The Sources of Soviet Perestroika

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I. The Communist System: Collapse or Renewal?

Introduction

It is now commonplace to say that recent events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have irrevocably transformed the geopolitical landscape. In East Europe, we have witnessed the breaching of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communist rule in Hungary, a shift to a coalition government in Poland, the appointment of a non-communist President in Czechoslovakia, and elections in each country in the region. In the Soviet Union, we have seen the diminution of fear, a greater freedom to speak, the revelation of historic state secrets, the defeat of unopposed candidates in elections to a new parliament, the appearance of private economic cooperatives, a meeting between the Communist Party's General Secretary and the Pope, the formal abandonment of the Communist Party's monopoly of power, serious talk of a multi-party system, and the rise of a congeries of national movements. Indeed, some of these events have been so revolutionary that thoughtful observers have variously pronounced the collapse of communism, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, an end to the nuclear threat, and the conclusion of the Cold War.

The overall impression one gains from Western reporting on these developments is that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is relinquishing its economic and political decisionmaking authority, and that it has abandoned Marxism-Leninism as the operational ideology of the Soviet empire. Many of the recent developments support such a view. The apparent turn toward free markets and a willingness to cooperate with Western businesses seems to indicate the renunciation of ideology in favor of economic pragmatism. The toleration and even encouragement of political criticism seems to mean the end of the Party's monopoly of information and its insistence on strict conformity with the Party line. The loosening of the Kremlin's grip on East Europe similarly leads one to suspect that it no longer believes in the universality of Marxist-Leninist principles.

If all this is so, then what are we to make of the following remarks made by Mikhail Gorbachev as recently as the autumn of 1989?

> ...the Party has been, and remains, the main organizing and coordinating force capable of leading the people along the path of profound socialist renewal, playing an integrating and consolidating role in society and, let us be blunt, preventing an undesirable and dramatic development of events. Perestroika will not work without the Party and its fundamental influence on all aspects of social life...

> ...There are attempts to create the impression that perestroika is founded upon deviation from the bases of Marxist-Leninist thought and is therefore plunging the country into chaos. This is all slander against the Party...
>
> ...Socialism is one of the most powerful ideas which ever gripped the minds of people. Paradoxically, just here, at home, you can hear voices saying that supposedly the socialist idea is some kind of fruit of intellectual fantasy, a certain anomaly not corresponding to human nature, that is deprived of substance and future. Those are not the voices which reflect the opinion of communists and workers and the profound trends of the historical process. The CPSU firmly stands on principled positions. It remains devoted to the socialist ideals, socialist principles...
>
> ...Our people made a choice in October of 1917, and despite the deformations of socialism and its Leninist concept which have taken place in the past, we will firmly go along this path. We say perestroika is the renewal of socialism, but not its dismantling. We say perestroika is revolutionary transformation, the elimination of the deformations of socialism, but not the restoration of capitalism. We say perestroika is the revival of creative Marxism, a new awareness of Leninist ideas...
>
> ...Let us recall the main principles of the Leninist concept...Do these principles maintain their significance? Undoubtedly. Moreover, perestroika is transferring them to the category of being real, since they were often merely proclaimed in the past.[i]

In the context of Gorbachev's campaign of astonishing reforms, these remarks sound a discordant note. How can they be explained? Are they merely an atavistic ritual which Gorbachev must perform before a nominally communist audience -- in other words, an audience most of which is not really communist at heart anymore? Could Gorbachev be a different kind of political animal than his predecessors: a humane communist? Or is he a closet democrat lying to his communist comrades in an attempt to subvert the very Party to whose pinnacle he has risen? If Gorbachev is what he says he is -- "a convinced communist" -- is he attempting to achieve the original Marxist-Leninist vision through other means than those to which we have become accustomed? Could he be merely engaged in a tactical maneuver of the Leninist type -- taking "one step backward" in preparation for "two steps forward"?[ii]

Such questions cannot be answered without examining the sources of the Communist Party's campaign for perestroika -- restructuring. These include, first, the animating spirit or idea behind the "new political thinking" and then the political, economic and social circumstances which have given rise to this "new thinking."

The search for these sources proceeds partly from the assumption that ideas have consequences -- especially ideas in the hands of those with the power to act upon them. Power in the Soviet Union is still in the hands of the Communist Party, and therefore it is necessary to examine its current ideas and attitudes. But since alternative centers of power have also been emerging -- in the form of autonomous movements arising out of non-communist civil society, particularly the national democratic movements -- it is also worth exploring the "correlation of forces" among these rival centers of power to see to what extent some of the consequences we have been witnessing have emerged in spite of the Party's intentions.

Indeed it is essential to make the distinction between intentions and unintended consequences. As we shall see, from all indications, the Communist Party's intentions spring from a desire to preserve and renew the socialist system, and not from some sudden change of political philosophy. It is true that a number of the changes we have witnessed deviate from what has been traditionally understood to be the totalitarian model. But these cannot be properly interpreted without consideration of two factors. First, we must keep in mind that there have been numerous historical precedents of policies which have deviated from totalitarianism, but which, in the final analysis, were undertaken with an eye to preserving the communist system. Second, we must also recognize that many of the Kremlin's policies have given rise to unintended consequences. It is the thesis of this analysis that it is in this realm of consequences, and not in the hearts of the Communist Party leadership, that we find the greatest potential for genuine revolutionary change. For the first time in thirty years, civil society in the Soviet empire has raised itself from under the Party's yoke in the form of a variety of movements which the Kremlin may find impossible to control.

The Communist Ideology: Continuity or Change?

Perhaps the central question of all is whether the Communist Party is still communist. Amidst all the changes, are there continuities in the nature of the Party and its modus operandi which testify to its commitment to a set of core values? Have any of these core values been replaced by others as the fundamental animating spirit of Party policies?

If a fundamental change has occurred in Soviet ideology -- i.e., the kind that would make the USSR truly politically compatible with the West (or at least that part of the West which still subscribes to the principles which formed the basis for Western democracy) -- then at least some of the following would have to come to pass:

--The Party would have renounced its gnostic claim to vanguard leadership of the inexorable forces of history -- not just in words specially crafted for Western consumption, but in deeds. It would have replaced its monopoly of power with an array of competing political forces (which would have been given a level playing field on which to compete) and a system of checks and balances.

-- The Party would have renounced -- again in deeds and not simply in rhetoric targeted to Western audiences -- its concept of conditional human rights: i.e., the idea that people have rights only on the condition that they do not belong to a historically-doomed class or to one or another religious faith. And it would have adopted a theory of rights where those rights are unconditional -- i.e. not subject to the whims and passions of the flawed men who happen to be in power at any given time.

-- The Party would have abandoned its claim to defining the "truth" for its subject peoples.

-- It would have ceased to depend on the systematic use of lies as an instrument enforcing its continued hold on power.

-- It would have discarded the sophistic concept of dialectics as an instrument of analysis and political manipulation.

-- It would have rejected the Leninist "end-justifies-the-means" concept of morality.

-- It would have stopped twisting the normal meanings of words to suit its political agenda.

-- The Party would have taken some steps away from the deification of man. The belief in the perfectibility of man would have yielded to acceptance of the possibility of the existence of a human nature and that this nature may be possessed of intrinsic flaws.

-- Its belief that man is the source of all law, morals and rights would have yielded some ground to the possibility that these things may derive from a Higher Law -- as it says in our Declaration of Independence, "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God."

-- The belief in man as an empty vessel shaped only by his environment would have been replaced by a recognition of individual moral choice and personal responsibility.

-- Doctrinaire materialism would have been replaced by at least some appreciation of the transcendant and the spiritual. Militant atheism would have been replaced by genuine tolerance or embrace of religion -- and not the Stalin-style harnessing and manipulation of religion for purposes of state, which appears to be the policy of the current regime.*

-- The traditional roles of ideology would have been abandoned by the Communist leadership. For example, it would have ceased to use Marxist-Leninist ideas and the "ideals of the October Revolution" as an essential instrument to legitimize its hold on power. It would have rejected the use of ideological formulations as a tool to establish political conformity and, therefore, internal security -- in other words, it would have ceased to set forth a "Party line." And it would have stopped using this line as the standard by which friends and enemies -- both at home and abroad -- are determined.

While we have witnessed a great deal of activity -- announcements of numerous "structural" reforms, avowals of allegiance to freedom and democracy, declarations of all sorts of high-minded intentions, and headlines upon headlines -- there has been little or nothing in the way of actual deeds that could justify affirming the validity of <u>any</u> of these propositions. No policy undertaken thus far has been either fundamental or irreversible in terms of changing the core of the Soviet <u>ideology</u>.

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* For example, "A.S.," an anonymous author in the independent Russian news magazine <u>Glasnost</u>, observes that the Kremlin has made it a top priority to stop the moral, civic, social, and even physical disintegration of Soviet society by using any means, including religion. Promoting social and moral degeneration was once advantageous to the Communists in their efforts to consolidate power. Now, however, when this process has gone too far, to the point of harming the very pillars of Communist power such as the economy, the Party has found it necessary to turn to religion to help reverse the process. As A.S. explains, "what the Soviet state needs from the Russian Orthodox Church is something quite specific: that people should once again labor

diligently at the workplace, support perestroika, campaign for peace (at this moment), fight anyone anywhere (at the next moment) and obey Mikhail Gorbachev." By treating the moral teachings of Christ as acceptable -- to the extent that they promote communist purposes, and by treating Orthodoxy as a custodian of national culture, the regime presents itself as having a new, tolerant and even benevolent attitude toward the Church, when in fact it remains as opposed to the Church's spiritual essence as before.[iii]

In fact, there is every indication that the Party continues to be committed to the socialist idea, to its materialist, humanist, secular and internationalist underpinnings, to dialectical analysis and to its own continued vanguard role in the political system. The ideas expressed in the Communist Party platform approved by the Central Committee in February 1990 make this clear.[iv] They include:

-- a commitment to a new society, "based on the humanist values of our country's peoples and all mankind." As the platform also states: "man is the intrinsic goal of history."

-- "devotion to the socialist choice and the ideas of October" (i.e., the October revolution of 1917) and a restatement of the original propagandistic slogans of that revolution: "power to the soviets, factories to the workers, land to the peasants, peace to the peoples, free self-determination to the nations."

-- a commitment to the primacy of "economic rights" as opposed to individual, civil rights. The latter can only be exercised according to the typical provisions of Soviet "fine print." As it says in the platform: "Here there must be strict observance of law and order and of the demands of Soviet laws." But Soviet laws continue to restrict free exercise of individual rights. And insofar as laws may be revised in the context of all the talk about establishing a "rule-of-law state," there is no rule of law in Gorbachev's USSR. In fact, the prospects of the emergence of such a system are nil so long as there is no independent judiciary, and so long as the Soviet Constitution continues to be nothing more than a piece of paper, whose provisions are not subject to individual legal appeal.

-- a commitment to "patriotism," but one "which in our conditions is inadmissible without internationalism."

-- the rejection of "unacceptable" forms of culture. For example: "A commercial approach toward culture is inadmissible to socialism."

-- the ritual reiteration of freedom of conscience and religion, restricted again by more fine print. Churches have the opportunity to act "freely," i.e., "within the framework of the laws" and so long as they pay the state's traditional price for their lawful existence: "making their contribution to mutual understanding between peoples," which, in practice, means serving the cause of Soviet foreign policy and its "peace" propaganda. Now that Gorbachev has met with the Pope and has indicated that the largest persecuted church in the world, the Ukrainian Catholic Church, may soon be legalized, it would appear that a new freedom of religion has come to pass in today's reformed USSR. This may be so -- if one defines freedom of religion as the legal requirement to register one's church with the state, turn over the church's finances to state control, and submit to other forms of state penetration and regulation.

-- the desire to create a "planned, market economy," which in practice means a planned economy with no renunciation by the Party of its desire to dictate the priorities of production and distribution. According to the platform, "production is impossible without centralized planned influence on its development." For all its talk about "restructuring property relations" and the passage of the new "law" on "citizens' property" (which happens to be at variance with the Soviet Constitution), full-fledged private property is ruled out, while the Party continues to repeat the Marxist nostrum that "the use of any form of property must exclude the worker's alienation from the means of production and man's exploitation by man." Insofar as individuals may now be permitted limited ownership of property, it would not be an unprecedented turn of events in any case: Lenin's New Economic Policy of the 1920's also permitted limited property ownership (to a greater extent than under Gorbachev). And while collectivizing the agricultural system -- from fields to farm animals -- even Stalin permitted the de facto ownership of private agricultural plots and certain "means of production" such as chickens. Lenin clearly explained that tactical retreats and compromises which appear to flout Marxist rules are often necessary to achieve Marxist objectives.

Keeping in mind these stated intentions of the Party, how then can we explain the recent tumultuous events? The answer can be found in three simultaneous crises in the Soviet system: the crisis of legitimacy, the crisis in the economy, and the crisis of the Party -- all three of which have threatened the continued power of the CPSU and its role on the world stage.

II. The Three Crises of the System

The Crisis of Legitimacy

The Communist Party has always had a problem establishing its legitimacy. Having seized power by conspiracy and force and having rejected the results of the first post-revolution election (in which it suffered a lopsided defeat at the hands of the non-communist Socialist Revolutionary party), the Communist Party has felt compelled to establish some logical, moral or practical reason why it deserves to be in power. Without such a reason, it faces the threat of a precipitous decline of its authority. So, over the years, Marxist-Leninist ideology has been the instrument which has consistently supplied that reason: the Party deserves to be in power, since it uniquely understands the immutable laws of history. Because of that understanding, it has freed itself from being buffeted about by the forces of history (a feat which cannot be achieved by those who do not understand). Thus, it is in a position to help the historical process along, serving as the vanguard of the working class and its revolution against the capitalist order.

Marxism-Leninism, however, has rarely been a sufficient legitimizing force. Given the proliferation of democratic thinking throughout the world in the 20th century, and the consequent need to combat democratic tendencies within the Soviet empire, the CPSU has regularly attempted to seek auxiliary instruments of legitimacy. The most successful has been the Party's invocation of its patriotic leadership of the Red Army's victorious campaign in World War II. Here the Party has claimed that it was the one force which could lead the country in defense of the Russian fatherland against the aggressive forces of fascism. In one fell swoop, the Party has succeeded in presenting itself both as the direct opposite of fascist and Nazi tyranny and as the genuine guardian of the Russian nation.

But forty-five years have passed since that war, and the effectiveness of that instrument of legitimacy has eroded. The failures of the socialist system have become clear for all to see. The USSR cannot feed it own people without imports. It is a country with fewer telephones than Spain, a rate of automobile ownership less than that among South African blacks, and a system of "free" hospitals, one third of which do not have running water -- in short, a country with severe and chronic shortages of the most basic necessities of life.

The peoples of the Soviet Union are consequently sick of it all, and sick in more ways than one. Millions of people are fed up with living a life of duplicity: one life under the sovereignty of official propaganda and another in the limited privacy of their communal apartments. Millions are tired of living a life of cultural ennui. And millions more are sick of standing in interminable lines to buy rotten food, and working

for worthless money to buy nonexistent goods, while watching the privileged Party elite gobble up luxuries imported from the West. Tens of millions have taken to escaping the miseries of life under this system through alcohol and drug abuse, while millions of others suffer malnourishment of both body and soul. The rate of infant mortality is increasing, while life expectancy is declining. The workforce refuses to work, and the intelligentsia has become so alienated from the system that it has become a de facto ally of the Kremlin's greatest anti-communist critics in the West. In short, society had no hesitation in blaming the Party and the idea it represents for these intolerable conditions.

Under these circumstances, the Party's prospects of maintaining its domestic and international positions of power were growing increasingly slim. There was no way that socialism could be revived and sustained without the cooperation of the intelligentsia and the masses of workers in whose name the Party was ruling. Radical measures had to be taken to secure this cooperation by restoring the prestige of the socialist idea and the legitimacy of the socialist regime.

The Crisis in the Economy

While it can be argued that the structure of the socialist system, by its very nature, is inclined to be in a state of economic crisis, there are crises of different severity in the USSR. While by no means the worst in Soviet history, the economic conditions of recent years have been among the most severe in the post-war era. But before exploring the effects of these conditions, it would be useful to examine what is meant by economic crisis in the Soviet context.

"Crisis" normally connotes a decisive moment -- particularly an unstable or crucial state of affairs, a period of acute distress. To determine the nature of a given crisis, however, it is necessary to establish what exactly it is that is experiencing the distress. Viewed through a Western lens, the Soviet economy is ostensibly designed to create and distribute wealth, just like any Western economy. Thus, given the shortages of the most basic necessities of life in the USSR, it would appear that it is this wealth-creation capability that is in crisis. The problem here is that such a mirror-image view of the purpose of the Soviet economy is misplaced. In fact, the purpose of this economy is to create and maintain power -- power for the Party, power for the USSR on the world stage, and power for the international movement which the USSR still claims to lead.

From the perspective of wealth creation, the Soviet economy has always visited privations on the people. But while such conditions create distress in average people's lives, they should

not necessarily be called a crisis of the system, except insofar as they threaten the power position of the Party and state. In fact, the manufacture of shortages can be a method of creating power, insofar as shortages divide society into two groups: one with power and the other without -- those who give out the rationing cards and those who scramble to get them. In light of all this, it would be inaccurate to declare the existence of a true economic crisis unless we could identify a crisis in one or another of the economic pillars of Soviet power, such as the means of acquiring and adapting foreign technologies which are too costly for the Soviets to develop themselves.

So what is it about the recent economic conditions that has caused a crisis of power creation in the USSR? Keeping in mind Moscow's production priorities, several factors emerge.

Given that its highest priority by far has been military production -- one of its key instruments of power -- the Kremlin has been concerned that significant parts of the military-industrial infrastructure of the state may not be able to keep up with the rapidly changing technological developments in the West. With computers and information technologies revolutionizing both industrial processes and end-products, Soviet military technology risks falling far behind that of the West unless radical steps are taken to modernize the military-industrial base. While the Kremlin invested an estimated $150 billion over a ten-year period on strategic defense technologies such as lasers -- well before President Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative -- it may still have grown concerned by the speed at which Western technology could outpace Soviet efforts in this field. The same speculation could be made about the Soviet reaction to U.S. "stealth" technology. Indeed, the systematic efforts by the Reagan Administration to prevent the transfer of militarily sensitive technologies to the East bloc may have proven to be a significant factor in aggravating this situation. Under the circumstances, the only ways of addressing the potential military challenge posed by lack of access to these technologies were: to revive the industrial infrastructure; acquire Western technology by purchase, joint ventures or theft; eliminate the mechanisms of Western technology security, principally by undermining their political-strategic rationale; and restrain Western military technology development through arms control, peace propaganda and political-strategic deception.

Another factor making up the crisis of Soviet power creation is that the shortages of goods may now be so acute as to cause the physical deterioration of the very labor force which must produce Soviet weapons, man the army, run the internal security system, and operate the many other institutions which ensure the Party's power at home and abroad. On top of the alcoholism and

poor diet, the peoples of the Soviet Union have suffered the revival of diseases like smallpox and diphtheria which were long ago eliminated from industrialized societies.

The shortages of basic necessities may also contribute to the threat of increased civil unrest in the USSR. 1989 witnessed major strikes in several of the coal mining regions of the country, which included the formation of independent strike committees. These committees proved to be influential enough to extract significant concessions from the regime. The repetition and spread of such work stoppages could compound the challenges to Party authority already posed by the various national and separatist movements which have emerged in recent years.

Finally, the acute shortages, which have increasingly alienated the people from the socialist system, have driven them to seek alternative methods of survival, which, in turn, threaten the Party's power. The principal method of survival in the USSR -- outside of seeking privileges through Party channels -- has long been participation in the underground economy. For years, the Party had to wink at the black market because it was essential to the survival of the population. As time passed, however, this second economy grew so large that it spawned two developments inimical to Party power.

The first was the liberating effect on increasingly large segments of the population: more and more people were able to earn a living without having to be dependent on the Party for access to goods and services. This de facto decentralization of economic decisionmaking was necessarily eroding the Party's monopoly of power. Secondly, the growth of this economy was having a corrupting and weakening effect on the Communist Party itself and contributed to the third crisis which gave rise to perestroika -- the crisis of the Party (see below).

Lest there be any misunderstanding about the nature of the crisis in the Soviet economy, it should be noted that, given the continued secrecy of Soviet society and the persistent lack of accurate data concerning Soviet production, most diagnoses about the health of the Soviet economy are derived either from: anecdotal evidence gathered by travellers; distorted Soviet economic statistics (which are doctored at many levels of the planning, production or reporting processes); or the testimony of Soviet economists of different political stripes, which, being little more than hearsay evidence, may or may not be true. Therefore, reports about Soviet economic performance vary wildly. For example, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has reported continued growth in the Soviet economy throughout the 1980's, and that the Soviet gross domestic product is about half that of the United States. Meanwhile, visiting Soviet economists have

charged that the CIA has grossly overestimated Soviet economic strength, and have declared that the Soviet economy is anywhere from one third to one seventh the size of America's. Some of them even have gone so far as to brand their own government's statistics as untrustworthy.[v]

Given the lack of satisfactory supporting evidence for any of these estimates, it is worth considering two possibilities: 1) the Soviets may be exaggerating their economic weakness for various reasons, not the least among which may be to induce the West to become complacent about its defense; or 2) the Soviets may be telling the full truth about their economy -- the truth which they have concealed for so long -- and may be doing so for similar reasons. In light of the Soviet history of distorting their various economic and military capabilities for various strategic purposes, these possibilities should not be dismissed.

The Crisis of the Communist Party

The crisis of the Party has been composed of several elements, each of which has affected its strength, cohesion and authority.

Perhaps the most threatening has been the growth of the underground economy. Local Party bosses were lured into this underground system, first through bribery, and then through direct participation in black market deals. One consequence was the rise of regional Party "mafias" which controlled large segments of private industry in the USSR. But another, more damaging effect was that these bosses were developing forms of self-interest that were at variance with the Party's interest. This burgeoning breakdown of partiinost' -- party-mindedness -- had a corrosive effect on the discipline and cohesion of the entire Party.

Too many Party members were being coopted by an institution of normal civil society -- the free market, where commercial transactions take place between consenting adults free of political constraint. As a result, the Party was threatened by the prospect of being transformed from a revolutionary Party -- operating separate from, but with decisive influence over, civil society -- into a traditional ruling class that is an actual part of that civil society. If the Party authorities were to permit such a transformation, they would lose not only the revolutionary purpose underlying the Party's very existence, but also the proper distance from civil society that enables their cadres to do what is required to maintain internal security. In short, the collective leadership of the Party first under General Secretary Yuri Andropov and then under Gorbachev recognized that the organization was suffering from a bad case of ideological decay.

The leadership also recognized that the Party was growing increasingly out of control. Rather than remaining an elite vanguard Party, it had become a mass party with twenty million members, bulky, unwieldy, and increasingly impervious to instructions from Moscow central. Many had become plodding functionaries -- a far cry from the model professional revolutionary laid out by Lenin and idealized by Gorbachev. The Party had developed layers upon layers of bureaucracy, through which every leadership decision had to penetrate and, in the process, suffer degradation. The central authorities identified these bureaucratic layers as bottlenecks which impaired the efficiency of the production process, and which would have to be targeted for elimination. Altogether, the Party had to be roped in again, put under strict control and ideologically purified.

III. The Communist Party's Response

Glasnost'

Glasnost' has been probably the most dramatic of the reforms adopted by the Gorbachev leadership. Our news media tell us, pursuant to the official Soviet mistranslation of the word, that glasnost' means "openness." And Moscow's news management apparatus has labored to have us believe that glasnost' is freedom of speech. In reality, it means "publicity" or giving voice to selected ideas or opinions. Traditionally it has been used both by the Soviets and the Tsarist authorities before them to serve as an expedient substitute for real freedom of speech.

In practice, glasnost' represents a combination of policies from increased press freedom to a reduction of overt political repression. The most impressive feature of this policy has been the regime's willingness to tolerate the publication and distribution of unofficial newspapers and magazines. This, however, has not been an unequivocal leniency. Independent publishers have been continually harassed, occasionally arrested, their offices raided by police, and their publications and equipment confiscated from time to time.[vi] In spite of such difficulties, they have been able to expose a remarkable number of previously hidden realities of the Soviet system. And in the process, they have served as important instruments to mobilize a variety of independent movements throughout the USSR. The fact that the regime has looked upon them with as much forbearance as it has is probably the most liberal and uncommunist feature of the entire reform program.

With respect to the official press, glasnost' has involved the revelation of selected facts about both contemporary life in

the USSR as well as Soviet history. People have been permitted to criticize various political, social and economic problems as well as selected targets that the authorities deem responsible for those problems. The policy also involves a relaxation of censorship in literature, film and theater. In practice, however, the subjects of the newly-permitted discussion almost invariably concern information about which most people already know. Furthermore, there are limits beyond which official publications cannot go. In one recent example, paper supplies were denied to the prestigious literary journal, Novy Mir, which had been serializing works by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Official censorship, in other words, still exists. Only now, instead of one uniform propaganda line emanating from thousands of periodicals and other media, a coordinated multiplicity of messages has issued forth -- as Vladimir Bukovsky has described it, a "pluralism of lies." So, for all the new truths and half-truths which have been unveiled, there are many more that remain concealed. As usual, it is the Party's interest which determines what is revealed or kept hidden.

It is quite likely that the tolerance of unofficial publication would not occur if the regime did not simultaneously transmit its own multiplicity of controlled messages through the official press. As Bukovsky has explained, the shift to official pluralism is designed to prevent the emergence of a single alternative voice -- such as the Solidarity movement in Poland -- around which civil society can rally. As it has transpired, there has been a substantial fragmentation of the political opposition in the USSR into a multiplicity of nationalist and other cause-oriented groups. The regime, in turn, has been able to play one group against another, such as Armenians and Azerbaijanis, in classic divide-and-rule tactics, while simultaneously getting credit worldwide for its liberalism.

The policy of glasnost' has been used to address each of the crises faced by the Party. It addresses the legitimacy problem in several ways. First, glasnost' involves yet another round of ritual anti-Stalinism. Successive Soviet Party bosses have sought legitimacy by denouncing the policies of their predecessors. Part of this process has consistently involved the excoriation of Stalin, his crimes, and his "cult of personality." This effort to distance the new Party leadership from Stalinism is designed to demonstrate how humane it is, and how radically it has departed from what everyone has come to recognize was a horrific regime. This focus against Stalin also serves a related purpose: to distract attention from the fact that the Stalinist system (be it the Party, the Gulag, the KGB, state control of the economy, etc.) was actually set up by Lenin, and that these original Leninist institutions are still intact today.

Glasnost' also helps the cause of legitimacy by permitting the exposure of corrupt Party officials and attacks on opponents of reform. When corrupt and "conservative" mid-level and regional Party bosses can be attacked in the media not just by their superiors but by their subjects and subordinates, average people can suddenly feel as if they have some say in society's affairs. Their new limited capability to lash out against many of the objects of their hatred and frustration helps to overcome their former feelings of helplessness. And simultaneously, it inclines them to be more favorably disposed toward the Party which is apparently purifying itself and giving the people this new lease on civic life. In this way, the Party bolsters its inadequate Marxist-Leninist-based legitimacy with a component of democratic legitimacy. And as with anti-Stalinism, the attempt to focus attention against villains in the mid-level apparatus also serves to divert opprobrium away from the top-level bosses.

The literary thaw under glasnost' -- as well as the limited freedom for the publication of unofficial periodicals -- is the way the Party makes a special appeal to intellectuals, a group with particular influence with the West. The publication of books, plays, articles and poems which touch on formerly forbidden subjects has been life-giving water to an intelligentsia thirsting in the desert. The almost immediate reaction of this group was to sing the praises of the reformers responsible for the thaw and to encourage the West to support them. One can scarcely conceive of a single policy that could coopt such an influential class of people so quickly.

What is noteworthy about this attempt to gain new legitimacy is how it depends on the projection of a titanic clash between enlightened "reformers" and retrograde "conservatives." While there may indeed be a split of some kind within the Party approximating this portrayal (although this is by no means certain), it is not always clear which personalities fit into these popular categories. The conventional wisdom tells us that the conservative "Darth Vader" of the Kremlin in the recent period has been Yegor Ligachev. This may be true. But, unfortunately, politics in the Kremlin has always been shrouded in secrecy, so there is a great deal we do not know. If Comrade Ligachev does fit the profile that some experts and our media have assigned him, then how does one explain apparent evidence which puts him fully in the reformist camp? For example: his support for the reformist Argumenty i fakty editor V.A. Starkov, whom Gorbachev personally threatened with dismissal; or his enthusiastic support for the abandonment of Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, which (rhetorically) establishes the "leading role" of the Communist Party in the USSR.

Ligachev may indeed be one of the frightful "conservatives." But given such contrary evidence as well as our lack of information about such matters, can we disregard one other possibility -- namely, that we are witnessing a repetition of the time-honored Soviet disinformation ploy of "hawks and doves" in the Kremlin? For years, the Soviet propaganda apparatus has labored to convince the West: that there is a perpetual struggle between such hawks and doves (or "Stalinists and moderates") where no such differences exist; that whatever genuine tactical differences may exist among factions within the Kremlin are much more pronounced than they really are; that whoever is General Secretary at the time is invariably one of the doves; and that unless we support him and make deals with him, we face the great risk that the hawks will come to power. This is nothing more than the "good cop, bad cop" routine applied to international politics in order to gain negotiating leverage. Since there is good reason for the Kremlin to attempt such a gambit in today's political climate, can we be certain that it is not being used once again?

Glasnost' also serves to alleviate economic strains. To the degree it gives people a greater sense of participation in society, it boosts the morale of a demoralized workforce. To the extent that it impresses people on a daily basis that Party control over civil society has loosened up somewhat, it gives people freer rein to explore more creative solutions to the problems of production, distribution and administration. Furthermore, by airing many of the formerly unacknowledged problems of the economy and society, it helps focus public attention on a search for solutions to these problems.

More importantly, glasnost' helps the economy by attracting aid from the West. For all its domestic functions, glasnost' has been designed for foreign policy purposes as well. It has impressed the West more than any other reform, insofar as it projects the appearance that the USSR is adopting genuine freedom of speech and is coming to grips with the full truth of its history. Under glasnost', the cascade of public revelations and criticisms has won a continuous stream of headlines in the West. And each news story serves to reinforce the impression that Moscow no longer has anything to hide and that everything has changed in the Soviet Union -- including Soviet foreign policy.

A significant portion of this policy has been the military glasnost' campaign, which has involved: military-to-military dialogue; the selective revelation to Western observers of secret military installations, exercises, space facilities and launches; the acceptance of increasingly intrusive arms control verification provisions; and a variety of related measures. These have been specifically designed to convince the West that

the Kremlin has abandoned secrecy as a standard element of its policy and that military power no longer occupies the same priority in its hierarchy of values.

As this author has documented elsewhere, however, there has been an enormous component of strategic deception involved in this campaign. For all the apparent "openness" displayed by the pattern of publicity stunts, it has served to distract attention from the ongoing Soviet military buildup, which has proceeded far beyond any legitimate requirement for defense, and in spite of the economic crisis.[vii] The following chart documents this continuing buildup in what is perhaps its most strategically relevant aspect: its relation to military production of the United States:[viii]

Major Weapons Systems Production: USSR and U.S.: 1985-1988

Weapon	USSR	US	Ratio
Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles	450	56	8.0 to 1
Sub-launched Ballistic Missiles	375	107	3.5 to 1
Sea-launched Cruise Missiles	4400	2250	1.9 to 1
Short-range Ballistic Missiles	2150	0	2150.0 to 0
Surface-to-air Missiles	63000	9800	6.4 to 1
Tanks	13300	3475	3.8 to 1
Other Armored Fighting Vehicles	18100	4175	4.3 to 1
Towed Field Artillery	4400	1075	4.1 to 1
Self-propelled Artillery	4100	475	8.6 to 1
Multiple Rocket Launchers	1900	225	8.4 to 1
Self-propelled Anti-aircraft Artillery	500	26	19.2 to 1
Submarines	34	15	2.3 to 1

Surface Warships	34	21	1.6 to 1
Bombers	190	103	1.8 to 1
Fighter/Fighter-bombers	2750	1850	1.4 to 1
Anti-submarine Aircraft	20	26	.8 to 1
Helicopters	1850	1500	1.2 to 1

Meanwhile, Soviet spokesmen have been explicit about their purposes. As a number of them have stated, the new reform program is designed to erode the "enemy image" of the USSR, to mitigate Western fears of the Soviet Union, and, in Gorbachev's words, "to deprive [U.S.] militarism of its political justification." By encouraging the West to believe that it no longer needs a strong defense against the USSR, Moscow can reduce the pressure on its own military-industrial base and give it more time to modernize.

With more and more people in the West convinced that Soviet strategic intentions have changed as a result of the glasnost' reforms, there has been a growing constituency in favor not only of unilateral Western disarmament, but also of helping the very people who have brought about these reforms. And help, as commonly conceived in Washington, usually consists of sending money in one form or another. In practice, this means proposals to: grant Most Favored Nation trading status to Moscow; remove technology security measures and increase the transfer of high technology items to the Soviets; offer increased credits at rates far below those charged to our own most credit-worthy customers; offer government-guaranteed loans; continue agricultural subsidies; and extend direct foreign aid. By attracting these sorts of proposals, the Soviets continue their long-time tradition of seeking a Western rescue of their economy, without having to undertake the internal reforms that would enable their own economy to sustain the country by itself.

Glasnost' has been used as well to address the crisis of the Party. It is a classic purge mechanism, used originally by Stalin as part of his many public campaigns against various segments of the Party. By keeping the Party vulnerable to public criticism from above and below, the cadres are kept on their toes, and therefore are induced to be more responsive to orders from the leadership. Gorbachev has used this instrument, among others, to purge several hundred thousand cadres deemed undisciplined and undesirable by the central authorities. The current leadership has also used it to attack its opponents within the Party.

Finally, glasnost' has been used to revive the domestic propaganda apparatus, which after many years was losing its effectiveness despite the billions spent on it every year. The

same propaganda line would appear in every newspaper, magazine, and television and radio program -- so monotonously that no one would pay much attention to it. By inserting greater doses of truth, some criticism of hated targets, as well as a variety of viewpoints, Soviet media gained a new popularity. Entire publication runs of various newspapers now sell out, whereas before people relegated them to the trash. The best propaganda is that which contains just the right mixture of truth and lies so as to contain some credibility. By following this formula, the Party has succeeded in maintaining its ability to manage people's perceptions of reality without having to surrender to genuine freedom of speech.

The question arises here as to whether the policy of glasnost' may have gone too far for the Party's continued security and even served to delegitimize it. For example, the longtime practice of denouncing Stalinism has always held the risk of this consequence. When Khrushchev initiated this policy, the legitimacy of communism suffered a major blow throughout its domain. But Khrushchev's calculation, which seems to be Gorbachev's as well, was that by blasting the "deformations of socialism" practiced by his predecessors, he could gain, if not full-fledged legitimacy, then greater public confidence. With this confidence, and the increased attendant public expectation that real reform can be ushered in from the top rather than from efforts at the grass roots, the destalinizing leadership can cement its authority and strengthen its power. If this was as far as glasnost' was to go, it could very likely have succeeded in its legitimizing role as in Khrushchev's time. But now, with the rise of so many independent movements and their news and information organs, the entire system upon which the Party depends for its power has sustained some severe blows -- and perhaps enough to undermine rather than bolster the Party's legitimacy. It is doubtful that these consequences were intended by the Party authorities. They are now between a rock and a hard place: if they want to continue to attract aid from the West, any visible effort to crack down on the independent press could undermine this key purpose, while continued tolerance of unofficial voices could further erode their authority.

Perestroika

While perestroika refers to the overall program of reforms in the USSR, it also represents the more specific economic measures taken both to "revive socialism" and to resuscitate the military-industrial infrastructure. Contrary to popular belief, these reforms did not spring from the imagination of Mikhail Gorbachev. They actually began under Yuri Andropov, and certain elements were begun even under Leonid Brezhnev. By the time Gorbachev became General Secretary, waiting for him were scores

of position papers developed by the various institutes of the Academy of Sciences and departments of the Central Committee which mapped out large segments of the reform program in detail.

In its initial stage -- both under Yuri Andropov and Gorbachev -- perestroika took the form of a traditional, Stalin-style labor discipline campaign. Exhortations to work harder were accompanied by a restoration of collective punishment (where the laziness or mistakes of an individual would trigger punishment of that individual's entire work collective). Soon this was bolstered by the anti-alcohol campaign and a renewed effort to remove "parasites" from the system.

When this effort failed to produce the desired results, the Gorbachev regime began to experiment with a few genuine innovations. New rules were promulgated which permit the formation of "private" cooperative enterprises. Some of these have had features of real private enterprises. But others have proven to be state-controlled operations in disguise. And others have been given monopoly status in their localities through official restrictions against any competition entering the market. The result has often been price-gouging by the favored monopoly -- a phenomenon which only plays into the hands of longstanding anti-capitalist propaganda: the high prices infuriate the local populace, thus confirming communist indoctrination about the evils of capitalism. Still other cooperatives are forbidden from producing or distributing selected goods and services in certain regions of the country. And more recently, exorbitant taxes and onerous regulations have been imposed on those cooperatives with the tenacity to withstand all the other roadblocks.

During the same period in which the Party carried out these radically divergent economic policies, it also conducted a campaign that went virtually unreported in the Western press: an attack against the private underground economy, the Soviet Union's only true free market, and its most efficient instrument of production and distribution. Because the Gorbachev regime feared the deleterious effects this economy was having on the Communist Party's control -- both of civil society and its own ranks -- it made a concerted effort to reduce it to tolerable proportions. In the first years of the reform program, according to the Soviet press, 800,000 private underground entrepreneurs were either arrested (for "economic crimes") or fled their occupations for fear of arrest. Such an operation to restore socialist legal norms seems strangely inconsistent with the apparent commitment to free markets.

Another innovation has been an effort to introduce "economic accountability," "self-financing" and "profitability" of

enterprises (measured, of course, by state-determined, and not market-determined, prices). But all these ostensible hallmarks of market economies are undermined by the fact that there are only so many ways that an enterprise's costs can be kept under control if production quotas and the allocation of resources continue to be made by central authorities. The principal instruments under the control of an enterprise are wage levels and numbers of employees. While an unprofitable company in a market economy can cut a variety of other costs before firing its workers or lowering their wages, the same cannot be said for most Soviet enterprises. The result is that Soviet workers face greater insecurity and increased demands for more productivity, despite the fact that there is nothing to buy with what money they manage to earn.

In addition to these innovations, the regime has begun experimenting with leasing land to farmers, in order to offer the type of production incentive that property ownership supplies to landowners. And more recently, a new "law" on "citizens' property" and "individual labor ownership" has been passed for the same purpose. But in spite of these apparent moves toward a free market economy, the perestroika reforms have studiously avoided the genuine legal protection of private property.

Meanwhile, there has been no reform of the price system: prices -- even many of those charged by the "private" cooperatives -- continue to be determined by the state. And in the case of goods which are so scarce that they cannot possibly be sold to the general population, political privilege, and not price, is the mechanism by which they are distributed. Furthermore, there has not been any monetary reform. The ruble does not serve the functions that real money serves in a market economy. It is neither a reliable unit of account, a store of value nor a universal medium of exchange. Lacking these attributes, it is not convertible into foreign hard currencies.

There has been much publicity given to Moscow's new "laws" concerning foreign participation in joint ventures with Soviet enterprises. Although foreign firms can now "own" a significant share of such ventures, there are still provisos against the repatriation of hard currency profits. Nevertheless, the Soviets have been working hard to make such arrangements as attractive on the surface as possible to Western businesses. The reason for this enthusiasm for joint ventures lies in the fact that such ventures are the most efficient vehicle for the transfer of Western high technology. It is here that we can see the real perestroika. As has historically been the case, it involves seeking a Western bailout rather than undertaking the necessary domestic reforms, and using the appearance of domestic reform as

a lure. Long-time Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was remarkably candid about this:

> The Soviet people do not hanker after what is not theirs, but neither will they give up their heritage. What are most precious to us are our socialist ideals which, combined with the technical expertise of other countries, will raise our people's standard of living. That is what perestroika is all about.[ix]

So, in the final analysis, the main efforts to decentralize economic decisionmaking and move in a free market direction have staggered to a halt. Notwithstanding the occasional headlines trumpeting dramatic plans to move in a free market direction, in reality the Party leadership appears to have given up on almost all of the innovative experiments of perestroika, most of which have proven to be failures. As Soviet economist Gavriil Popov observed: "Enterprises are drowning, not because they don't know how to swim, but because the center has tied their hands."[x] Meanwhile, monetary and price reform have been postponed until some time in the indefinite future. And for all its rhetoric against centralized control, bottlenecks and bureaucracy, the Party has decided to perpetuate the command economy. Genuine reform was quietly interred in December 1989 when Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov presented the Congress of People's Deputies with yet another Five-Year Plan.

Democratization

A large part of Soviet "restructuring" has consisted of moves to "democratize" the USSR. These include: the creation of a new "Congress of People's Deputies;" a "restructured" Supreme Soviet (which serves as a full-time parliamentary subdivision of the Congress); multi-candidate elections for both the Congress and the Supreme Soviets in each of the union republics; the establishment of a new presidency; and copious talk about the creation of a multi-party system. The parliamentary elections held in 1989 and the union republic elections of early 1990 were a startling change from past electoral practice in the Soviet Union. Previous "elections" -- with one candidate on the ballot -- were essentially exercises in mass mobilization and political conformity. This time, however, many Party candidates faced opposition on the ballot, were voted out of office, and, when unopposed on the ballot, were defeated by an insufficient vote of approval. Results such as these so astonished Western observers that they proclaimed that free elections had been held in the USSR for the first time.

However much they were an improvement over past sham elections, these elections were not, properly speaking, free.

The nomination process was rigged by the Party. Other parties were not free to compete. Voter registration was rigged as well: for example, 80,000 Soviet soldiers stationed in Poland were registered to vote in the Byelorussian elections, despite the fact that most of them were not Byelorussians. There were many other abuses and irregularities. When it came to the final results, the new Supreme Soviet -- which is chosen not directly by the voters but by the Congress of People's Deputies under an arrangement rigged in favor of the Communist Party -- contained a larger percentage of Party members than the old, discredited Supreme Soviet, and these members were reminded by Gorbachev that they were all subject to strict Party discipline.

With such an outcome, the question arises: for what were these candidates competing? First they run for election to the Congress and then maneuver for the possibility of being chosen to the Supreme Soviet. But the Congress, which is more truly representative of the electorate than the Supreme Soviet, meets only twice a year (while the Soviet runs year-round) and the legislation it passes which is not to the Supreme Soviet's liking is permanently tabled. Meanwhile, the new Supreme Soviet has been busy holding hearings and passing its own laws. All the sturm und drang of this parliamentary activity gives one the impression that this legislative body has genuine, independent policymaking power. But if this is so, then what are we to make of the complaint of the Estonian deputy who denounced the new parliament as a "screen" to conceal the Communist Party's continuing monopoly of power? Indeed, if the USSR is still not run by the rule of law, then what good are all the "laws" passed by this august assembly? Even if the authorities decide to transfer some power to this body, its overall control by Party members ensures that Party policy will continue, only with different clothes.

If the parliamentary bodies in the USSR are, for now, simply hollow organizations when it comes to real power, then what are the purposes behind the entire exercise in quasi-democracy? To answer this, it is necessary once again to look at the various crises in the USSR. In the first place, "democratization" is designed to bolster the legitimacy of the regime -- to augment the Marxist-Leninist foundation of socialism with democratic legitimacy. But this is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, by giving people a chance to have some choice -- even to vote out "Stalinist" types -- this policy makes the people feel that they have some voice in governmental affairs and thus strengthens popular support for those who have given them this opportunity. On the other hand, this policy whets the people's appetite for real democracy and raises expectations which may be increasingly difficult for the Party to fulfill without threatening its power

or being forced into some sort of crackdown which could jeopardize all the good will it has won in the West.

As part of the effort to bolster legitimacy, the creation of a new parliament is one of the vehicles used by the Party to encourage greater public participation in society's affairs -- an effort that originally stressed involvement in "mass organizations." Armed with a sense that their participation had some effect on public policy, people might be more likely to give the regime their willing cooperation -- particularly in helping to solve the economic crisis through greater productivity. Insofar as the parliament is mostly a forum for lively debates about the direction of social and economic policy, it also serves to let off steam from a frustrated populace. By ostensibly sharing power with this parliament and other state and governmental structures, the Party can divert the blame for economic failure to others, which it was previously unable to do.

A "new, improved" parliament, chosen by "free," multi-candidate elections, also gives the West the impression that a major institutional change for the better has taken place in the USSR. Influenced by a steady stream of such favorable images, the West is much more likely to extend the various types of aid sought by Moscow. The establishment of a new, strong "presidency" and the parliament's "election" of Mikhail Gorbachev to this position serves a similar purpose. The fact that he was elected by a vote of over four to one gives the West an extra incentive to send aid and do business with Moscow: it is a sign of political "consensus" and therefore political "stability" -- the climate most propitious for business investment.

Whether or not this new presidency and parliamentary system represent a genuine institutional shift in the USSR, only time will tell. It is conceivable that Gorbachev, in a maneuver reminiscent of Stalin, is attempting to gain greater personal power for himself by establishing another competing power base in the country. But whatever evidence there is that points to this possibility is far from conclusive. For all its newly exposed weaknesses, the Party is by far the most formidable power base in comparison with any other institution on the Soviet horizon. And for all we know, Mr. Gorbachev may not be as decisive an individual in the Soviet scheme of things as the West currently imagines. He could be little more than the first among equals in a collective leadership, the best front man and summiteer in that leadership, and therefore the one chosen to do the job. If Gorbachev is so powerful, why was he not able to carry through with his publicly reported effort to dismiss Mr. Starkov, the liberal editor who offended him?

"Democratization" has also been designed to address the crisis of the Party. Along with glasnost', it has been an electric shock administered to a Party apparatus which the leadership has diagnosed as stagnant, bureaucratic, careerist, opportunist, corrupt, undisciplined and, worst of all, ineffective. This apparatus had become too comfortable in its hold on power, to the extent that the Party leadership began to suspect it was incapable of withstanding a crisis such as a concerted challenge to its leadership. A party with such qualities is a party that has strayed far from Lenin's conception of an elite corps of tireless professional revolutionaries with the energy, discipline and imagination to be effective in shaping the consciousness of the masses. A strong case can be made, therefore, that the leadership has decided that a little democratic pressure on the cadres is not inconsistent with this Leninist vision -- in that it requires each Communist to do his part in the struggle to seize and maintain power. As Francoise Thom has contended, Gorbachev had to teach them a lesson on the precariousness of power.[xi] And insofar as certain candidates of the apparatus were defeated in some contests, it may be argued that the elections were used as a mechanism to purge them. Some Party candidates, after all, were subjected to greater electoral vulnerability than others through the Kremlin-controlled nomination process.

A final and more ominous purpose may also be discerned in this democratization exercise. This is the possibility that it is being used, among other things, to identify -- and eventually punish -- those who deviate from the Party line. This technique of internal security has a long history in the communist world, the most prominent examples being the "Trust" operation of the 1920's and the "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom" campaign in Mao's China. According to Victor Sheymov, a prominent KGB defector who recently surfaced publicly, the KGB's Second Chief Directorate has been gathering data on dissenters "in a massive effort."[xii] While there is precious little hard evidence to prove or disprove this possibility at this writing, and while it seems unlikely in the current atmosphere that the Soviets would be doing this sort of thing, the historical practice of communist regimes demands that it must not be dismissed.

Revolutions in East Europe and the Policy of "Love"

Given the evidence that the Soviet Union may have not only tolerated, but even stimulated, the recent revolutionary events in East Europe, it is not inappropriate to include these developments as part of the overall perestroika program. Because Moscow has denied any direct intervention in the East European revolutions, any evidence of such involvement is necessarily limited by whatever actions Moscow may have taken to conceal it.

Nevertheless, the available evidence reveals a pattern of developments which strongly suggests a coordinating role played by the Kremlin.

Almost every East European Communist Party was the recipient of Gorbachev's personal pressure to reform. Glasnost' has emerged everywhere. The Communist Parties in each country have undertaken a purge of the old-line bosses who have been replaced by "reform socialist" Gorbachev clones. Similarly, one by one, other communist regimes outside East Europe have been following what appears to be the same Party line. Najibullah, Moscow's puppet in Afghanistan, is now parading as a reform socialist. The supine Mongolian communists are now all "reformers" as well, and are conducting a "democratization" along Soviet lines. The Italian Communist Party has declared its allegiance to the reform path. And in Vietnam, the Communist Party has adopted a policy of "renovation" which parallels the Soviet reform program in one category after another. Meanwhile, Communist Parties in East Europe have all decided that they should change their names so as to present themselves as "social democratic." And everyone, it seems, is against "Stalinism."

The East German events of late 1989 began with the exodus of thousands of people fleeing to West Germany through Czechoslovakia and Hungary. How this could happen -- while the old-line bosses were still in office and while Soviet-controlled forces were in charge of the borders with the West -- is difficult to conceive unless there was Soviet assent or direct involvement. One can only speculate as to why Moscow should have allowed this. A possible explanation may be that permitting people to flee without impediment or punishment may have been a way of putting pressure on an old-line communist regime to reform. The same purpose could also have been served by showing the people that if there was no punishment for leaving the country, there would not be no sanction against demonstrating for change.

Subsequently, Soviet interference seemed evident in the decisions not to use violence to suppress demonstrations in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. In East Germany, the street demonstrations began at the very moment when Gorbachev arrived in Berlin to put pressure on Erich Honecker to reform. The first two days of demonstrations were met with violent suppression by the police. But on October 9, the policy of suppression was abruptly reversed. The enormous demonstration of 70,000 in Leipzig, the largest in East Germany since 1953, was permitted to take place without police intervention. The explanation for this about-face did not come until several weeks later, when former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, having recently returned from Moscow, reported that it was the Soviet army that acted to

keep East German troops and tanks from moving on the demonstration. Brandt even revealed that the Soviets had told him of Erich Honecker's forthcoming resignation the day before it took place.[xiii]

In Czechoslovakia, the initial decision to suppress demonstrations violently was also abruptly reversed, suggesting the possibility that the Prague Communist leadership had similarly been served notice to follow Moscow's new Party line of tolerating popular demonstrations for reform. Then, when the non-communist opposition was on the verge of coming into office, it was faced with the possibility of a roll-back by the secret police. As Joseph Bartoncik, Chairman of the non-communist Czechoslovak People's Party, observed, "The danger of a coup by the state security was imminent before we took over. There was a will and a means to implement such a solution." But this too was apparently prevented by the Soviets. According to the new non-communist First Deputy Prime Minister Walter Komarek, "the Soviets had a role in subduing the security forces."[xiv]

At this writing, the latest news bulletins confirm not only this explanation of the Czechoslovak events, but also the analysis made by this author in January 1990, that these events were precipitated in the first place by Moscow.[xv] According to President Vaclav Havel, the Soviet KGB was behind a plot to replace his country's communist government with one more in line with Gorbachev's reform program. The plotters engineered student unrest and faked the police "killing" of a student demonstrator in an attempt to spark pressure for the change. The Czechoslovak figures behind these maneuvers, including General Alois Lorenc, head of the secret police, "were in one way or another controlled by the KGB," according to Havel. The plan backfired when a member of Alexander Dubcek's 1968 Prague Spring leadership refused to lead a new reformist government, and the popular demonstrations took on a momentum of their own.[xvi]

In Bulgaria, the old-line party boss, Todor Zhivkov, was ousted summarily by his comrades on the Politburo in a fashion strongly suggesting that they had been given new marching orders from higher up. A "reform socialist" was required at the helm, and the Bulgarian Party, historically most obedient to Moscow, appeared to comply. The crowds appeared in the streets demanding reform only after this palace coup had been engineered. Coming so handily in the wake of the other events in neighboring countries, there was something remarkably unspontaneous about this "revolution." One can further speculate that this change of regime followed the script that Moscow would have ideally liked to see in each of the other countries if it had been fully in control of events.

In Romania, there is considerable evidence that the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime was not entirely the result of a spontaneous revolution in the streets. The fact that there was no breakdown in the military command structure is just one factor which should prompt this suspicion. If the revolution were entirely spontaneous, one could reasonably expect that some elements of the armed forces would stay loyal to the regime while others would rebel. But in this case, the entire military structure turned against the regime. It is highly unlikely that this could occur unless the military command structure had assurances from some quarter that rebellion would be politically risk-free. The only plausible way that such assurances could be seen as credible by the military command is if they came from precincts more powerful than Ceausescu. The only sure locus of such power could have been Moscow.

Other factors do not rely nearly as much on such speculation. The Romanian National Salvation Front, which took power immediately, claimed that it had just come into being. But there is evidence that it existed at least two months before: A new group with the same name had issued an appeal to the 14th Communist Party congress to dismiss Ceausescu on account of his catastrophic policies. Later, one of the Front's members, its minister of defense, General Nicolae Militaru, disclosed that it existed six months before. An examination of its members reveals that some of them have had strategically significant ties to Moscow. For example, according to former Romanian intelligence chief Ion Pacepa (who defected to the West), the same General Militaru is reported to have been compromised by Soviet military intelligence at a time when he was up for promotion to be Ceausescu's deputy defense minister.[xvii] And Ion Iliescu, the Front's new President, is reported to have been a classmate of Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. His new regime has retained the services of Ceausescu's secret police and diplomatic corps. But now the entire gang can call themselves "reform socialists."

Meanwhile, multi-candidate elections have been taking place all over the region. It is here that whatever control the Soviets may have had over these events may have slipped away. Following the "democratization" pattern in the USSR, the East European elections quickly developed a momentum of their own. In Hungary, the election of a center-right democratic government codified the final collapse of a Communist Party which appeared to have lost the will to maintain its hold on power. In most other cases, save Romania and Bulgaria, opposition groups and individuals commanded the early allegiance of the respective electorates, and the Communist Parties' efforts to rehabilitate their external appearance did not universally meet with the electoral success that they had apparently anticipated. All of this may have been completely unexpected in Moscow. But despite

the apparent victory of civil society over totalitarianism, each country in the region, to a greater or lesser degree, has had to follow the model established in Poland: namely, non-communist leadership of the state and government bodies, with continued de facto communist control (or Soviet remote control) over the secret police, the foreign intelligence services, and in some cases, the armed forces.

While efforts have been made -- in Czechoslovakia and East Germany in particular -- to gain civilian control over these instruments of coercion, they have met with only partial success. It was discovered that the foreign intelligence services had developed their own external sources of funding, such as special firms set up to do international business and narcotics trafficking. The new non-communist authorities in these countries also admitted that it was difficult to remove the intelligence agents in question, since their identities remained unknown, and since Moscow appeared to be assuming control over many of them. The Czechoslovak case is particularly poignant: in spite of the efforts of the non-communist government to gain sovereignty over the intelligence functions, President Vaclav Havel and his non-communist Interior Minister Richard Sacher were compelled to negotiate a new intelligence liaison agreement with the Soviet KGB which enjoined the new government to continue to provide Moscow with information gathered on its soil.

Meanwhile, as part of what appears to be a consistent pattern throughout Moscow's orbit, the Nicaraguan Sandinistas submitted themselves to elections. Again, according to the latest reports, it was the Kremlin that was responsible for pressuring its clients to hold these elections.[xviii] For all the Sandinistas' efforts to rig the electoral process, the anti-communist opposition won the contest. But before the actual vote tally, a Sandinista spokesman indicated a lack of concern over such a possible outcome: if the Sandinistas were to lose the election, they would simply follow the Poland model, and not lose actual power at all.

In light of all this, there is some question as to how much control Moscow has over the East European situation. On the one hand, civil society has resoundingly rejected the continuation of the old regime. New non-communist governments are establishing themselves and are working to push communist institutions and practices out of the picture. On the other hand, Moscow may be able to exercise a great deal of hegemony over the region through its military power, its continued influence over the various Warsaw Pact armies, its links with the intelligence organizations, its penetration of the opposition and its exploitation of East European dependence on the USSR for energy supplies and other goods.

But why should the Kremlin have risked opening up a Pandora's box of anticommunist independence movements? Given the continued secrecy surrounding Soviet foreign policy, glasnost' notwithstanding, one can only speculate. Did it know so little about popular sentiment in these countries that it actually thought "reform" communists could win elections? On the one hand, this seems unlikely, given the high priority assigned to internal security throughout the Soviet bloc. The secret police organizations have been charged precisely with the task of collecting intelligence on civil society and keeping it from creating organizations which could challenge Party control. In just one example of how this task was being undertaken with apparent effectiveness, Evangelical Bishop Gottfried Forck, a member of the East German citizens' commission overseeing the breakup of the "Stasi" secret police, has reported that the Stasi analysis of the trends and moods within the fledgling opposition movement was extraordinarily accurate.[xix]

On the other hand, it is also possible that the various communist parties and their secret police were quite skillful in monitoring individual trees but failed to understand the forest -- i.e., the attitudes of society at large. The Soviets and their communist allies in East Europe may very well have fallen victim to their own propaganda. They may have come to believe that they were ruling with a certain amount of popular consent, or at least without pervasive mass disaffection. And this may have inclined them to feel that they could undertake various political machinations to create a new "reform socialism." They may have come to believe that by making various reforms at the margin, from increasing the standard of living to reducing political repression, they could rehabilitate the socialist vision in the minds of the people, or at a minimum, prevent popular disaffection from bringing down the entire order.

Whatever the case, it is possible that a large part of the explanation for the Soviet policy in East Europe can be found in Gorbachev's public declaration of the "Sinatra Doctrine," which envisioned a Finland-style arrangement for the region. This doctrine, derived from a Frank Sinatra song, is the sobriquet used by Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, Gennadi Gerasimov, to describe the new Soviet policy of letting Warsaw Pact nations "do things their own way." This new policy enshrines the principle of "the freedom of choice" and the renunciation of "hegemonism" and "interference in the internal affairs of other countries." Among its other objectives are the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of other countries, the elimination of military alliances, and the disbanding of COCOM (the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls, which prevents the transfer of military technologies to the Warsaw Pact states).[xx]

This new doctrine represents the Kremlin's boldest move to date to promote the creation of a "common European home."

The "common European home" is Moscow's modern-day attempt to create a "collective security" system in Europe which would incorporate the entire continent while excluding the United States. It revolves around the Kremlin's idea of creating an expanded sphere of economic "cooperation" that would benefit all of Europe. Here, in addition to the traditional Soviet policy of "peace," Moscow has now introduced the policy of "love." Gorbachev explained this during his visit to East Berlin:

> In the last century, the remarkable poet, Fedor Tyutchev, worked for a number of years in the Russian diplomatic mission in Bavaria. Responding to Bismarck's program, he wrote:
>
> "The oracle of our times has proclaimed unity,
> which can be forged only with iron and blood.
> But we shall try to forge it with love.
> Then we shall see which is more lasting."
>
> The lyrical poet Tyutchev expresses by the word love everything that we, at the close of the 20th century, put into the notions of concord, cooperation, interaction, and human relations as applied to Europe.[xxi]

The impetus behind the policy of "love" and the extraordinary and risky attempt to achieve the goal of a collective security system in Europe at this point in history is probably Moscow's concern over the impending economic integration of West Europe in 1992. The new conditions slated to take place that year -- particularly the breakdown of trade barriers -- will prompt West European countries to have greater interest in investing among themselves than in the East bloc. Moscow's fear is that this will accentuate the rift between East and West exactly at a time when the Soviet empire is in need of increased trade, financing and technology from the West.

Whenever the Soviet Union has faced economic crisis in the past, it has invariably turned to the West for help rather than undertake the economic decentralization required to repair the crisis internally. Real rather than cosmetic economic decentralization poses too much of a threat to the central Party authorities. By endangering their ability to set economic priorities from on high, it jeopardizes their ability to make their instruments of coercion the highest production priority. Thus, true reform threatens their power both domestically and internationally. So today, as always, this option must be

substituted by reliance on financial arrangements with, and subsidies from, the West.

The only way Moscow can make investment in the East more attractive than the prospects of intramural West European investment under "Europe 1992" is by liberalizing conditions in East Europe so dramatically that West Europeans are tempted by the enormous growth possibilities of countries ostensibly unshackled from communism. Moscow may have decided that East Europe is now so drained economically that it can no longer be exploited profitably, and that it may have even become a financial liability for the USSR. With the growth of nuclear weapons and Soviet global power projection, East Europe is less essential as strategic territory for Soviet security purposes. And in any case, Moscow would still cast a long shadow of power over a "Finlandized" East Europe. Therefore, to Finlandize East Europe would represent a minimal loss while simultaneously opening up large possibilities for another Western financial bailout. The new East Europe could then become a conduit for Western technology and financing for the USSR.

A Soviet retreat in East Europe could very well be a variant of the classic Soviet strategy of Brest-Litovsk. In 1918, in the wake of the Bolshevik coup d'etat, some of the "Left" communists recommended seizing the momentum of the revolution and extending it to Germany, with which Russia was at war. Lenin argued that this strategy was reckless given the vastly greater strength Germany enjoyed over the infant Bolshevik state. Instead, he argued that Russia should sign a separate peace, make the necessary concessions, and gain a breathing space (peredyshka) in order to consolidate power. The peace of Brest-Litovsk was signed, thousands of square miles of territory in the western portions of the Russian empire were temporarily ceded to Germany, and Bolshevism succeeded in ensconcing itself to fight again another day. Peredyshka was a success.

Lenin's regime undertook the same strategy when it retreated in the face of a resistant peasantry in the early 1920's. Having nationalized and collectivized large portions of industry and agriculture, the Bolshevik regime crippled the productive capacity of its economy in its earliest years. The peasants refused to continue planting crops so long as their harvests were to be seized from them. As the Soviet system faced disaster, Lenin had to retreat once again: he adopted the "New Economic Policy" (NEP) -- which reestablished various elements of a free market economy. In particular, NEP let peasants keep a share of the fruits of their labors and sell it on the open market. The Soviets themselves called the new policy the "peasant Brest-Litovsk."

This strategy of tactical retreat has thus been a mainstay of communist governance from the beginning. It was codified by Lenin in various works and has been the focus of contemporary Soviet policy analysis as well.[xxii] Most recently, Gorbachev has invoked this strategy in his book Perestroika. Referring specifically to Brest-Litovsk, he notes:

> Lenin, however, kept calling for peace because he was guided by vital, not immediate, interests, the interests of the working class as a whole, of the Revolution and future of socialism. To safeguard them, the country needed respite before going ahead. Few realized that at the time. Only later was it easy to say confidently and unambiguously that Lenin was right. And right he was, because he was looking far ahead; he did not put what was transitory above what was essential. The Revolution was saved. It is the same with perestroika.[xxiii]

By retreating in East Europe, and perhaps even sacrificing one or more pawns on the global chessboard, Moscow may have calculated that it could make the best of a dismal situation and perhaps even turn it into some strategic advantage. The sacrifice of East Germany could achieve the neutralization of West Germany and its severing from NATO. The West German attraction to the possibility of enjoying major competitive trade advantages and a decisive influence in East Europe could reinforce this neutrality. A new political landscape on the continent would deprive the United States of a compelling reason to maintain a military presence in Europe and even a significant overall military posture. In the absence of an American presence, Soviet power could emerge as the preeminent force in the region. A decisive shift in the "correlation of forces" could thus take place on the continent. The Finlandization of East Europe could result in the Finlandization of West Europe as well. In the process, the integration of the East bloc into the global capitalist economy would serve to rescue socialism yet again from its perennial state of crisis and perhaps enable it to reclaim its lost territories.

At this writing, the prospects for the German part of this scenario are by no means implausible. In spite of the victory of the conservative coalition in the East German elections, the momentum in both Germanies toward reunification is so strong that one may reasonably wonder whether the unification/neutralization process could be stopped if Moscow's ultimate price for the withdrawal of its troops from the East is West Germany's de facto withdrawal from NATO or the abolition of NATO's traditional defense function. Indeed, Bonn's recent astonishing decision to pay Moscow some $450 million or more per year for five to ten years to subsidize the continued Soviet military occupation of

eastern portion of reunited Germany may be interpreted as a symptom not merely of neutrality but of compromised sovereignty. In light of the Bush Administration's support of this arrangement, the net result is the de facto Western accession to the Soviet demand that if reunified Germany is not to be neutral, it should have simultaneous membership in NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

In spite of this apparent Soviet negotiating success, there has been an identifiable retreat and alteration of Moscow's established techniques of influence in East Europe, albeit less so in some countries than others. It is difficult to believe, however, that the Kremlin had planned a retreat of the magnitude that we have been witnessing. This retreat, after all, could not but have had an emboldening effect on the Lithuanian desire to seek independence. To be sure, the Kremlin may have been willing to give greater autonomy to the Baltic states -- another "Finland-style" arrangement -- as a means of using them also as instruments to attract Western investment. But again, it is hard to imagine that it wanted to face the impossible choice of either granting Lithuania full independence and precipitating the breakup of its internal empire or cracking down on the Lithuanians and forfeiting much of the good will it had been accumulating in the West.

What the Soviets have lost thus far in East Europe represents a significant ideological setback. However, we should not exclude the possibility that the skillful exercise of Soviet hegemony over the region, deriving from the various extant "organic" economic, military and intelligence relationships, could conceivably mitigate the perception of such a setback over the long term. In another example of Soviet retreat -- Afghanistan -- the immediate international perception of a Soviet military defeat has been substantially modified by the growing realization that the Soviet troop withdrawal did not result in the denial of Moscow's strategic purpose, namely, the communization and satellization of the country.

The final complexion of East Europe is by no means certain as yet. How Moscow and its "reform socialist" allies in East Europe will react over the long term to the mass rejection of socialism remains to be seen. The non-communist leaders in each country still live with fears as well as hopes. Many of them have admitted publicly that the communists still represent the only cohesive organized political force in their countries. Although the new non-communist governments have reliable officials at many of the high policymaking levels, the vast majority of functionaries are still members of the communist nomenklatura, and as such, represent a potential threat. On top of this, the new governments cannot be entirely certain of the

reliability of all of their own ostensibly non-communist officials. The communists have had a long-time operational tradition of penetrating non-communist opposition groups and even creating opposition movements for the purpose of manipulating, controlling and eventually destroying them. The famous "Trust" operation and the "Changing Landmarks" movement of the 1920's are but two examples of communist skill in such activities. Given the recent revelations of the secret police backgrounds of certain non-communist politicians, it can safely be said that the new political landscape in East Europe is a veritable wilderness of mirrors.

While reversals in the non-communists' fortunes seem unlikely so long as Moscow has a strong a need for Western aid, such reversals may become more likely under a variety of different scenarios, such as sudden changes in Soviet policy or leadership. The massacre in Peking's Tiananmen Square represents only one option which is not beyond the capacity of other communists to replicate. But the Tiananmen model is not the only way Moscow might seek to reverse the situation. The Kremlin has a long tradition of gradualistic pressure tactics which are designed to achieve objectives without alarming its adversaries. Thus, many other options remain at its disposal.

Conclusion

Before the West jumps to the conclusion that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has abdicated power, we would be well advised to remember the cardinal principal of communist governance: compromise with the adversary. Soviet leaders have consistently compromised with every force which has threatened their power and ideological vision: nationalism, capitalism, religion and foreign enemies. In each case, the compromises have been designed to appease, delay, confuse, deceive, divide, coopt, and even harness the opposing force. And for seventy years, the tactics of advance, retreat and compromise have proven successful. Perhaps now they will not. Compromise with democracy risks unleashing civil society beyond Party control. And the communist retreat in East Europe risks stimulating the breakaway of nations within Moscow's inner empire.

If these forces are now out of control, it is not because Moscow planned them to be so. It is because the Kremlin was compelled to take certain actions to preserve its power, and may have made some miscalculations in the process. Some actions have been defensive reactions to unfolding events. Others have been bold attempts to go on the offensive in the face of unfavorable circumstances. The systematic disinformation campaign to "deprive the West of an enemy image" is only one example. But whatever the case, unless we make the critical distinction

between deliberate intentions and unintended consequences, and unless we distinguish genuine changes from propaganda, our response to ferment in the Soviet bloc may prove to be dangerously mistaken. Indeed, the current tendency to proclaim Gorbachev as the Redeemer without considering the alternative possibilities may constitute an intellectual error of Chamberlainian proportions.

i. Gorbachev Speech to Ukraine Communist Party Central Committee plenum, September 28, 1989, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report -- Soviet Union (hereafter FBIS-SOV), September 29, 1989.

ii. Lenin expressed himself in a number of places on the importance of retreat as a tactic to pursue in the face of adverse circumstances. See, for example, his Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder.

iii. A.S., "Are the Communists Getting Religion?," Glasnost, January-March 1990.

iv. "K gumannomu, demokraticheskomu sotsializmu (Platforma TsK KPSS k XXVIII s'ezdu partii) ["Toward a Humane, Democratic Socialism (Platform of the CPSU Central Committee for the 28th Party Congress)"], Pravda, February 13, 1990.

v. "Soviet Experts Say their Economy is Worse than U.S. has Estimated," New York Times, April 24, 1990, and "CIA, Soviet Economists Confer on State of USSR Economy," AEI Press Release (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, April 23, 1990).

vi. As recently as April 8, 1990, for example, the offices of the prominent human rights journal, The Express Chronicle, were raided and illegally searched by Moscow police.

vii. See John Lenczowski, "Military Glasnost' and Strategic

Deception," International Freedom Review, Winter 1990.

viii. Chart compiled by Jim Guirard, West Watch, January-February 1990 (data based on: U.S. Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power, 1989).

ix. Andrei Gromyko, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 60.

x. "Five-year Plan Triumphs over Perestroika," Washington Times, December 14, 1989.

xi. Francoise Thom, "The Soviet Elections: Democracy or Deceit?," International Freedom Review, Fall 1989, p. 8. See also her volume, The Gorbachev Phenomenon (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1989).

xii. Victor Sheymov (whose pen name is "Victor Orlov"), presentation to round-table discussion sponsored by the Center for Security Policy, Washington D.C., March 14, 1990.

xiii. "Soviets Prevented Slaughter in Leipzig, Brandt Declares," International Herald Tribune, December 14, 1989.

xiv. Lally Weymouth, "Reds Beneath the Velvet," Washington Post, March 18, 1990.

xv. See John Lenczowski, "A Dash of Skepticism Wouldn't Hurt" Los Angeles Times, January 11, 1990, in which the author discusses the possibility that the Kremlin may have manipulated the crowds of demonstrators in several East European countries as a way of putting pressure on the old regimes to reform themselves.

xvi. "Havel Quoted as Saying KGB Plot Led to Freedom" Washington Times, May 30, 1990.

xvii. Ion Mihai Pacepa, Red Horizons (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1987) pp. 192 ff.

xviii. "Moscow Prodded Sandinistas on Elections, U.S. Says" Washington Post, May 30, 1990.

xix. "East Germany Haunted by Stasi Legacy," Washington Post, March 31, 1990.

xx."Soviets Look to Sinatra: Bloc Can `Do It Their Way,'" Washington Times, October 26, 1989. See also the speech by Mikhail Gorbachev in Finland, FBIS-SOV, October 27, 1989, p. 29.

xxi. Speech by Mikhail S. Gorbachev in Berlin's Great Hall of the Palace of the Republic on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the GDR. Pravda, October 7, 1989.

xxii. See, for example, Alexander Lebedev, The Problem of Compromise in Politics as Seen by Lenin in the First Post-revolutionary Years (1918-1921) (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency publishing house, 1989).

xxiii. Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Perestroika (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) p. 53.