarity. He backed federalism as a way on the road to building the 'new socialist man'. This formula of Lenin meant that while, each minority would enjoy its own culture and language, Marxism-Leninism was to pervade all values and policy.

In the mid-1920s the emphasis of the government was placed on developing many of the cultural attributes of the minority people. Dealing with civilizations ranging from every advanced cultures to almost primitive tribes, the Soviet government constituted policies most helpful to the less advanced people. Indigenous languages were encouraged by establishing schools teaching literacy in native tongues.

Stalin's regime had brought a different turn to the nationality question. Stalin reversed Soviet policy toward the ethnic and national question in the late 1920s and 1930s. Collectivization on the farms was the beginning salvo. In 1934 Stalin took a crucial step in reversing the state's policy towards the minorities. Contradicting Lenin's rejoinder, Stalin proclaimed at the

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Pipes, "Solving the Nationalities Problem" in Joseph L. Noguee (ed.), *Man, State and Society in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p.505.

Seventeenth Party Congress that "non-Russian nationalism" was, indeed more dangerous to the state than the Great-Russian chauvinism.<sup>51</sup>

The unique cultural events and customs were discouraged, and alphabets based on Latin, Mongolian, or Arabic were transformed to Russian Cyrillic script. He even attributed the whole lion's share of credit to Russia for the victory of the Great Patriotic war (World War - II). He proclaimed that Russian "had won the right to be recognized as the guide for the whole union" and that the other nationalities should treat it not as an equal but as an "elder brother".<sup>52</sup>

The policy of national policy under Krushchev was based on the principle of equality which was opposed to that of Stalin. He tried to abolish all special national privileges and to form a voluntary federal union of free and equal nations. "The Party Programme adopted in 1961 laid down the guiding principles for a further drawing together of socialist nations in the period of early communist construction."<sup>53</sup>

The emphasis in the new party programme of 1961 was obviously on unity and rapprochement of nations in the USSR. Many of Krushchev's decentralization reforms also gave the minorities additional autonomy. His reform dissolving several central ministries and replacing them with regional economic councils promised to developed economic power to the local level. Krushehev also began a policy of increasing the number of minority people in the party.

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Pipes, op. cit., p.529.

<sup>52</sup> Leon, P. Baradat, op. cit., pp.315-316.

<sup>53</sup> Devendra Kaushik, "The National Question in the USSR - The Current Phase" in R.R.Sharma (ed.), *The USSR in the Transition: Issues and Themes* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1985), p.202.



Brezhnev's address on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the USSR in December 1972 indicated the new leadership's cautions and balanced approach towards the nationalities question. "Brezhnev took to task both the extremists, those who desired to hasten the pace of draing together of nations and those who tried to obstruct this natural process under socialism"<sup>54</sup>

The bureaucratic top level under Brezhnev reacted with a dual approach, on the one hand developing internal dependence through specialization, which increased national discrimination, and on the other developing the national bureaucratic apparatus in each of the territories inhabited by the non-Russian nationalities, in order to integrate them into the defence of the Status-quo.

The above-mentioned discussions on various aspects of Soviet society, has focused on many dimensions. There was a crisis that arose in the USSR on the basis of alienation of the masses from the power, from self-organization, and the results of labour, from personal security and alienation of the product from the needs of population. There was a feeling among the people that Soviet society had reached the limits of its possibilities. During the sixties, the USSR began to lag more noticeably behind the west technologically. There was a threat to socialism both from the inside and outside world.

In March 1985, when Gorbachev took over, he identified three specific problem ridden areas: the command-bureaucratic system, adherence to the ideology of socialism, and the terrible arms race. Thus, Gorbachev tried to

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<sup>54</sup> Devendra, Kaushik, op. cit., p.203.

bring the changes into the Soviet society by introducing the idea of "*perestroika*" and "*Glasnost*", which implied reform in the socio-economic and political sphere. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter II

## **PERESTROIKA AS A TRANSITION TO TRANSFORMATION OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY**

The soviet society has undergone many changes since its establishment in 1917. The triumph of the October Revolution laid the foundation stone of a state and society based on socialism. The Soviet Union was considered as the mother country of communism. The Soviet society was based on the objective of forming an egalitarian classless society. In order to achieve this goal it had gone through many stages under the leadership of different political leaders. It was Lenin who first laid the foundation of socialism in Soviet Russia. From Lenin to Brezhnev, the praxis of communism had undergone many transitions. The establishment of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) and New Economic Policy (NEP) by Lenin, at first, tried to consolidate the socialist rule. The advent of Stalin saw a new phase in which collectivisation of agriculture and rapid industrialisation became the utmost goal of USSR. Krushchev's ascendancy was marked by the destalinization campaign and return to Leninism. And the advent of Brezhnev period saw the Soviet society's unprecedented rise in living standards in the beginning. All the reforms and changes, which were introduced by various leaders at different time aimed at achieving the socialist goals.

The practice of socialism in the erstwhile Soviet Union did undergo many changes under different leaders. It is true that the seventy years of communist rule really uplifted the face value of Soviet Union. The whole world was divided into two power blocks capitalist block led by the United States and

other west European countries and the Socialist block led by the Soviet Union, during the cold war period. Although Soviet Union was regarded as a major power block, yet the power and respect, which it enjoyed, was due to its massive military strength. All major developments, which made Soviet Union a powerful threat to Western capitalist block was due to its development in particular fields like space and communication, nuclear power, etc. All these developments made it a powerful military block during the cold war period. On the other hand, the economic condition of the country was not making parallel progress along with its military power. Also the political and ideological power of the Soviet Union was severely challenged during the cold war period.

In the post-World War II period modern socialism which came to be identified with Soviet model was repudiated by Yugoslavia in the late forties and throughout the fifties for the first time. Yugoslavia enjoyed the reputation of being the first revisionist country in the history of modern communism which had modified Marxism-Leninism in a number of ways.<sup>1</sup> At that time Yugoslavia was severely criticized by the Soviet Union and other communist countries and was accused of being a revisionist state that deviated from the true path of Socialism and was also thrown out of the Communist bloc. However, this challenge to the practice of socialism was not limited to Yugoslavia alone, soon the demand for change and reform was also raised in the uprisings in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland

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<sup>1</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, *Gorbachevian Revolution in the Soviet Union* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991), p.4.

throughout the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> The retreat of socialism was also witnessed in China after the advent of Deng Xiapoing. Even within the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev's vigorous cultural thaw of the late 1950s went into cold storage after the Cuban missile crisis.

The Soviet model of socialism was beginning to be challenged by various countries. On the other hand, by 1980s the economic system of socialist countries could not come upto expectations of the new world of the consumer society and the standards set by the more affluent living patterns of Western Europe and the United states. The cause of decline of socialism was that economics based on ownership by the state, economic equality and the command of bureaucracy failed to work satisfactorily.<sup>3</sup> On the material front, it became clear after the initial success in production that the growth rate of the economy of the socialist societies was definitely lower than that of the societies depending upon the market economy. In agricultural sector, state or collective ownership proved to be an utter failure. A super power like the Soviet Union having one sixth of the land surface of the earth was finding it difficult to meet the food requirements of its population.

The Soviet Union as well as other socialist countries of Eastern Europe were facing crunch situations in their respective economies during the 1980s. During this time the soviet model of socialism was seriously challenged. The Polish solidarity crisis of 1980-81, when popular protest nearly destroyed the

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<sup>2</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, op. cit., p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.7.

Polish' regime, was one such warning shot.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile the soviet influence on world communist movement started declining when the Chinese and the western Euro-communists negated the Soviet experience. By 1982 the soviet union was faced not only with capitalist encirclement but with a form of communist encirclement too, relations with Poland and China being as troublesome as relations with western powers.

Soviet Union was not only facing the challenges from its own followers ideologically, it was also being challenged by over expanding and competitive market economy of the capitalist world. The socialist system of Soviet Union had achieved a high degree of development initially in its formative years. But the society was reeling under various problems during the end of Brezhnev period. Economic policy certainly ran into serious trouble during Brezhnev's last years, symbolised graphically by the importation of grains, mainly from the United States.<sup>5</sup> Despite an enormous investment programme, net agricultural output rose by only 0.9 percent during 1971-79, and declined far below plan levels in the years 1979 to 1982. Brezhnev's last major domestic initiative was a rather desperate Food Programme, launched in 1982 aimed at making domestic food output the 'top economic priority' as an urgent 'socio-political task'. Economic growth overall was declining, apparently inexorably. National income growth rates fell from 41 percent during 1966-70 to only 16.5 percent in 1981-85.<sup>6</sup> Expectations meanwhile were rising, partly fuelled by increasing

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Crouch, *Revolution and Evolution; Gorbachev and Soviet Politics* (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., 1989) pp.56-57.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

numbers of Soviet people visiting Eastern and Central Europe as tourists and comparing Soviet reality with the noticeably more affluent Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany.

During the 1960s when the capitalist system was passing through a period of crisis, the programme of twenty second party congress of the CPSU of October 1961 asserted that the world socialist system would triumph given the cumulative “crisis of world capitalism.”<sup>7</sup> It was proclaimed that within 20 years the soviet economy would catch up with the standard of living of the United States. This goal would be ensured by the advantages of state ownership, central planning, and communist party leadership based on Leninist principles.

The principles which were adopted in the twenty second party congress of the CPSU proved to be a failure in the long run. Considering the goals of the party programme of 1961 against achievements reached by 1980, real conditions fell considerably short of anticipations. National income was 36 percent less than the long-term plan, gross agriculture production was 56 percent short, electric power was 57 percent down, and grain production fell 39 percent below the estimate.<sup>8</sup> The quality and the regularity of food delivered to the urban areas was inadequate. This does not mean that there were no improvements; compared to the 1960 levels, the actual level of national income had risen 320 percent, gross agricultural production has risen 65 percent,

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<sup>7</sup> David Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika* (London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p.7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.



electric power 470 percent, and grain production 141 percent.<sup>9</sup> Standards had improved, but they had not improved enough to meet the high expectations engendered by the political leadership of Khrushchev.

Other than this the Brezhnev period witnessed many upheavals. Consensus politics appeared to degenerate into what Brezhnev himself repeatedly termed 'narrow departmentalism' as each bureaucracy defended its own territory.<sup>10</sup> Even the modest attempt to bring change by Brezhnev were opposed by the lower order and Brezhnev, with his commitment to the stability of cadres, was in no position to fight back. Corruption and black economy flourished, morale and productivity declined. By 1982 Soviet society could be characterized, according to Crouch, as one in which the middle classes were essentially careerist, the working classes apathetic and anti-intellectual, the peasants alienated and youth remarkably cynical. Alcohol sales had risen by 77 percent between 1970 and 1980 with a consequently damaging effect on the nation's health. Though the exact figures were not clear, male life expectancy at birth appears to have declined from 67 years in 1964 to no more than 62 years by 1980.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet Union's problem, had not been confined to economic ones. On the military front the Soviet Union achieved a superior status in comparison to the United States during the period after Khrushchev. But under Brezhnev the policy of peaceful co-existence and détente reflected its weakness. The

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<sup>9</sup> David Lane, *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Crouch, *op. cit.*, p.57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Soviet Union after the Second World War had steadily lost its hegemony over the world communist movement. It had conceded ideological leadership. Some of the sacred assumptions of Marxism-Leninism, central planning, and collectivism, were shrouded in doubt.<sup>12</sup> Those assumptions had been cast aside by movements ranging from Euro Communism to economic reforms programmes in Yugoslavia and Hungary. And Soviet model of socialism had also been challenged by many other communist states as has already been discussed.

The Soviet command economy which brought rapid development of Soviet Russia during Stalin's era was of little relevance after Stalin. The Soviet model of growth had only appealed to relatively underdeveloped countries. Since the end of Second World War, the world economy changed fundamentally. The advent of high technology, the rise of the service industries in the west, the dependence on scientific advance for the achievement of state defence and economic growth put a greater store on internal innovation and dynamism. The world economy witnessed the rise of new economies in southeast Asia as well as technological advance in Western societies. The Soviet model failed in this international competition. The technological gap, particularly in the evolving weaponry of the United States, has been a cause for concern in the USSR.

During this time, when Soviet Union was faced with many problems both internally and externally, there arrived a leader who emerged as a radical

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<sup>12</sup> David Lane, *op. cit.*, p.9.

reformer. It was no other than Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's ascendancy to power was not smooth. Infact the death of Brezhnev was not quite the end of Brezhnev era. There was the evidence of succession crisis after Brezhnev. The change of leadership from Brezhnev to Gorbachev was marked by serious drift, division and instability in the Soviet leadership. Symbolically perhaps, whereas the party had managed with only three General Secretaries in the sixty years from Stalin's appointment in 1922 till Brezhnve's death, it produced another three within just three years from 1982.<sup>13</sup> The end of Brezhnev era was marked with various turmoils in the politics of Soviet Union. Due to mounting evidence of economic disarray in particular, the leadership was increasingly polarised into conservative and reformist factions, the one often cancelling out the other. Nowhere was this more evident than in the successive leadership choice first of a reformer, Yuri Andropav, and then of a Conservative, Cherneko.

Andropav started reforming the Soviet Society in a limited sense. He did not entirely give up the course of Brezhnev and like him favoured tighter discipline rather than democracy. He sought, as Brezhner had done, to improve the old mechanism of the command economy rather than transform it.<sup>14</sup> Andropav encouraged greater public debate particularly on the economic questions. On the other hand admitted that the party did not have all the answers to every question on economy. He perceived economic reform as an

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<sup>13</sup> Martin Crouch, *op.cit.* p.59.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

isolated technical problem without wider social, cultural or political implications, and should be resolved at the technical level.

The unexpected death of Andropov in February 1984, brought Cherneko, a conservative minister from Brezhnev's old guard into power. During the tenure of Cherneko all the important issues remained unresolved. This period also saw a genuine shift of opinion among the party intelligentsia in favour of a major economic reform. Meanwhile Gorbachev was also a Politburo member and sometimes described as the deputy General Secretary in the absence of Cherneko. However the death of Cherneko paved the way for Mikhail Gorbachev to come to power when the whole of Soviet Society was facing problems in all Spheres of life.

The ascendancy of Gorbachev marked the end of Brezhnev era. The first and foremost task of Gorbachev was to reform USSR so as to make it more competitive in the era of globalization. The first answer of Gorbachev was to eradicate the malaise that Soviet Union was facing through radical reforms. Reforms and changes were not new in Soviet Politics. Changes in the Soviet Union were heralded by Khrushchev when he embarked upon "de-Stalinization" drive in 1956. And this process of change and reform lasted till the end of Brezhnev era. But Gorbachev started his reformation of Soviet Society with an attack on Brezhnev. At the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress of CPSU held in 1986, Gorbachev frankly criticized Brezhnev era.<sup>15</sup> He prescribed the panacea for saving Soviet Union from ruin and advocated for radical reforms. In reforming

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<sup>15</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, *op.cit.*, p.23.

the soviet society, Gorbachev essentially tried to do three things. One was to promote new people and breathe new life into the party, and democratise the political life to some degree (*demokratization*); second was to put together a coherent reform programme of economic and social reconstruction (*perestroika*); the third to persuade people of its irreversible necessity and thus to implement it, not least through the policy of openness in public discussion (*glasnost*).<sup>16</sup>

The concept of *Perestroika* was discussed and developed first in 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU congress in February-March 1986 and in several subsequent plenary meetings of the CPSU Central Committee. The concept was further improved and its scope expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> All Union Conference of the CPSU held in 1988. Its achievements were reviewed and the process was reinvigorated at the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU congress held in July 1990. In the formulation of the policy of *Perestroika* the major contributory factors had been 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress (1986) and Gorbachev's own book *Perestroika* (1987).

The objective of *Perestroika* can be best explained from Gorbachev's own work as mentioned below:

*Perestroika* means overcoming the stagnation process, bearing down the braking mechanism, creating a dependable and effective mechanism for the acceleration of social and economic progress and giving it greater dynamism.

*Perestroika* means mass initiative. It is comprehensive development of democracy, socialist self-government, encouragement of initiative and creative endeavour, improved order and discipline, more glasnost, criticism and self-criticism in all spheres of our society. It is utmost respect for the individual and consideration for personal dignity.

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Crouch, op. cit., p.65.

*Perestroika* is the all-round intensification of the Soviet economy, the revival and development of the principles of democratic centralism in running the national economy, the universal introduction of management by injunction and by administrative methods, and the overall employment of innovation and socialist enterprise.

*Perestroika* means a resolute shift to scientific methods, an ability to provide a solid scientific basis for entry of new initiative. It means the combination of the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with a planned economy.

*Perestroika* means priority development of the social aimed at ever better satisfaction of the soviet people's requirements for good rest and recreation, education and health care. It means increasing concern for every individual and society as a whole.

*Perestroika* means the elimination from society of the distortions of socialist ethics, the consistent implementation of the principles of social justice. It means the unity of words and deeds, rights and duties. It is the evaluation of honest, highly qualified labour, the overcoming of levelling tendencies in pay and consumerism.<sup>17</sup>

*Perestroika* which was envisaged by Gorbachev was a progressive, qualitative and revolutionary change aiming at social development. It also involved radical changes in all aspect of society – political, social, economic, cultural, in science and technology, moral and intellectual life, ethics and so on.<sup>18</sup> The agenda of *Perestroika* could also be explained as a transition from the first Industrial Revolution of machines to the second Industrial Revolution of micro electronics and biotechnology and the development of non-ferrous metallurgy to overcome the problem passed by the limits of the earth's resources.<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev's radical reforms within the conceptual framework of *Perestroika* (restructuring), *glasnost* (openness) and *novoye myshelenye* (new thinking) aimed at (i) rejuvenating the stagnant Soviet economy and (ii)

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<sup>17</sup> Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and The World* (London: William Collins Sons and Co., 1987), pp.34-35.

<sup>18</sup> Ajay Pattanaik, *Perestroika and Women Labour Force in Soviet Central Asia* (New Delhi: New Literature, 1989), p.140.

<sup>19</sup> Rakesh Gupta, "Perestroika: Transition with participation", *International Studies*, vol.27, no.1, 1990, pp.4-5.

Security consideration in a rapidly changing international system which would be controlled and dominated by those nations which would acquire mastery over space weapons and new information technology.<sup>20</sup> *Perestroika* in Gorbachev's framework, implied "not only eliminating the stagnation and conservatism of the preceding period and correcting the mistakes committed, but also overcoming historically limited, outdated features of social organisation and work methods."<sup>21</sup> Thomas H. Naylor while evaluating *perestroika* explained that General Secretary Gorbachev was pursuing the following ten fundamental objectives which seemed fairly balanced and comprehensive. There were reforms in the field of economy, agriculture, technology, consumption, international trade, democratisation, foreign policy, third world, arms control and culture.

*Perestroika* (restructuring or radical reform) was a set of tactics aimed at resolving contradictions. Rather than a set of policies, *Perestroika* was an attitude or approach to politics and society. *Perestroika* involved four mobilising strategies, such as: Individual (and group) self-interest; Public criticism (*glasnost*); Democracy (*demokratiya, demokratizatsiya, pluralism*); Law and order.<sup>22</sup>

*Perestroika* was marked by an important shift in the organizing principles of Soviet society. From an administered model – in which the public interest was determined centrally by the authorities it envisaged change to a

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<sup>20</sup> Shams ud Din, "The Gorbachev Radical Reforms" in Shams ud Din (ed.), *Perestroika and the Nationality Question in the USSR* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1990) p.10.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>22</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.13.

system wherein individuals and groups were allowed to express their own interests. Within this framework of *Perestroika*, Gorbachev also adopted the policy of *Glasnost*, which meant public criticism and access to information. It legitimised the articulation of individual group interests and the answerability of decision-makers to criticism; and thus involved greater individual and group autonomy. Through *glasnost* a process of democratisation started in the Soviet society where pluralism of views were granted in the previously centralized and controlled media. The press then reported on multitude of facts that had been previously hushed up. *Glasnost*, criticism and self-criticism began to be practised in the closing years of Brezhnev's rule and that gained a great acceleration through Gorbachev. Gorbachev claimed that no real change was feasible without them. He pointed out that democracy could not be achieved without *glasnost* and without democracy, socialism would be achieved.

*Demokratiya* (democracy) and *demokratizatsiya* (democratisation) involved a transformation in participation in decision-making. The objective of democratisation was to place more authority with the rank-and-file citizen or member of a collectivity or group. A thorough restructuring of the apparatus of the state would devolve power to the legislative apparatus (the Soviets) and place a limitation on the centralized role of the party. *Demokratiya* was meant to involve the masses in a more positive way in public affairs and thus limit the power of the leadership. It also aimed at encouraging pluralism of interests.

With the advent of *Perestroika* the notion of law moved Soviet Union towards a legally constituted state. As Gorbachev put it at the Nineteenth Party



conference in June 1988, “the process of the consistent democratisation of Soviet society should complete the creation of a socialist state governed by the rule of law.”<sup>23</sup>

Gorbachev’s *perestroika* was not a break from socialism Gorbachev’s reform emphasized man’s freedom.<sup>24</sup> It also emphasized differential equality. It very much adopted Lenin’s slogan “from each according to his ability, and to each according to his work”.<sup>25</sup> In his report to the Nineteenth All-Union Conference of the CPSU, Gorbachev spoke of the apathy and estrangement, giving importance to individuals and admitted that socialism to be a system of true and tangible humanism in which man had to be really the measure of all things. He said that *Perestroika* meant to tackle the problem of man as a being belonging to the species homo sapiens (as stated by Hegel), the problem of economic foundations of this alienation (as claimed by Marx), and the problem of political alienation (as created by Stalinist political practices).<sup>26</sup>

As a part of radical reforms (*Perestroika*), political reforms were carried out through two stages. In the first stage a new more representative and responsible super-parliament, i.e. Congress of People’s Deputies was created: elections were held for this congress as well as Supreme Soviet: the historic Slogan “Power to the Soviets” was further advanced by reconstructing representative bodies and widening their powers; government bodies were delinked from the party. Powers of the party and government bodies were

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<sup>23</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.15.

<sup>24</sup> Rakesh Gupta, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev’s speech quoted in Rakesh Gupta, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

clearly demarcated. The key issue in the second stage was the creation of a new structure of bodies of power and administration in the republics, territories, regions, cities and districts.<sup>27</sup> For that, electoral law were enacted democratically and few adjustments were done to the electoral system. A process of decentralisation of power to achieve a true federation was also designed. The citizens were ensured basic rights and legal protection. The reforms of Gorbachev aimed to achieve progress in successive stages towards a “Socialist rule-of-law state.”

The electoral system of the Soviet polity was changed to make it more democratic. Prior to the reforms, the electoral system was undemocratic. There prevailed the practice of only one candidate running for each seat. Thus owing to the lack of competitiveness among candidate and the non-existence of alternative before the voters, the role of the candidate was hardly representative. The reform of the electoral system was aimed at ensuring the renewal of entire political practice in that sphere. Democratic mechanism of interaction between the voters and the candidates in the election campaign was introduced.<sup>28</sup> More effective participation of the voters was guaranteed at the stages of election campaign thereby raising the qualitative level of the Deputies (members of legislature) who were called upon to perform the functions of representatives government bodies actively and competently.

Under the Leninist system further the vanguard role of the communist party, a unique type of organisational structure was devised i.e. democratic

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<sup>27</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

centralism. This involved the election of bodies from the bottom up and control from the top down. Before the reforms, the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) was very disciplined and the members were expected to follow the party line and support it. The Party was centralised and factions were banned. Dissent was favoured if achieved through democratic discussion and debate in which all the members were allowed to participate and air their views. There was always a tension between the democratic and centralist elements in this doctrine. Under Stalin, centralism became dominant.

At the Nineteenth Party Conference, Gorbachev complained that democratic centralism had been “largely replaced by bureaucratic centralism.” “Gorbachev sought to emphasize a more pluralistic approach.

Under the one-party system that historically came about and became established in our country, we need a constantly operating mechanism for the comparison of views and for criticism and self-criticism in the party and in society in conditions of growing democratisation ..... This is how the essence of miner-party democracy was understood by V.Z. Lenin ..... who was resolutely opposed to the persecution of Party Comrades for thinking differently.<sup>29</sup>

*Uskorenie* is another key term used by Gorbachev along with *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *democratizatsia*. *Usokorenie* meant ‘acceleration’ which actually connoted the revival of the lost dynamism in the economic growth. In his book, *Perestroika*, Gorbachev envisaged a radical economic reform programme. The June 1987 Plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee endorsed Gorbachev’s reform programme for economic reconstruction and acceleration. Gorbachev himself explained the all

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<sup>29</sup> Gorbachev, Nineteenth Party Conference, 29 July 1988, quoted in David Lane, op. cit. p.72.

embracing and comprehensive character of his 'radical economic reform'. In his own words: "It provides for fundamental changes in planning, a reform of the price formation system and of the financial and crediting mechanism, and the restructuring of foreign economic ties. It also provides for the creation of new organizational structure of management, for all-round development of the democratic foundations of management, and for the broad introduction of the self management principles".<sup>30</sup>

The objectives of the economic reforms under Gorbachev were to reduce the "over centralization" of the economic mechanism. *Perestroika* aimed at establishing a 'planned market economy based on diversity of property forms, independent producers competing with one another, and a developed financial system and profits and becomes for individual and group of workers.<sup>31</sup> Keeping these objectives in mind Gorbachev called for an end to Stalinist command economy, particularly in Industry, a major scaling down of the role of the central planners and a managed shift to a mixed economy, a form of market socialism, with a combination of planning and market forces.<sup>32</sup> The Central Committee agreed in June 1987 to follow this road, replacing the command economy with a form of self-management that would involve elected plant managers and bankruptcy for unprofitable enterprises.

*Perestroika* aimed at reforming the economic administration. The reform in the sphere of administration aimed at limiting the power of the centralized ministries. As a result, the power of the ministers were curbed.

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<sup>30</sup> Vinay Kumar Malhotra, op. cit., p. 34

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Crouch, op. cit., p. 66.

Thus “financial autonomy” was given to production enterprises to encourage economic rather than administrative relations. On the otherhand greater autonomy was granted to the republics. The executive of the Council of Ministers of the USSR sill continued to control the economic regulation of the economy and other state objectives (defense and foreign affairs). Nevertheless, there was slimming down of the central bureaucratic system.

The economic reform under *Perestroika* sought to encourage “individual entrepreneurship” and through the Employment Act of May 1987, more than 30 types of activities were legalized. The *perestroika* was meant to improve quality of production in order to increase the marketability of Soviet products both at home and abroad. And Soviet reformers felt that quality of production in order to increase the marketability of Soviet products could be improved by:

- i. an improvement in labour productivity,
- ii. an optimal capital-output ratio and
- iii. a more rational use of science and technology.<sup>33</sup>

Under the radical reforms of Gorbachev, laws were passed to grant individual and “co-operatives” right to engage in private trade.<sup>34</sup> The law on co-operatives, adopted on May 26, 1988 permitted co-operatives to function in all spheres of the economy. Co-operatives were allowed to hire full-time contract employees as per their requirement. This was a bold step towards the creation of a viable private sector.<sup>35</sup> The number of co-operative began to rise

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<sup>33</sup> Sham shu Din, op. cit., p.22.

<sup>34</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.38.

<sup>35</sup> Vinay Malhotra, op.cit., p.43

during this period. By 1988 there were a total of 19,539 units in operation with 245,700 people working on them.<sup>36</sup>

To reduce the detailed administrative control of enterprises, the reform strategy called for the use of “economic” criteria: the principle of *Khozraschet* was adopted. *Khozraschet* was the idea of autonomous financial accounting: each accounting book must balance its own books.<sup>37</sup> Another objective of the new economic mechanism was to adopt a wholesale trading in the means of production. For going over to self-financing and self-management, wholesale trading is vitally necessary.<sup>38</sup> Instead of the command methods of economic management, the economy was sought to be run on the principles of commodity-money relations.

In the sphere of agriculture, radical and sweeping changes were planned. The emphasis on co-operatives were placed on a qualitatively new level. Agriculture prior to Gorbachev’s reform was a major source of weakness in the Soviet economy. Under the administrative or command system there were three types of farming units: State farms, Collective farms and Private plots. Agriculture earlier had provided sufficient food to maintain the population, though the quality and availability of foods were below people’s expectations. The problem arose partly due to rapid urbanization of the Soviet Union – between 1950 and 1980 the urban population rose from 39 to 63 percent of the

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<sup>36</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.38.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>38</sup> Report by Mikhail Gorbachev at 19<sup>th</sup> All Union Conference of CPSU, quoted in Ajay Pattanaik, op. cit. p.144.

total population, an increase of 97 million people.<sup>39</sup> With urbanization the standard of living increased whereas the quality of consumption declined, as agriculture did not keep up with the demand.

For agriculture, the reform strategy attempted to inject an element of private enterprise to increase output through the leasing of land and the use of quasi-family contract system. The reforms of Gorbachev aimed basically at granting farmers broad opportunities for displaying independence, enterprise and initiative. Work groups within state and collective farms were encouraged to lease land and equipment and to form it on a contract basis.<sup>40</sup> Earlier the collective or state farm was given a plan and farmers were required to fulfill it as efficiently as they could.

Within agriculture the concept of co-operatives was not undermined rather it was enhanced. After the 27<sup>th</sup> congress, there was a fresh look at the co-operatives. As Gorbachev put it, “the co-operative movement must be revived in all its diversity. But this revival must naturally be in line with the new conditions and new requirements. We must re-establish co-operatives, but in the old and sometimes very simple forms; we must create modern co-operatives, highly cultivated, and widely integrated within their structure and with state enterprises and organizations. We need highly effective co-operatives, well equipped technically, and able to produce goods and services of the highest quality and to compete with our own and foreign enterprises.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> David Lane, op. cit. p.45.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>41</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech at 4<sup>th</sup> All Union Congress of Collective Farmers, March 23, 1988, quoted in Ajay Pattanaik, op. cit., p.152.

The radical reforms which were envisaged through Gorbachev's *Perestroika* were an all-comprehensive process. These aimed at making Soviet Union a technocratic state, so that it could minimize its gap with the West. The reforms under *Perestroika* looked at changing the Soviet society in all spheres of life. It was a break from old command structure of the economy towards a more competitive market economy.

However, this reform policy of Gorbachev paved the way towards a multi-dimensional change in the society and culture of Soviet Union. Any change in any part does have a strong bearing in bringing the change in the whole system. Gorbachev's economic and political reform or his policy of perestroika brought a lot of changes in the whole Soviet system and specifically in the socio-cultural spheres. The nature of changes, whether positive or negative is always a matter of grave concern for everybody. These aspects will be dealt in details in the next chapter.



# Chapter III

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES IN RUSSIA DURING PERESTROIKA**

The principles of socialism, such as social justice, non-exploitation of man by man, from each according to his ability to each according to his work, etc. are fine. But if in practice, they lead to shortages of food and essential consumer goods, lack of adequate housing and services, poor medical and health care, bad communications, a low rate of growth, and poor productivity, then there is indeed something wrong with socialism as understood at present. This is what Gorbachev felt when he came to the power and thought of restructuring the society.

But it is quite clear that Gorbachev did not distance himself from the socialist ideology. The causes behind the introduction of perestroika has already been discussed in the earlier chapters. The various objectives adopted during perestroika have also been discussed. However, the present chapter will give specific importance to the various changes that occurred due to the restructuring policy. It will also emphasize the various consequences of perestroika.

Seldom in the seventy years history the Soviet Union has there been a period as exciting as Gorbachev's years in office. The initiatives of the new secretary general have brought new impetus to the development of the USSR, previously characterized by increasing stagnation.

The principle of “transparence” of (glasnost) occupied central importance in all fields of policy. The expression may also be translated as “openness”. More openness was encouraged in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's declarations showed an intent to expose to the pressures of publicity those functionaries of party, state, and economy who were not up to their jobs. In addition, intellectual and cultural life in Soviet Union had begun to relax noticeably under the protection of the spirit of glasnost.<sup>1</sup>

Any innovation encounters resistance in society and in nature. Reform often turn into counter reform which frequently return society to a state at times considerably worse than before reform. The aim of a reform and its system of values is ultimately to raise the social effectiveness of society's reproductive activity. This requires the mass dissemination of a system of values oriented towards progress. Hence, the most important factor for the fate of a reform is the acceptability of its particular elements to people. There is the possibility of it being seen in terms of a polar opposition, that is as a state of comfort or discomfort, as desired change or perhaps as a negative, intimidating and dangerous change. Innovation that are not sanctioned in the culture, that the culture does not perceive as “its own”, as something normal and comfortable, can provoke a potent state of mass discomfort in society. This is what became more relevant to the transitional Russian society.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerchard Wetting, *The Soviet Union 1986/1987: Events, problems, perspectives*, Federal Institute for East European and International Studies (Boulder, San Francisco, London: West View Press, 1989), p.1.

## Class Structure

In the years of perestroika the conceptions of the social structure of Soviet Society had undergone decisive changes. The development that have occurred under the leadership of Gorbachev reflected major social changes in the USSR, resulting in a social structure that was qualitatively different from that under Stalin and Khrushchev. Gorbachev's role should be considered not as one of changing society from the top; instead the changes taking place during his leadership should be viewed as a result of new social groups and interests that had developed in the past thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

According to Iadov, the ideologized and mytholized model of "two plus one" - two classes and a stratum, the denial of social hierarchies, alienation, and antagonisms, conceptions of a progressive social homogeneity, etc. proved to be absolutely unjustified.<sup>3</sup> Very deep contradictions were found within the basic elements of the social structure-classes, and ethno-national groups. A radical re-examination and revamping of the entire conception of social structure became necessary; namely bringing to light not only already known but also unknown social groups, moving from a description of the external structure related to industrial and other sphere of production, to an analysis of the internal structure related to the vertical and horizontal make up of civil society; studying of the hierarchy of social structure i.e., not only relations of equality and inequality, but also of domination and sub-coordination: Finally,

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<sup>2</sup> David Lane, *Soviet Society Under Perestroika* (London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p.123.

<sup>3</sup> V.A. Iadov, "The social processes of perestroika", *Sociological Research*, vol.32, no.2, March-April, 1992, p. 15.

social structure had necessarily to take on a subjective character, becoming connected with the individual, his development and his freedom or unfreedom.<sup>4</sup>

According to Kochetov, “A fundamental change was taking place in social consciousness; the deceptive nature of propagandistically inflamed contrasts between “communist” and “democrats”. It was becoming obvious, and the genuine social cause of the confrontation was becoming intelligible”.<sup>5</sup> The problem of social polarization was beginning to be taken seriously.

There was a shift from social homogeneity to more differentiation in the sense that the society started to bid farewell to the politics of equalization and levelling of people with respect to their abilities and wages, and was making transition to inequality based first on the elimination of restrictions on wages and second on allowing diverse forms of property and entrepreneurial activity.

The social structure of the existing Soviet society was fundamentally undermined and there followed the process of disintegration. There was the disintegration of, in the first instance, totalitarian society. What was taking place then was the replacement of the coercive integration of a totalitarian society by coercive and voluntary form of integration and class differentiation of a democratic civil society.<sup>6</sup>

The changes that took place in the sphere of power and property affected the social structure of society. Thus, part of the former ruling class ceased its activities, and another part dispersed into the commercial and political spheres.

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<sup>4</sup> V.A. Iadov, op cit., p.15.

<sup>5</sup> A.N. Kochetov, “Sources of the ‘New’ Social Structure”, *Sociological Research*, vol. 33, no. 3, May-June, 1994) p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> V.A Iadov. op. cit., p.16.

A new upper stratum began to form, comprising of the rising liberal-democratic elite; while a middle stratum, consisting of the most qualified, active, and enterprising citizens, was expanding. The values of paternalism and egalitarianism weakened and the economic activities of the population, especially the younger and middle generations, was stimulated.<sup>7</sup> Supplementary employment spread and job as well as social mobility intensified.

However, the spread of market relations caused a deepening of social differences and a sharp polarization into rich and poor. The living standard of large groups of the population declined substantially and the well being of most families was at or below poverty line. The former system of state social guarantees collapsed and no new one was created in that place.

With the introduction of the market economy, the role of the collective peasantry as a major actor in the Soviet society declined. Their number and share in the employed or economically active population fell. In 1987 there were only 12.2 million collective farmers which accounted for only 9.3 percent of the work force compared to 26 percent in 1960 and 46 percent in 1940.<sup>8</sup> The collective farmer was being separated socially and economically from the urban manual worker and non-manual employee.

Collective farmers occupied the bottom rungs of the stratification system in the early Soviet period, although the status of this group improved later on. As a group, they were expected to provide for social security from their own

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<sup>7</sup> Tatiana I. Zaslavskaja, "The Transformation of Russian Society as a Monitoring Target", *Sociological Research*, vol. 33, no. 4, July-Aug, 1994, p.14.

<sup>8</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.132.

resources; their members had no internal passports and could not legally leave farm without permission of the collective farm meeting, its governing body. During the Gorbachev era, collective farmers were able to join the agricultural workers' trade union and could acquire rights to social security provisions. Also, like urban workers, collective farmers were issued internal passport giving them the right to travel.

According to David Lane, "Collective farmers, however, had considerable representation in the communist party. In 1989, 11.4 percent of the party's total membership constituted of collective farmers, 45.4 percent were manual workers, and 43.2 percent were non-manuals."<sup>9</sup> Gorbachev's policy encouraged the leasing of land by members from the collective farm and an increase in trade on the market. According to him, the essence of economic change in the countryside had to consist of granting farmers broad opportunities for displaying independence, enterprise and initiative.

The manual working class was changing in character. In the 80's the rising level of education led manual workers to seek work-satisfaction and seek a wider range of consumer goods. The greater use of the market was a strategy that the leadership adopted not only to meet consumer demands but also as a means of disciplining the work force in an attempt to raise productivity. These factors had led to greater instability among the industrial workforce. Labour

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<sup>9</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.134.

productivity had declined because standards of punctuality, workmanship; and labour discipline was poor.<sup>10</sup>

As regards social institutions, the profound process that was taking place so intensely in all these spheres amounted to a kind of change of sign. The institutions that had pre-dominantly fulfilled functions of social suppression were gradually assuming the functions of social defence and protection. Hence identification with social institutions that still retain their former characteristics was diminishing; and identification with those that were acquiring or developing a new set of characteristics was increasing.<sup>11</sup>

While the collective farm peasantry was in numerical decline, at the other end of the scale the professional, technical, and executive personnel - the Soviet intelligentsia was becoming a dynamic social element. The intelligentsia started to grow enormously in size. In 1939 there were only 1.2 million in the USSR with complete higher education (that is, 8 per 1,000 of the population over the age of 10). By 1987 the number had risen to 20.8 million (90 per 1,000) and, in addition, there were another 3.5 million with incomplete higher education and 30.9 million with a secondary specialist background. Even between 1980 and 1986 the number of specialists employed in the economy rose by 4.5 million - reaching a total of 34.6 million.<sup>12</sup>

This group has a higher level of expectations, a more sophisticated view of the world, and higher political awareness. The rise of this social stratum of

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<sup>10</sup> David Lane, *op. cit.*, p.137.

<sup>11</sup> V.A. Iadov, *op. cit.*, p.16.

<sup>12</sup> David Lane, *op. cit.*, p.139.



urban non-manual personnel had great significance for the political culture of the USSR. It aspired for more political participation. The electoral system introduced under Gorbachev led to increased representation of the professional non-manuals in the representative institutions. Gorbachev reported at the Nineteenth Party Conference saying, "we should not be afraid of the disproportionate representation of various strata of the population."<sup>13</sup> This stratum also played a dominant role as a social critique in the USSR. It improved its relative position under *perestroika* and was a major force in shaping the policy of the political elite under the leadership of Gorbachev.

Another important problem of the Gorbachev's economic reform was the distribution of income among the different groups of the population. The transition to market relations in the economy has led to fundamental changes in the machinery and the methods of deriving income and, together with them, in the character of income differentiation of the population and in social stratification.

The gap between high income and low income groups in Russian society has increased 1.5 fold. Thus the difference between the incomes of the 10 percent highest income group and the 10 percent lowest income group has increased from 3.5 times in 1990 to 5.6 times in 1993.<sup>14</sup> Wage differentiation between occupational groups continued to grow. The average wage of managers at various level was 2.5 times higher than that of specialists and three

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<sup>13</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> L.A. Khakhulina, "The Attitude of population Toward Income Differentiation and Social Stratification" *Sociological Research*, vol. 33, no. 4 July-Aug 1994, p.35.

times higher than that of skilled workers; and as much as four times higher than that of employees.<sup>15</sup>

This differentiation in income level had a profound influence in giving rise to new tendencies and new principles of social inequality and stratification. These changes were the result, first, of the liberalization of the entire system of wage payments and its liberation from rigidly centralized regulation and, second, of the spread of new and non-traditional forms of receiving income unknown in the economy of the earlier Soviet period.

These new income policies determined the new character of stratification in Russians society and had both positive and negative consequences. The liberalization of the wage systems had the effect of making the incomes of the working segment of the population depend more not on a system of salary and wage schedules established from the above but on the actual functioning of firms, their ability to operate on the market and compete with other subjects of economic activity. On the whole, this not only strengthened incentives for more effective work but also channelled labour mobility into the economically active spheres of the economy and types of enterprises.

The negative aspect of growing inequality cannot be disregarded. Production was declining, the structural re-organization of the economy was proceeding slowly, subsidies to unprofitable firms were drastically cut, and budget financing of the social sphere diminished. Qualified specialists working

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<sup>15</sup> L.A. Khakhulina, p. 35.

in the military-industrial complex and in science, medical, education, and culture became low paid personnel, where as in practically all the developed societies those who are low paid are basically unskilled workers and employees. This distorted scale of inequality was a threat to the future of society.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it discouraged the intellectual potential and contributed to the alienation of the intelligentsia from the social changes in progress and even to the rejection of the changes.

This imbalance turned to be more complicated with the phenomena of 'brain-drain' in Russian society. With the liberalization of foreign economic relations and emigration laws, the 'brain-drain' occurred in massive scale. The 'brain-drain' a project of economic, political, occupational and other factors connected with the non satisfaction of peoples respective needs.<sup>17</sup>

The economic cause was one of the important factors of 'brain-drain' where people were quite dissatisfied with their financial plight. The unsatisfied need for social prestige and self-realization was also a matter of grave concern. The occupational causes of the 'brain-drain' lay not only in specialists' dissatisfaction with the level of material-technical and informal support for their activity but also in the difficulty of satisfying their creative need for knowledge, training, choosing the subject of their activity, professional reorganization etc. According sources, the minimum value of a specialist was on the average \$300,000, and USSR's loss from the 'brain-drain' in 1990 alone

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<sup>16</sup> L.A. Khakhulina, p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> S.Iu. Glazev, and L.P. Malkov, "The Brain Drain and Social Consciousness", *Problem of Economic Transformation*, vol.35, no. 6, October, 1992, p.51.

exceeded \$75 billion and comprised a figure much greater than the entire influx of capital and economic aid from abroad.<sup>18</sup>

The development of two tendencies, each pointing in a different direction, was typical of a social crisis; fragmentation and differentiation of socio-cultural formations and a simplification of the social identity of the individual. The process of differentiation was determined by the diversity of forms of property, by the social division of labour, and by the dynamics of distributive relations, while the process of simplification was determined by the polarization of socially protected and unprotected strata of the population. Hence, the diversity of social interests of differentiated communities and groups, and the tendencies for the interests of the poor and the rich, wage labourers and entrepreneurs and proprietors, the middle strata, the national ethnic structures, and intersecting socio class and socio-occupational groups to converge. Stratification models began to take on more importance than models based on the social division of labour.<sup>19</sup>

The population's perceptions and assessment of growing social differentiation were quite contradictory. They reflected on the one hand, an understanding that egalitarianism in distribution and the creation of incentives for effective work were incompatible phenomena and, on the other hand, the habit of thinking in terms of old stereotypes, a fear of radical change in the status quo, generating alarm and alienation toward the deepening stratification. But on the whole, public opinion was favourably disposed toward the growing

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<sup>18</sup> S.Iu. Glazev, and L.P. Malkov, *op. cit.*, p.50.

<sup>19</sup> V.A. Iadov, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

inequality in incomes and wages, and the reduced role of direct state intervention in their distribution.

## **Media and Culture**

The restructuring of the Soviet society had a close link with the Soviet mass media, and culture. There were a lot of changes in the field of arts, cinema, literature, media etc. In the Soviet Union, before Gorbachev came to power, there was little freedom of the press and the media were run by the government under strict control. A sea change came over the Soviet media in the years of perestroika and the changes were both of positive and negative nature. The changes that occurred during perestroika were, nevertheless, unprecedented and very nearly unbelievable.

According to Bakaya, the opening of the Congress of the peoples Deputies showed the surprising extent to which 'glasnost' had "invaded" Soviet media."<sup>20</sup> Gorbachev brought about a radical transformation in the Soviet media in general and press in particular through his glasnost which literally means 'openness'. On insistent demands made in the press, TV and Radio it was decided to telecast the proceedings live. This was something unprecedented. For days, together almost all work stopped and people stayed glued to the TV screen which showed the animated debates, hot exchanges of words and even walkouts by some members. Since this experience adversely affected the work of the people employed in all branches of life, it was decided

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<sup>20</sup> Ravi M. Bakaya, "Democratisation: The Role of the Soviet Media" in *The Second Revolution: Democratisation in the USSR*, Indian Centre for Regional Affairs (New Delhi: Patriot, 1989), p. 77.

by general agreement to give up live telecasting of proceedings of the Supreme Soviet elected by the Congress of the Deputies, peoples but to telecast record proceedings in the evenings. Many felt that this too affected the national economy adversely as hundreds of thousands used to sit up late to watch the proceedings and come sleepy to their places of work next day.<sup>21</sup>

‘Moscow News’ in English was unrecognisable from its past ‘incarnation’ and had gone to the extent of publishing articles and letters, critical of the party, the government, the bureaucracy and even of some aspects of perestroika. The literary Gazette, Ogonyok, Selskaya Zhizn, Kultura, and scores of other magazines had not gone to the same extent as ‘Moscow News’, but were seriously and constructively critical of the slow progress of economic reforms and the conservative, dogmatic elements in the party.<sup>22</sup> The Soviet press which was extremely uniform in its presentation of news and views a few years ago became conspicuous for its plurality of views as well as presentation of news items.<sup>23</sup> Soviet papers were divided into “radical”, “conservative” and so on. There were open debates and clashes of opinion between different writers.

Even ‘Pravda’ had changed and published critical letters from its readers which were taken note of by the party secretariat of the CPSU, as Gorbachev had publicly revealed. ‘Lzvestia’, surprisingly enough, had gone even ahead of ‘Pravda’ and increased its circulation from the previous 3 to 11

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<sup>21</sup> Ravi M. Bakaya, op. cit., p.77.

<sup>22</sup> T.N. Kaul, *Stalin to Gorbachev and Beyond* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), p.154.

<sup>23</sup> Ravi, M. Bakaya, op. cit., p.77.

million printed copies daily as compared to Pravada's 8 million.<sup>24</sup> That was perhaps an indication of the gradual decline in the role of the party in the minds of the intelligentsia and response to it.

*Glasnost* led to a major change in the forms of initiation, content, and effects of mass communications.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the media control moved from being one of administrative regulation to a more market like system in which both the initiators or messages and the recipients have had much greater influence over the counter programmes. Although television and radio were financed directly by the government, and were coming under the control of a state committee of television and radio, controllers and programme executives had been brought into contact with the public through many public participation programmes.

The Soviet media were trying to move from a secrecy culture to an information culture, from administrative regulation of information to self-regulation.<sup>26</sup> This principle involved a severe reduction in the bureaucratic control and tutelage of party officials. The press and other media notably played major role in seeing that the suppressed works saw the light of the day. Many party leaders were hesitant and sometimes frightened by the way the Soviet Media made use of the new found freedom.<sup>27</sup> Under Gorbachev, the editors and other executive personnel had been given much greater independence to publish and transmit what they thought to be interesting and

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<sup>24</sup> T.N. Kaul, op. cit., p.154.

<sup>25</sup> David, Lane, op. cit., p.284.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>27</sup> Ravi M. Bakaya, op. cit., p.76.

important to the people with far fewer restraints placed on the content of media. The transformation that had come about in the Soviet press was seen in the fact that papers and periodicals had to compete in order to retain or improve their circulation.

Soviet cultural life was at the centre of public feeling and imagination. So, it was more interesting to observe the developments on the cultural scene. When Gorbachev came to power, the Soviet intellectuals, the reading and listening public, had been many times through short periods of reform and then loss of freedom. As some of them put it, the accordion goes out; the accordion goes in. We know that one generation is more liberal; another is more conservative. As soon as we stick our necks out, we are going to get in to trouble.”<sup>28</sup> With the advance in science and technology, the informatics revolution and the rapid development of means of communication and telecommunications, geographical distances between countries and peoples need not be a barrier to their cultural intercourse and interaction. Gorbachev was well aware of this trend and tried his best to build bridges of friendship within his own country and with other countries. He had thrown open hither to closed areas to diplomats and foreigners and invited a number of foreigners to mingle and interact with his own people.

Cinema and the theatre had been playing their role in the extension of Soviet democracy. Many films which had won international acclamation and

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<sup>28</sup> Irwin, Weil, “Soviet Culture: New Attitudes Towards the Art” in Arthur B. Gunlicks and John D. Treadway, (eds.), *The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: Assessing the First Year* (New York, London: Praeger, 1987), p.130.



prizes at film festivals were among those which were lying for years on the shelves because of the censors. When one examines new trends in Soviet cinema, one is inevitably led to the conclusion that the most interesting was done by makers of documentaries. The anti-corruption campaign during Gorbachev led to the filming of a number of exposes of political heavy weights; the audience now saw scenes of government officials turning their backs and running from the cameras. There was an increase in the availability of rock music, both imported and domestic. Of more interest was the increasingly rebellious nature of authorised Soviet rock music as represented by groups such as “Kino”, “Time Machine” and “Aquarium”.<sup>29</sup>

The new changes that took place in the society attracted much of the public opinion. There had been many exposures of corruption in high places. Those led to punishment of many highly placed persons. Sensitive internal issues were openly discussed and debated in the press, T.V. and radio, including the worsening ethnic relations and clashes which had led to much loss of life and migration of refugees. Themes which were never touched upon before were increasingly appearing in the media. These included writings and talks by religious leaders and reports on the activities of non-official voluntary organisations and charity organisations. The attitude towards the so called “dissidents” had radically changed.<sup>30</sup> Their works were imported as well as reprinted in the country. Reports of accidents and natural calamities were not

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<sup>29</sup> Guy Houk, “Soviet Culture and Society Under Gorbachev” in Mel Gurtov (ed.), *The Transformation of Socialism* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: West view press, 1990), p. 141.

<sup>30</sup> Ravi M. Bakaya, op. cit., p. 82.

only given publicity but their causes became the subject of animated discussion in the media.

The Soviet media were now wide open to opposing opinions including those from critics and statesmen abroad. Their articles were openly printed, sometimes with soviet rejoinders. Soviet press often carried articles and interviews by foreign politicians opposed to socialism and communism. No leader, including Gorbachev, was spared of criticism and the media no longer recognised any final authority.

However, the socio-economic process initiated under Gorbachev, had a substantial negative impact on the cultural sphere. The positive impact was also undermined by the negative consequence. It is extremely important to investigate the inter-relationship among the fundamental concepts to understand the essence of the historical calamity and the hidden mechanisms of transition to a new, civilized, social, economic, technological and spiritual cultural state.

There was no doubt among the people that the Russian culture was in bad shape. There were clearly discernible trends of a decline in the number of club institutions; from 77,500 in 1980 to 73,200 in 1990 and a decline in theatre attendance; from 71.0 million in 1980 to 56.6 million in 1990.<sup>31</sup>

The Russian budget on cultural infrastructure was drastically reduced. At the beginning of the 1991, about 12.9 percent of the mass libraries and 26.4

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<sup>31</sup> Feliks F. Rybakov, "Culture and Market Relations", *Problems of Economic Transitions*, vol.36, no. 5, September, 1993, p.84.

percent of the clubs were in need of capital repairs; 2.7 percent and 4.3 percent respectively were in need of emergency repairs.<sup>32</sup> The extremely limited Russian budget allocations for socio-cultural needs did not make it possible to alter this situation for the better.

There was also high commercialisation of culture. A powerful disincentive to the development of culture had been set in motion by the local Soviets' acquisition of broad rights to set lease payment rates; artists, sculptors, and other representatives of the creative genres were being denied benefits. The low level of honoraria and pay for producers, performers and actors were leading to the progressive drain of talent abroad. The planning of paid services by finance organs of the local Soviets on the basis of the "status quo" and the mechanical transfer of growth rates from the performance of consumer services (dry cleaning, laundry, shoe repair) to culture had resulted in absurdity because planning an increase in services in culture sphere without regard to its social role forced the corresponding institutions to orient themselves exclusively toward commercial criteria contrary to commonsense.<sup>33</sup> There, artistic level began to decline due to the lack of support for cultural activities.

It is, therefore, quite clear that Russian culture and media had changed to a high degree influencing the other part of the society. The greater coverage of news, the debunking of previous Soviet practices, the delegitimation of people in authority roles, and the greater public attention given to the more seamy side of Soviet life had probably not only led to higher expectations on

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<sup>32</sup> Feliks F. Rybakov, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* . 87.

the part of many groups but also had weakened seriously the ideological cement of Soviet society. Rather than talking of a united society, socialist pluralism became the watchword of the new Soviet authorities. The totalitarian model of manipulative control from the top did not fully do justice to the variety found in the Soviet media.

### **Gender Relation and Women**

Sex is a biological and physiological characteristic of human beings. Gender roles are the social and cultural behaviour and expectations that are associated with each sex.<sup>34</sup>

The relationship between sex and gender roles is a matter of dispute. People with a more sociological perspective take the stance that gender roles are socially determined and have no origin in biology. According to J. Smelser “Differences between men and women are studied by sociologists on the basis of an analysis of four components of gender-self-awareness; biological sex, gender identity, gender ideals, and sexual roles”.<sup>35</sup>

The question of women has always occupied a major part in the sociological literature. It embraces the social status of women in all spheres of social life and especially in economics and politics, the problem of discrimination against them, and the organization of actions in defense of their legal and actual equality. The concept of “social status” is an integrative

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<sup>34</sup> David Lane, op.cit., p.213.

<sup>35</sup> G.G. Sillaste, “Sociogender Relations in the Period of Social Transformation in Russia”, *Sociological Research*, vol.34, no.1, Jan-Feb, 1995, p. 36.

indicator of the position of women in all spheres of activity and the functioning of society.

Marxist explanations of gender roles are most pertinent to understand the policy in the USSR because the leaders of the Soviet state sought to abolish the major forms of exploitation.<sup>36</sup> The position of women in modern society was taken up by Marx and Engels, who were upset by the condition of proletarian women under bourgeoisie rule. According to them “The subjugation of women under capitalism remain guised beneath the veneer of sexual equality”.<sup>37</sup>

For Engels and Lenin a new type of socialist family based on the reciprocity of spouse relationship, mutual love, and equality arises after the abolition of bourgeois system.<sup>38</sup> Under socialism child would be reared in the family but society would increasingly take a greater responsibility for child care. Monogamy would regulate sexual relations but on the basis of choice of the partners. These were the principles prevalent during the building of socialist USSR and although. Thus, the twenty-seventh Congress of the party noted the achievements of socialism in freeing women from economic and social oppression, and in creating for women equal opportunities to work, obtain an education, and participate in social life, and especially stressed the necessity of

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<sup>36</sup> David Lane, op.cit; p.215.

<sup>37</sup> Ajay Patnaik, *Perestroika and Women Labour Force in Central Asia* (New Delhi: New Literature, 1989) p.X.

<sup>38</sup> David, Lane, op.cit; p.215.

improving conditions of work and everyday life for women, and of raising the material well being of family.<sup>39</sup>

The beginning of Gorbachev's era with his theory of *perestroika* did have a strong bearing on the status of women in Soviet society. The problem of women's equality was perhaps one of the most controversial in the area of human rights. Ofcourse, Gorbachev's policy intended to enhance the facilities for women in every field. At the same time, these policies had a reverse impact on the women's position.

The intention of Gorbachev was to strengthen the family and to give more importance to the social production. Recognition of the strain on women brought on by their roles of homemaker, mother, and worker had led to a new emphasis on the more feminine role of women. As he put it, "we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children. Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home - house work, the up bringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problem in children's and young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production – are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitude to family responsibilities. That is why we are now holding heated debates.....about the question of what we

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<sup>39</sup> E.S. Chertikhina, and E.B. Gruzdeva, "The Occupational Status and Wages of Women in the USSR", *Soviet Sociology*, vol.26, no.3, winter, 1987-88, p.67.

should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission”<sup>40</sup>.

The leadership of Gorbachev had called for a reduction in women’s employment in dangerous jobs and jobs with health hazards. According to Tatyana Zaslavskaya, on a discussion with Novosti Correspondent, “The radical economic reform and new know-how were supplanting unskilled and manual labour. The process was welcome but it hit the women’s interest hard; women found it more difficult to keep up with the qualification standards of men”<sup>41</sup>.

Natalya Rimashevskayh, Head of the Institute of Socio-economic Aspects of Demography, said “Modern technology makes the work easier as well as more difficult for people and of course, only high skilled workers can handle it. Because, most of the less skilled workers are women, they are being automatically relegated to less advantageous production areas”<sup>42</sup>.

The important result of the social transformations in Russia was that women had been deprived of many social gains; their social status before so called perestroika had declined sharply; society had come so far as to engage in social discrimination against women in all spheres of social life, and moreover in forms and manifestations that Russian women never knew previously.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> M.S. Gorbachev, *Perestroika; New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (London: Collins, 1987) p.117.

<sup>41</sup> Tatyana Zaslavskaya and Natalya Rimashevskaya, “Women’s Equality: Inside View”, *Soviet Sociology*, vol. 26, no.3, 1989, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> G.G. Sillaste, op.cit; p. 38.

There was a contradiction for women to return to 'purely womanly mission', because it would make the conditions of women's greater participation in authority and work roles more difficult. Here, the priority would be given to women's reproductive role. The growing consumerism and market orientation had lifted previous restrictions on vulgarity and demeaning of women. Beauty contests with contestants replete in bikinis were accepted part of Soviet life; the first Soviet beauty queen contest occurred in 1987; in 1988-89 an All Union competition for the title of "Miss Photo – USSR" was held.<sup>44</sup>

Those competitions were arranged by the new private enterprises. Prostitution and marketing of sex seemed to be more acceptable. Female nudity was permissible: a female Soviet skating champion at the European championships even made the front page of the British mass tabloid press for the daringness of her see through costume. That was, however, a cultural shock to the old generation. The basic rights of women to participate in political life were being violated. For women, the process of democratization had turned into a totally unexpected situation; they had been driven from active political life and cut off from participation in state decision making.

## **Youth**

The younger generation's voice in the political life of the state, its access to cultural values, and lastly, its material well being – all constitute the principal criteria determining its position in society. This is the basis of social

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<sup>44</sup> David Lane, *op. cit.*, p.229.



justice. The status of youth as a social group in society obviously shapes its attitude to the existing social system. For its part, this attitude predetermines the ideals, ideological and moral bearings, plans and the orientation and degree of social activity of the youth.

One can not say that Soviet youth did not have any problems. They had real rights and the opportunity to work, get an education, enjoy rest and leisure, social advancement – all forming the foundation for realizing young people’s hopes and aspirations and effecting the principle of social justice in respect to the younger generation in the USSR. But, it is a fact that, the transitional period, especially the reform period, influenced the Soviet youth to a greater extent. Despite of the constitutional provisions, they were being marginalised, during Perestroika.

There had been general shift away from a collectivist, compliant consciousness to one of self interest, individual striving, and success Glasnost and demokratiya had had led to the flowering of numerous “informal groups” of young people. The official youth organization, Komsomol could not meet the aspirations of many youth and was in decline. This, again, reflected a difference in generational attitudes – a greater aspiration for individual expression rather than collective activity. “Individualistic Pluralism” had replaced socialist collectivism”.<sup>45</sup>

The Russian Youth were facing typical problems during perestroika. A sizable portion of youth was placed outside the mainstream of social and

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<sup>45</sup> David Lane, op.cit, p.243.

political life. Without committing any legal offences, without openly violating the socially acceptable norms, those groups could not find a proper place in society, did not have a stable economic position and were compelled to live with a feeling of discomfort.

The important among the youth group were the marginal youth groups. Some of them may be called the 'traditional', such as handicapped, former "jail birds", people having specific diseases, tramps, professional beggars, etc. Handicapped were the most affected group. Many of them had become objects of social defence and charity, but this did not help them to enter the mainstream of life, sometimes even made it worse for them, stressing their disability. Especially, serious was the situation with the handicapped because of some psychic diseases, where employment possibilities were becoming less and less. While in 1984 the proportion of employed and unemployed handicapped young people (up to the age of 29) was two to one, in 1989 that proportion changed and the number of unemployed increased.<sup>46</sup> The problem of psychic disease was becoming more grave and the percentage of mental patients had been growing steadily since the 1980s. The number of outpatients in mental hospitals had increase from 1980 to 1989 by 16.7%.<sup>47</sup>

There was a feeling of alienation among the youth because, they always felt that they were unprotected by the state. A state which gave more emphasis on the market often could not give justice to these groups. Often, young people

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<sup>46</sup> Victor Shapinsky, "Problems of Marginal Youth Groups in Russia Today", *Public Opinion*, vol. 38, no.7, April, 1993, p.7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.8.

who were apparently settled felt discomfort and dejected and internally did not belong to the society in which they led their existence. Such contradictions, such “internal marginalism” had bearing upon the very depths of social consciousness and may have far reaching effects on the future. The problem was also quite acute for the rural youth, who were disappointed in life perspectives in their native places. They tried to escape to cities in search of new opportunities, thus breaking their roots with traditional peasant values, but often they did not find the dream land in the city and became lumpens, outsiders.

Individualism was expressed through various forms of consumerism and self-gratification as well as opposition to such consumerism. “The previous forms of social solidarity – through Kollektivnost had lost their binding effect”.<sup>48</sup> The policy of perestroika involved the recognition and freedom of the individual. Informal groups became increasingly independent of the Komsomol. Under Gorbachev the market was replacing administrative control—the market in the social sphere was reflected in mushrooming of the different kinds of youth associations.<sup>49</sup>

Young people became the victim of drastic changes in political situation towards the end of perestroika days, when society started to disintegrate. They found themselves facing a dilemma of where to live. Marginalization, pluralism and consumerism created a gap in the society which was the sign of the loss of Soviet ideology. Marginalization of a number of groups led to the growth of

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<sup>48</sup> David Lane, *op.cit*; p.243.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

criminal tendencies, because “associability” (a break in socialization) easily got transformed into “antisociality”.<sup>50</sup>

Young people’s consciousness as active subjects of social creativity and their desire for self-realization increased sharply during of perestroika. Time had, as never before, drawn a clear line of demarcation between the generations and revealed not only the differences in their taste and views on life, music and fashion, but also the differences in some intellectual goals and value orientations. A notable specific feature was the rapid increase in the number of young people’s voluntary associations and non-formal groups, which embraced millions.

Majority of the youth were engaged in activity which was undoubtedly useful for the society. At the same time, along with the greater political consciousness and social activeness of most young people, there had been a marked increase in the number of young men and women who were politically passive, had no interest in political knowledge, had a nihilistic attitude to the future, and were confused while the earlier position in assessing the phenomena and events of social reality was being either rejected or questioned.<sup>51</sup>

Symbolic was the emergence of the “metallisty” seemed to be catalysed by the legitimation of rock music under Gorbachev and ensuing concerts by Soviet heavy metal bands, which gave metal fans their first occasion to dress

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<sup>50</sup> Victor Shapinsky, op. cit; p.9.

<sup>51</sup> Igor Ilyinsky, “Socialism’s Development and the Youth”, in *Big Changes in the USSR*, Leafing Through the Soviet Journal, ‘Kommunist’ (Moscow: Progress, 1988) p.204.

the part and congregate in the large numbers.<sup>52</sup> Most of the Soviet adults viewed the sub-culture as a sign of moral crisis in their society and were inclined to blame the breakdown on excessive liberalization, or excessive western influence, or both. The sub-culture had mushroomed under Gorbachev. They felt that moving away from the norms of the socialist way of life did considerable damage to young people's moral consciousness and morals. "Consumer attitudes, 'double morality', parasitism, egoism, drunkenness, drug addiction and rowdy behaviour affected some of them and had a destructive effect on their ideals".<sup>53</sup>

### **Ethnic Relations**

Ethnicity is a natural phenomenon; it has existed ever since the beginning of the human life. According to David Lane, "An ethnic group usually denotes a less inclusive social entity distinguished by language, religious affiliation and skin pigmentation".<sup>54</sup> An ethnic group may be identifiable in terms of racial attributes, they may also share other cultural characteristics such as religion, occupation, language, or politics. The crucial point is that ethnicity in concrete societies is nurtured not in isolation but in conjunction with various other institutional structures as a result of their interaction.<sup>55</sup> The USSR was obviously an ethnically composite state and the

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<sup>52</sup> Bushnell John, "The History and Study of the Soviet Youth Sub-culture", *Soviet Sociology*, vol.29, no.1, Jan-Feb, 1990. p.6.

<sup>53</sup> Igor Ilyinsky, op.cit., p.204.

<sup>54</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.161.

<sup>55</sup> R.R. Sharma, "Ethnic and National Diversities: Parameters of National Integration in the USSR", in *The Second Revolution: Democratization in the USSR*, Indian Centre for Regional Affairs, (New Delhi: Patriot, 1989) p.85.

ethnic groups were largely enmeshed in a multinational state. The ethnicity in this case was thus incorporated into nationality.

It appeared that there were various dimensions of the nationality problem. There was the case of nationality dissatisfaction in relation to political decision making. Some national groups felt left out from the process. However, the reason why the ethnic problems had surfaced during perestroika was that these feelings were suppressed by force after the death of Lenin and got a chance of exposure during the campaign for *glasnost* and democratization.

The status of the major Russian nationality changed as a result of the greater assertiveness of the other national groups and the greater plurality associated with Perestroika. The Russians had not only formed the largest group, but they had dominated culturally and politically in the Soviet Union. Russians had a superior status and had been considered as 'first among equals' or as the elder brother to other nationalists. Russians had also dominated the leading political and economic positions of the USSR.

Under Perestroika a revival of Russian nationalism had taken place. Many grassroots movements, such as the association 'Pamyat' (memory), 'Otechestvo' (Father land), The United Council of Russia, the United Workers Front, and the All Russian Cultural Foundation had arisen to defend peculiarly Russian concerns.<sup>56</sup> Over the course of Mikhail Gorbachev's first five years as leader of the Soviet Union, Perestroika had transformed the 'national question' through out what Ronald Reagan once melodramatically termed the 'Evil

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<sup>56</sup> David Lane, op. cit., p.199.

Empire' of the Soviet block.<sup>57</sup> The Soviet union was highly centralized unitary state in which the central authorities in Moscow used to decide all essential and a large number of secondary questions. Gorbachev leadership of course, had not suggested that by “radical reform” and revolutionary ‘reconstruction’ it intended any decentralization in the sense of a transfer of responsibilities to the territorial, national, and regional periphery. However, a number of particularistic forces in society had grown up in the past decades, among them a diversely developed regionalism and ethno nationalism.

National consciousness in the USSR proved to be stronger than class allegiance, and for some national groups’ attachment to the USSR as a political unity was put in question. To a considerable extent, the political leadership of Perestroika had been hoisted on its own petrad. By destroying Marxist class imagery and class interpretation of history, it had left an ideological vacuum that had been filled by a revived and amplified traditional national consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

The modernization effect led to greater aspirations on the part of the previously backward peoples: a national identity furthered their own exclusive rights to resources. In times of change and uncertainty people turned to traditional emotional and psychological forms of identity; these involved the definition of their own group in terms of others on the basis of religion and history. The larger mass of educated people tried to preserve their own

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<sup>57</sup> Raymond Pearson, “Nationalities: Decolonising the Last Empire”, in D.W. Spring. (ed.), *The Impact of Gorbachev: The First Phase, 1985-90* (London, New York: Printer Publishers, 1991) P. 92.

<sup>58</sup> David, Lane, op.cit., p.200.

language and culture. Perestroika allowed for the development of nationalist cultures along the lines of “social closure”.<sup>59</sup> “Social Pluralism” had worked against the unity of the nations of the USSR. Ideas of social justice had been used by certain ethnic groups to legitimate their own claims to resources. Democratization and Glasnost Led to the destabilization of the unitary system of government, particularly in the periphery of the USSR.

The traditional groups supported the greatness of Russia’s past, and exalted the achievements of Stalin. “The United Council of Russia had been said to be based on: The sacred notions of Native Land, Father Land, People”.<sup>60</sup> They were critical of Non-Russian nationalities. They identified with Russian orthodoxy and had played an important role in preserving ancient Russian monuments. Some of these groups had revived interest in the tsars and pre-Revolutionary flags and symbols. The United Front of Workers of Russia was concerned with protecting the interests of Russian workers in the national republics who were likely to be penalized as a result of the greater assertiveness of the indigenous people in the national Republics. Thus, *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* policy of Gorbachev influenced the revival of the Russian nationalism in the USSR. People wanted more freedom and separate cultural entity, keeping the distance from the unitary socialist ideology.

The crisis that developed during the Perestroika was characterized by the loss of commonly accepted goals; which now was presented to be false and

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<sup>59</sup> David, Lane, op.cit., p. 200.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 199.



unattainable. The foundation of social consensus disappeared. At the individual level, this moral crisis was refracted as a motivational vacuum.

Various changes, both positive and negative cropped into the soviet system during the transitional period. Soviet society has changed over the years from one with a massive peasantry under Stalin to a society that was based on modern industry and an expanding intelligentsia and a long period of social stability. At the same time the cost of stability had been absenteeism, poor labour discipline, and poor quality production, in short, low labour productivity. The falling levels of economic growth and non-fulfilment of plans led to widespread consumer dissatisfaction despite an improvement in living standards. The development of private enterprise through cooperatives in the service sector improved service but led to greater income differentials, which in turn became recognized as new inequalities. The notion of a homogenous class-based society with narrowing differentials and a growing community of interests was replaced by a society with a plurality of conflicting interests founded on greater monetary differentials motivated by self-interest. The old slogan “unity of party and the people” was replaced by one of plurality of social interests.

# Chapter IV

## CONCLUSIONS

It has been observed from the beginning that the Soviet society was changing very fast. The nature of changes during the *Perestroika* was very unpredictable and haphazard. Changes that occurred during Gorbachev had a direct impact on the socio-cultural gamut of the Soviet society.

In its heyday Soviet system was based on the monopoly power of CPSU, which had fused organically with mighty power structures like the KGB, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the army and on a totally nationalised economy. The economic system of the USSR was based on a virtually total socialization of land and the principal means of production, as well as externalised planning and control of the economy. The military, industrial and fuel and energy complexes occupied the central place.

The principal structural elements of Soviet society were: socially closed and personally integrated ruling stratum of the nomenclature; a comparatively small middle class, comprising the 'management core' and the most qualified intelligentsia; a weakly stratified lower class, uniting wage labourers of moderate and low skills. There was high concentration of power in the hands of ruling elite; a sharp polarization of the position of the upper and lower strata of a society against a background of general lag in the standard of living, underdevelopment of a middle stratum as well as precedence given to official position over skill as a criterion of stratification.

During the sixties, Soviet people felt that they were lagging behind the west. The “defensive might” of the country, which ensured it the status of a great power, began to weaken with the passage of time. The living standard of population stagnated and declined, dissatisfaction grew, and people’s alienation from social labour and from the Soviet system increased. Corruption became acute. Not only the intelligentsia but also the workers and some of the nomenclature began to realise that the social system had outlived its days and that it was necessary to change it. Hence, Gorbachev’s attempt at “restructuring” Soviet society received considerable support. The agenda of *Perestroika* was the transition from the socialist industrialisation to industrialisation based on technology. The reform was also aimed at the introduction of the features of a market economy with more democratic freedom to the Soviet people.

A socio-cultural crisis embraces the totality of social (societal in broader sense) relations, as well as the culture. At the same time any change in any part do have a strong bearing on the whole system because a society is always based on the principle of “Part and whole relationship”. The Soviet system faced many changes both functional and non-functional, during the transitional period.

The transitional Soviet society was marked with the emergence of a new upper stratum, comprising the rising liberal democratic elite, while a middle stratum, consisting of the most qualified, active and enterprising citizens were expanding. The values of paternalism and egalitarianism started to weaken, and

the economic engagement of the population, especially the younger and middle generation, had been stimulated. However, the social mobility intensified. On the other hand, the spread of market relations caused a deepening of social differences and a sharp polarization into rich and poor. There was no social guarantee from the system.

A key problem in the economic reform was the distribution of income among the different groups of the population. The gap between high-income and low income-group began to increase. The changes taking place in income differentiation had a profound qualitative character, and were giving rise to new tendencies and new principles of social inequality and stratification. The liberal principle of wage system had the effect of making the incomes of the working segment of the population depend no more on a system of salary and wage schedules established from the above but on the actual functioning of firms, their ability to operate in the market and compete with other subjects of economic activity.

But there was a case of growing inequality. Production was declining, the structural reorganisation of the economy was proceeding slowly, subsidies to the unprofitable firms had been drastically cut, and the budget financing of the social sphere had diminished. Qualified specialists working in the military industrial complex and in science, medicine, education, and culture had become low paid personnel. It contributed to the alienation of the intelligentsia from the social changes in progress and even to the rejection of changes, with paving the way towards the “brain-drain”.

The privatisation of production engendered completely new principles of stratification not only in respect to the magnitude of differences in wages and incomes but also in the dimensions and type of property owned by different groups. This meant the formation of a new economic elite, on the one hand and a new group of poor, on the other.

The population's perception and assessment of growing social differentiation were quite contradictory. On the one hand, they reflected an understanding that egalitarianism in distribution and the creation of incentives for effective work were incompatible phenomena. On the other hand, there continued the habit of thinking in terms of old stereotypes, a fear of radical change in the status quo, generating alienation, of the growing inequality in incomes, and wages, and the reduced role of direct state intervention in their distribution.

Totalitarian society, with its particular totalitarian structure was being destroyed in the transitional period. The classes in their traditional meaning were absent from it. Its social structure was connected not so much to property relations as to the system of state administration. The structure of totalitarian society was destroyed by the decomposition of the existing strata, as a result of which certain distinct groups interested in reforms began to emerge from both the stratum of working people and the nomenclatura stratum.

A liberal democratic reform was at the core of the social transformation taking place. The social sectors of the economy – education, public health, science, culture were in deep crisis and the state was unable to come to their

aid. State's enterprises were being managed on commercial principle, and the economic crime and corruption were on the rise. This entire historically accumulated complex of centralized normative control over society by the state, was crumbling. By relying on "free-market structure", high level officials began to take advantage to sell abroad resources, raw materials, and many domestic consumer goods and means of production produced at state enterprises and to use their earnings to import goods for resale at free and high prices, there by, rapidly supplanting and impoverishing the state sector.

The socio-economic processes in Russia during *Perestroika* substantially affected its media. The glasnost policy of Gorbachev provided utmost freedom to the Soviet press. Gorbachev brought a radical change in media and press. Earlier the media was strictly run by the guidance of the state authority and little freedom was granted to the press in order to carry the socialist ideology. The glasnost policy of Gorbachev invited many critiques to come out in the open and became critical of the Soviet controls, as well of the system as a whole.

The transformation process influenced the Russian culture to a greater extent. There were clear trends of a decline in the number of clubs, institutions and a decline in theatre attendance. Cultures' material technical base was in bad shape. There were two sectors in culture, commercial and non-commercial. Commercial sector primarily favoured those who met the demands of the broad public to the greater degree; genuine art that satisfies the demand of preserving national culture was represented in noncommercial sector, where interesting

creative experiments were carried out. High commercialisation of culture became a normal phenomenon. The low level of honoraria and pay to artists, performers and actors was leading to the progressive drain of talent abroad. The funds on the expenditure of cultural activities were drastically cut.

There was crisis in aesthetic, moral, and interpersonal norms and criteria of behaviour. Society develops the modes of self-organisation of some sort (traditional; every day; or determined by economic structures of civilised society). One of the signs of the end of the state-guided modernisation was a crisis of the former “enlightenment” type or, more accurately, that type which established a single, universally binding norm for literature and the mass information system.

Another powerful factor was new openness of the society. The culture of Russian society was almost abruptly removed from its customary cover, or more accurately the systems of barriers meant to forcibly shield a pre-defined geo-political and socio-cultural space from the destructive influences of the outside world, and became open to the most diverse influences, from post-modernism in art to non-traditional religions.

A factor of cultural change such as the individualisation or privatisation of the normative regulators of social life was playing an essential role in those processes. The focus of people’s lives was shifting to every day human interests and needs, the family, health, children and a decent level of well being. The idea that social institutions, the state and politics should serve the interest of the individual and not the vice-versa was making headway in social



consciousness. A sense of individualism based on diverseness developed in the cultural sphere, condemning the earlier socialistic principle.

Russian youth were also the victims of the transitional period. As the result of the transition, socially disadvantaged groups of the population were left unprotected and destitution began to rise. The beginning of the spread of unemployment and homelessness had brought about the growth in crime, violence and racketeering. Marginalisation of youth became high because they were no more protected by the state. The young generation showed its attraction towards the western culture, especially to the music, dress pattern, hair style, etc. This became possible through the policy of *glasnost*.

The principal result of the social transformation in Russia that started with *Perestroika* was that women had been deprived of many social gains. Their status before so-called *Perestroika* declined. There was greater social discrimination against women in all spheres of social life and in forms and manifestations that Russian women never knew previously. The participation of women in political structure began to decline towards the end of *Perestroika*. Women were unable to sustain themselves in the new market economic condition due to the traditional nature of their skill. Social guarantee was not provided by the state, hence, compelled the women to remain in a state of severe burden.

Ethnic problem was another outcome of Gorbachev's reforms. The development of radical nationalism on non-Russian people and radical Russian chauvinism emerged during the transition. There was an increase in nationalist

demands for state sovereignty of some of the republics and regions, to the point of their secession from USSR. A new Russian nationalism emerged in the Soviet society during the *Perestroika*.

The old administrative-command mechanism for integrating Soviet society collapsed, but no higher social cultural mechanism for safeguarding and supporting its integrity was created in its place. As a result, society disintegrated to a certain degree and a hopeless struggle for priority arose between the various branches of power, and between periphery and the center, while state power weakened and ceased to full-fill its functions. The level of legal order declined.

The period of reforms destroyed the forced uniformity of thought among the citizens and led to a diversification of ideological views. There was a crumbling of economic ties, the development of separatism, a decline in the qualification of administrative and managerial cadres, the spread of lawlessness and so on.

The situation that evolved in Russia during the *Perestroika* period could be characterised by a contradiction between the theory and practice of the democratisation of society, providing on the one hand, broad political rights, freedoms, and on the other hand, witnessing the erosion of equality, social cohesion, alienation, etc, as a result of reforms. Hence, changes initiated in Russia during *Perestroika* shook the foundation of social system developed under socialism

The changes that occurred in the society during the *Perestroika* needs to be analysed by a theoretical framework. As far as *Perestroika* was concerned, there was always a contradiction in whether *Perestroika* was a revolution or an evolution. Revolutions are objectively necessary in the history of nations, but many end in defeat. The main reason for defeats are tactical mistakes, i.e., the inability to translate the tasks of revolution into current, operational tasks (sub tasks). The most prevalent tactical mistakes are a unilaterality in the implementation of strategy and sluggishness. There is one more type of mistaken action, namely, the adventurous tactic of trying to speed up events when the masses are clearly not ready. In this sense, *Perestroika* was a revolution that failed to reform Soviet socialism. In many respects *Perestroika* was a remarkable break with the Soviet past. Whatever the outcome may be, *Perestroika* was the product of both evolutionary and revolutionary forces, and was best interpreted in this light. It was an evolutionary process with some potentially revolutionary consequences.

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