Glasnost| The Pandora's box of Gorbachev's reforms

Judy Marie Sylvest

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Date: December 23, 1999

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GLASNOST:

THE PANDORA'S BOX OF GORBACHEV'S REFORMS

by

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B.A. The University of Montana, 1996

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

1999

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Glasnost, or openness, was initiated by Mikhail S. Gorbachev in the former Soviet Union as a supplement to his primary reform of perestroika, or re-structuring. This study focuses on the glasnost reform, arguing that while perestroika addressed economics glasnost encouraged democratization in society. Primarily, the study examines the social discourse that was ultimately affected as a result of glasnost. The societal issues that erupted after glasnost, exhibited defiance against the regime, particularly in terms of fundamental liberties of expression and the availability of information.

The study also examines differences in interpretation of Gorbachev and the Soviet population, a significant point in the explanation as to why the Communist Party could not sustain democratic reform and maintain control of the nation. The Soviet consciousness was conditioned by historical experience to concede to authoritarian political systems, and the study builds an argument that Gorbachev was a product of his culture. Therefore, the political system which V.I. Lenin erected in October 1917 served to perpetuate a mentality of political autocracy and social repression.

The presence of glasnost was literally referred to by Gorbachev as democratization, a definition which the study examines in particular to understand why glasnost escaped his objectives and brought about the failure of the Soviet Union under Communist power. The term democracy is therefore treated as an intangible power in itself that surpassed the control of the Party and in fact brought the process of democracy to the public consciousness by allowing freedom of information.

In the study a great amount of care was given to analyze Russian scholars and authors in order to gain their unique perspective. In examining the results brought about by glasnost’s liberalizing effects the study strives to utilize specific Russian citizens’ accounts of glasnost.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

On Christmas Day of 1991 the red flag of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was unceremoniously lowered, officially marking the end of that nation's existence. Earlier on that same day Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev resigned his position as Soviet President, the unexpected culmination of his 6-year leadership of a global superpower.

The intrigue of such high political drama is that the national failure of the Soviet Union was not due to external causes, but rather the result of an internal political gamble on the part of Gorbachev to strengthen and stabilize the Soviet Union’s economic and political situation. Perhaps the most ironic aspect of the Soviet Union’s demise was that the Communist Party, under the direction of Gorbachev, played the lead role in its own fall from power.

Upon ascending to the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on March 11, 1985, Gorbachev became leader of an empire that was increasingly stumbling in its ability to compete with other industrialized states, particularly in terms of economics. Jerry Hough accounts for the timeline of Gorbachev’s actions in beginning the reform process that was intended to redirect the nation’s progress.

Less than six months into office, Mikhail Gorbachev told the editors of Time that he had a “grandiose” domestic program in mind. His language became more radical at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in February-March 1986. By July
1986 he had become still more radical, equating perestroika with revolution—in all spheres of life, not just the economy. In 1986 he backed his words with a series of laws and decrees that began the process of economic reform. The laws were all good early steps. From the fall of 1986 he increasingly emphasized democratization.¹

Perestroika, or restructuring, was Gorbachev's primary reform in his objective for resurrecting the Soviet economic situation. His publication of 1987 was entitled Perestroika, demonstrating Gorbachev's sincere investment in his reform for reviving the economy. Change was imperative if the Soviet Union were to sustain itself internationally and domestically, a fact that Gorbachev addresses in his volume Perestroika. Like his predecessors, Gorbachev assessed the problem as primarily economic in nature. However, unlike former Russian and Soviet leaders, Gorbachev was compelled to initiate the reform glasnost, or openness, in an attempt to address corruption in the Soviet state. As he explained in Perestroika, the only inhibitor to the success of the nation's economic resurgence was a lack of social democracy, active participation in the nation's progressive development. In Gorbachev's report regarding the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, he calls for "the elimination of everything that interferes with development,"² and in Perestroika he urges:

[T]he development of democracy, criticism, and glasnost. It is no longer a question of whether the CPSU Central Committee will continue the policy of glasnost through the press and the other mass media and with the active participation of citizens. We need glasnost as we need air.³

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However, by initiating the glasnost reform Gorbachev unintentionally released a social revolution within his own nation's borders that spiraled out of control, challenging the Communist Party as the Soviet Union's single political authority and ultimately driving Gorbachev and the Party system out of power.

This thesis argues that glasnost encouraged democratization in the areas of communication and information which created a social revolution against the political authority of the Communist Party, consequently leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The hypothesis will be supported by evaluating two distinct factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. First, Gorbachev's reform, glasnost, will be analyzed according to the theoretical definition of democratization and also according to Gorbachev's intended definition, a point that is the crux of the issue. It is essential to the argument of this thesis to establish that Gorbachev used glasnost in a specific way, hoping that the reform would stimulate the population to embrace the socialist democratic ideal. Glasnost, according to one particular accepted theoretical definition, suggests a specific direction but according to another interpretation, addresses a diversity of opinions and interpretations. The second factor that the thesis argues contributed to the dissolution of the Soviet Union revolves around the political authoritarianism possessed by the Communist Party. Because glasnost was such an abstract concept, the reform escaped Gorbachev's control and literally clashed with the rigid dogma of the Communist Party. Glasnost's democratic nature could not be reconciled with the authoritarian nature of the Party.
It is critical to the argument to establish glasnost’s impetus toward change in a nation where, for centuries, autocratic rule defined the political and socioeconomic structures. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the literature of such noted Soviet citizens as Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in order to comprehend how the lack of democratic freedoms, such as the right to freedom of speech and of the press, in the Soviet Union created a system totally antithetical to the social democracy platform Vladimir I. Lenin used to gain power in 1917. By evaluating the works of Russian authors, one can gain an understanding of the democratization process which was embodied in glasnost.

In Sakharov’s volume, Memoirs, published in 1990, he reflects on the restrictions placed on himself, his family, and friends as well as countless other political dissidents residing in the Soviet Union. As Sakharov explains, censorship, enforced by the KGB, or Committee of State Security, regarding communication and freedom of expression was always present in order to suppress social resistance and ensure political loyalty to the Communist Party. As Sakharov recounts, his struggle for human rights started earnestly in the mid-60’s when he published a series of reform proposals meant to stimulate the economy and allow intellectual freedom. The defining difference between Sakharov’s bid for social democratization and Gorbachev’s glasnost reform is that each perceived the idea of open communication as fulfilling different objectives. While Gorbachev employed the term glasnost to enhance the Soviet system, not destroy it, Sakharov desired open communication and the ability to inform and be informed as a fundamental right of humanity, regardless of the consequences to the Soviet system.

As a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975 the distinguished scientist was exiled to Gorky with his wife, Elena Bonner by orders of the Chairman of the Presidium of the
Supreme Soviet, Leonid Brezhnev, in 1980. Sakharov presents a compelling perspective of the struggle of political dissidents who were silenced to benefit the Communist Party authority. Additionally, Sakharov exemplifies the Soviet citizen's desire to break free of political and social oppression, and to that end he illustrates the need for glasnost before Gorbachev advocated the reform.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, literary writer and political activist, through his literature shed light on the reforms needed in the interest of democratization. In his important publication of 1991, Rebuilding Russia, Solzhenitsyn expands on the processes and problems that Russia must confront since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a Russian citizen he offers a candid evaluation of the mentality that has inhibited social democratization. Solzhenitsyn's insights also include the definition of democracy from the Russian perspective, a valuable contribution in comprehending what glasnost means to the national population.

An important part of the study in understanding glasnost's effects on the Soviet population and on the Communist Party is met by evaluating how glasnost was interpreted. It is interesting to note that, according to author W. Bruce Lincoln, the term glasnost was initially used by the "enlightened bureaucrats" who occupied the courts of 19th century Russia. What is imperative about Lincoln's account is that the Russian definition of glasnost was altogether different from how the West understood the term. According to Lincoln, the term glasnost emerged to represent the necessary communication "important in bridging the gap between the bureaucracy and educated

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society which Nicholas I’s firm suppression of the Decembrists had opened at the beginning of his reign.”

Lincoln’s assessment of glasnost lends a firm basis to the argument that Gorbachev used the term according to a particular understanding obtained from Russian thinkers. In the mid-19th century the Russian courts of Nicholas I and Alexander II were marked by the desire for change that swept across Europe during the Enlightenment. Consequently, many scholars and intelligentsia advocated glasnost as a way to bring public opinion to the fore but only under the auspices of authority. From Lincoln’s 1981 volume The Vanguard of Reform comes a valuable insight into the definition glasnost took in the 19th century, allowing a basis of comparison with Gorbachev’s definition over one hundred years later.

Most notable to the premise of the thesis is the account of Scott Shane who published Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union in 1994. Shanes’s work largely supports the contention of the thesis, claiming that “[i]nformation slew the totalitarian giant.” Shanes’s account is compelling because he focuses on the common Soviet citizen, providing insight into how the public responded to the restrictions on information and communication by the Communist Party. From artists to publishers to political prisoners, Shane gives a wide perspective of how information and expression in the form of art, literature, education, and opinion enables the development of identity apart from the state. Additionally, Shane presents valuable comparisons of how the

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7 Ibid.
Communist Party responded to glasnost as the governing authority and felt challenged by the flow of potentially damaging information. By offsetting the viewpoints of society and those of the Party officials the reader gains an understanding of what was at stake for both society and the political entity. Moreover, Shane’s focus enables the reader to realize the consequences involved when the struggle for political power leads to the sacrifice of the society.

In establishing the contrary objectives that Gorbachev recommended, when he first declared the use of glasnost as a reform, it is necessary to review his own literature for a fuller comprehension of what he hoped to accomplish. Perhaps one of the most revealing accounts of the Communist Party’s illusion concerning social consensus comes from Gorbachev’s first book in which he outlines the reform initiatives. It is especially valuable in terms of establishing Gorbachev’s loyalties to the Party and of his belief in the socialist democratic system that Lenin had implemented. The countless references to Leninist principles that Gorbachev uses throughout Perestroika and speeches delivered during his time in office point to the unyielding direction in which Gorbachev wished to lead the Soviet Union. Yet, there is also an unmistakable difference in method found in the leadership of Gorbachev.

Unlike his predecessors, who maintained a course that did not deviate from the Party line, Gorbachev exhibits a flexibility and receptivity to different approaches in the interest of motivating change in the nation. Hence, he proposed glasnost as a way to engage the population in a discussion of issues relevant to economics and politics. The new style approach, utilizing glasnost, was distinctive in that it offered public

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9 Gorbachev, Perestroika.
participation. However, Gorbachev’s platform for encouraging reform, “new thinking,” is still packaged in the style of Party compliance, which presents a paradoxical situation in terms of glasnost’s democratic value and the rigidity of the Party structure. To observe better the incompatibility of glasnost with the Party dogma it is reasonable to explore the writings of the man who embodied Party principles of socialist democracy yet sought to implement a democratic reform meant for social rejuvenation.

One of the best sources of comparison comes from Gorbachev’s autobiography of 1995, Memoirs, in which he reflects on the course of action that he took and that ultimately led to the failure of the Communist Party to maintain power, driving the Soviet Union to the collapse of 1991. In Memoirs, Gorbachev is acutely aware of the corruption in Party politics in all areas of the Soviet system: economic, political, and social, which due to a lack of progressiveness in reform, maintained the status quo of Party authority and kept the society debilitated. Most relevant to the argument of this thesis is Gorbachev’s insight concerning his interpretation of glasnost. What he formulates in Perestroika, the adherence to the Leninist socialist democratization as critical to the process of socioeconomic reform, takes on a different interpretation in Memoirs when Gorbachev has retrospectively assessed all the changes brought to bear upon his nation under his leadership.

By his own admission, Gorbachev acknowledges the contradictions found in his speech that he delivered to the Congress, contradictions that he could afford to be more introspective about at a later date. Yet, these contradictions effectively demonstrate the

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10 Gorbachev, Memoirs.
tenuous nature of the Communist Party system regarding political and social interaction.

Gorbachev writes:

‘Contradictions’ of this kind can also easily be found in other places in my report. It contains the theme generally recognized at that time, that ‘by relying on the advantages of socialism, the country has in a short historical period reached the heights of historical and social progress.’ But only two paragraphs later there is a reference to ‘the need for further changes and transformations, for the achievement of a new qualitative state of society. . . . This means sweeping changes in the area of labour and the material and spiritual conditions of life. This means energizing the entire system of political and social institutions, a deepening of socialist democratic principles, and self-government for the people.’

Gorbachev’s words epitomized the contradictions which he, as a leader, faced in attempting to reconcile the dysfunctional socioeconomic Soviet system with the authority of the Communist Party. Substantial change in the Soviet Union had been hampered by the inability of the Party to concede power in all three spheres of interest, politically, economically, and socially. Gorbachev was challenging the Party to be receptive to reform that would potentially affect the central political authority because he was appealing to society, in addition to the Party, to move the nation forward. According to Judith Devlin, Party officials rejected the reforms outright based on a continuing commitment to the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Market economics, promoted by perestroika, were associated with capitalism, in direct opposition to the socialist ideology. Particular to glasnost, few Party members were supportive to the democratization reform, maintaining that “Leninist socialism was becoming increasingly discredited among the radical intelligentsia.” Most Party officials refused to condone any deviation from the

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11 Ibid. 174.
13 Ibid.
Marxist-Leninist dogma based on principle. Realistically, Gorbachev's "anti-Marxist heresy" caused Soviet officials to reject any reform, economic or social that would challenge their position of power. As Peter A. Hauslohner notes, Gorbachev faced a growing consensus within the Party apparatus that resisted "the democratization of government and the Party," therefore initiating political divisions.

The struggle between Gorbachev and the controlling power of the Communist Party is effectively described in Dusko Doder and Louise Branson's book of 1990, *Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin*. Particularly relevant to the argument of this thesis is how Gorbachev is illustrated as a reform-minded leader who still believes in the political premise of the Party as the vanguard of socialist democracy. However, according to Doder and Branson, "Gorbachev would not recognize publicly the magnitude of the contradiction between his quest for democratization and a Marxist-Leninist Party's rule," a characterization which captures the argument of the thesis.

Essentially, the contradictions in the system and in the leadership of Gorbachev are important in understanding why he initiated such a reform as glasnost. The reform that would bring democracy to the population in hopes that socialism would prevail proved to be an impossible mission. This thesis takes the position that glasnost was first, misinterpreted by Gorbachev because he was a product of his political culture and represented what he believed to be the correct system of government in the Soviet Union.

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Second, the critical point revolves around glasnost as an intangible reform that escaped Gorbachev's carefully executed plans for renewal of the nation. Glasnost embodied much of what the Party deemed to be threatening to the political presence of power, ultimately leading to Party censorship and controls placed on the population, therefore limiting social liberties. In the interest of power, the Party was capable of maintaining the status quo through communication controls, a position that was politically pragmatic for authoritarianism but vastly ineffective in terms of socioeconomic progress. What Gorbachev conceived in glasnost turned out to be counter-productive for the Party and for the survival of the Soviet Union. Yet, even if Gorbachev had never turned to glasnost the rest of the world continued progressing despite the Party's reluctance to implement change.

Today the former Soviet Union is regarded as an unsuccessful political experiment. However, there is more at stake than a cursory evaluation of how not to conduct socialist democracy. The real value in studying the experience of the former Soviet nation is to gain a greater understanding of the interactions necessary between political power and the society they govern if real progress is to be achieved. Statistics show that the Soviet Union was a formidable military power and produced more industrial products such as steel than the United States, a commendable accomplishment if a nation's resources rest solely on militarization and the industrial output to secure militarization. However, there are also resources that must be nurtured if progress is to occur in a nation.

Solzhenitsyn elaborates on the crisis of disequilibrium in the former Soviet Union:

Following the bitter experience of 1917, when we plunged headlong into what we thought was democracy Vasili Maklakov, a prominent leader of the Constitutional

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16 Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 86.
Democrats, reminded us all of a simple truth by the following admission: "In order to function, democracy needs a certain level of political discipline among the populace." But this is precisely what we lacked in 1917 and one fears that there is even less of it today.  

Precisely because the population in Russia and the former Soviet Union was deprived of participation by the political power the threat of a social rebellion was always present. Russia has endured more than one crisis within its nation's borders in the 20th century, and contributed to more than one international conflict. The instability of such a powerful nation remains a valid concern for the global community as well as for the population of Russia.

Glasnost represents what Russia was lacking to achieve national cohesion. The writers, scientists, and leaders needed glasnost before 1985. For two centuries the Russian society asserted itself in various rebellions in an effort to be heard. Yet the political autocracy jealously guarded its power instead of promoting the concerns for society. This thesis argues that, placing the political power above the needs of society in order to bring what one authority perceives as socioeconomic or political equality ultimately costs the nation in terms of progress, and will far exceed what can possibly be gained through controlling political allegiance.

The structure of the thesis reflects the conflict between political authoritarianism and social democratization, specifically the Communist Party and glasnost. An analysis of literature supporting the trend of Russian rulers and Soviet leaders to promote autocracy will provide a counterpoint that, for two centuries, there have been a number of political dissidents in Russian history who were unsuccessful because the political power had the

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authority to eradicate any opposition that came from society.

The second chapter establishes a historical foundation that supports the contention that Russia developed into an autocracy and such a political system refused any reforms that challenged the political authority. The chapter examines leaders who brought a degree of reform to Russia and the Soviet Union, such as Peter the Great and Nikita Khrushchev, but whose objectives were directed to bolster the autocratic power in the systems of government.

The third chapter focuses on Gorbachev's role as Communist Party political administrator, analyzing why he reflected the inadequacies of the system in his book Perestroika, yet was unaware of the tremendous need for, and impact that social liberties, such as glasnost, would provide. Additionally, the thesis argument that the Party created the illusion of a socialist utopia while practicing political authoritarianism is developed in chapter three.

Chapter four contrasts Andrei Sakharov's experience with Gorbachev's in order to illustrate the social injustices which created the need for glasnost, long before the reform was implemented. In addition, there will be an analysis of the struggle for freedom of communication among Soviet citizens drawn from the work of Scott Shane, showcasing the effects of glasnost on the general public. This chapter also addresses the disparity between the Communist Party and the Soviet society in terms of communication and political authority in order to illustrate how freedom of communication can be an important factor in the survival of a political system.

In the fifth chapter the effects of glasnost are illustrated through the content of information that circulated throughout the Soviet Union. The chapter reviews the
diversity of information that erupted into society with glasnost, and virtually exploded the myths that had propped up Party politics for decades. Additionally, there is an analysis of Gorbachev's fall from power as a result of the imperfections revealed by glasnost against the Party and Leninist principles.

The concluding chapter examines the structure of the Russian state and the Soviet Union as instrumental in producing an autocracy that refused to take a progressive social direction. In light of glasnost, the conclusion underscores the necessity for political systems to facilitate dialogue with citizens and increase the advantage for progress.
CHAPTER TWO

DEMOCRATIZATION IN RUSSIA AND THE SOVIET UNION

The Legacy of Political Autocracy

Nineteenth-century Russian history professor Konstantine Kavelin contends “[a]ll of Russian history is primarily the history of the state, political history.”¹ Kavelin’s “state school” theory emerges from the Westernizer perspective of Russia’s history which identifies with the Western European development of nations. Alexander Yanov evaluates Kavelin’s “state school” theory in support of his own assertion that Russia became an autocratic empire with the reign of Ivan IV who effectively removed any limitations on the political power by subordinating the economic and social system to a function performed for the benefit of the state.²

According to Yanov, the system of government that grew out of Russia upon the expulsion of the Tatars amounted to a strange hybrid of despotism and absolutism because the economic power and the ideological power of society were arrested by the power of the Tsar. Yanov argues that the defining feature occurred under Tsar Ivan the Terrible when he implemented the Oprichnina, “the nucleus of autocracy which

² Ibid.
determined . . . the entire subsequent historical process in Russia." Yanov describes the relevance of the Oprichnina to Russian political development:

If Charles Montesquieu invented the separation of powers, then Ivan the Terrible invented the separation of functions between powers. The separation of powers leads, as history has shown, to democracy. The separation of functions leads to autocracy. This was the true political significance of the Oprichnina . . . a means for maximization of political control with a minimum of administration.

Yanov goes on to explain that, due to the division of territory under Ivan IV, a social mentality of division in order to secure national power became the accepted standard of political and economic development. Yanov's theory emphasizes the use of terror, delivered by the Oprichniki, or the political police, under the Tsar's orders, which essentially demanded allegiance of the population to the political and economic structure. Under such a system no possible means of participation or competition could result because the source of power was removed from the population.

Russian autocracy is described by Yanov in reference to Montesquieu's philosophy that suggests the separation of powers in Western Europe led to a monarchy with an aristocratic class while Russia never developed an aristocracy with independent economic power. According to Montesquieu, the natural class structure which emerges from a monarchy produces a society that is self-interested, creating ambition in the interest of acquisition of wealth or status. The presence of competition inspires performances based upon honor, a characteristic Montesquieu claims acts as the cohesion of a competitive

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3 Ibid., 68.
4 Ibid., 69.
society, but which he cautions “is possible only if men have a certain concern for dignity and freedom.”

Emile Durkheim’s analysis examines the social classification theory put forth by Montesquieu in an effort to understand why societies differ in political order.

A despotism is either a variety of monarchy in which all the orders have been abolished and there is no division of labor, or a democracy in which all the citizens except the ruler are equal, but equal in a state of servitude. Thus it has the aspect of a monster, in which only the head is alive, having absorbed all the energies of the organism. The principle of such social life in such a society can be neither virtue, because the people do not participate in the affairs of the community, nor honor, because there are no differences of status. If men adhere to such a society, it is from passive submission to the prince’s will, that is solely from fear.

Durkheim’s analysis supports Yanov’s argument that Russia’s unique autocratic empire was the result of an abolition of economic and social power, and the institution of an administrative order that consolidated the political authority. Yanov goes on to make another convincing point relevant to this thesis. The consolidation of power requires “the minimization of ideas ... so that the thought of the possibility of challenging the constant plundering of the economy cannot even arise.” With the elimination of economic competition, the necessity of eliminating ideological participation is paramount if the state is to retain its dominance.

Having established the trends of Western Europe to democratic behavior and of Russia to autocracy, it still remains to explain why Russia, despite such a dominant political structure was given to extremist politics throughout history. Precisely because there was a lack of organized competition in the system, Russian struggles with power

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6 Ibid., 31.
7 Ibid., 31-2.
8 Ibid., 39.
were marked by violence and strategic plotting in order to gain the upper hand. As Yanov reminds, Russian history exhibits a pattern of full-scale social and economic dominance exerted by the political power of the era, followed by a period of revolution, reforms, or relaxation of the power. Yet, the aforementioned period is always temporary, overshadowed by the inheritance of being politically dominated and unable to rally a broader support for permanent change. Such tendencies can be explained by the term, "reactionary politics," when the opposition to the old system is present but the impetus to effect progressive change is lacking. Challenging the authority of the system is one thing while challenging the system itself is quite another.

According to Yanov, Russia demonstrates the disposition to reactionary politics primarily because the nation has become too dependent on one resource of power. This argument is supported by the patrimonial identity which Russia and the Soviet Union embraced, particularly after the expulsion of the Tatars which forced the necessity to create a strong national image. As long as the identity of the authority was firmly woven into the national consciousness the possibility of success for reform was slim.

The mentality of defense was foremost in the objectives of both the rulers and of the people who had endured the Tatar pillaging of Russian lands, starting in 1242 and lasting for more than two centuries. Such an experience created the fortitude to erect a national defense structure that would secure the people. The terms for security, therefore, were of little importance at that time because the struggle for the Russians was to defend themselves, not to free themselves. Consequently, the first Russian Tsar, Ivan III, built a national power based on the idea of "collectivization" in order that the lands and the

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\(^9\) Ibid.
population could be safe from the enemy. Hans Von Eckhardt argues that during the Muscovite era "the idea of the reason of the state began to germinate." Establishing an identity capable of consolidating the nation was also accomplished under the reigns of the first two Russian Tsars, Ivan III and Ivan IV. Patrimony was introduced by the middle of the 16th century, but the power of the patrimonial identification emerged with Peter the Great.

Peter I took the first title, "Russian Emperor" upon the Peace of Nystadt in the fall of 1721, and began plans for the creation of a capital built exclusively for the defense of the state. Prior to the construction of St. Petersburg, Russian cities were built to defend only themselves. Peter's penchant for rationality and order can be seen in the straight lines of St. Petersburg's architecture. Under Peter I, mass militarization occurred primarily because the Tsar was involved in numerous conflicts, and also because he was driven to excel in forging a powerful military establishment.

As a Tsar, Peter assumed the position of military commander, but the position influenced his reforms and political administration to be advantageous to the state power but disastrous to the population that were subjected to his command. With Peter's direction Russia saw reforms that enforced service to the state, excluding no one. According to Anisimov, "Peter had carefully provided that nobody 'got out' of service or the tax assessment or some form of occupation," a situation that consolidated the

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12 Ibid., 227.
society under the power of the Tsar. Moreover, Anisimov makes the case that the first Law Code of 1649 tied servants to their masters during the lifetime of the master but set the legal standard of slavery to be selected from the “free and itinerant” population. The idea of “free people” was removed entirely under Peter’s reforms, and the term came to be associated with the fugitives of society. These fugitives, primarily indentured servants or peasants, were turned in by citizens or apprehended by the state police in an attempt to control social order. The insistence of Peter to regulate the population under reforms, such as the “soul tax,” imposed upon the agrarian sector to fund the state, and the military established “Table of Ranks” that enforced service regardless of place in society, created a significant influence on Russian development. Additionally, the Tsar reinforced the notion of patrimonial dictatorship, resorting literally to beating those under his command to induce conformity to his system. Peter’s intent was to produce a strictly regimented society, a goal which he initiated but did not realize during his lifetime. However, the Petrine notion of order produced a state system that deflected challenge and a mentality that compliance was the best course of action if one wanted to avoid punishment.

Even as Russia yielded to the primary objective of militarization, the Tsar had introduced European culture and customs to his nation which diffused the idea of St. Petersburg solely as a fortress. Particularly, by the time Catherine the Great (1762-96) completed her bid for power in 1762, Russia was indeed responding to the Enlightenment ideas from Europe. The Empress was instrumental in promoting cultural thought

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13 Ibid.
among the Russian bureaucrats, indulging her own taste for theatre productions by
writing plays and engaging the French *philosophes*, Voltaire and Diderot, in her courts.
Catherine's reign saw the legislation of printing presses throughout Russia, with the
provision that police were to be notified as to content of the publications. In 1794 the
Academy of Arts was founded in St. Petersburg, contributing to cultural development for
elite classes. Additionally, Catherine authorized scholars to travel to Europe and pursue
education at foreign institutions. Yet, as de Madariaga contends, “the 1790’s represent
the parting of the ways between the government and the intellectuals of Russia . . . the
intelligentsia.” Such divisions in Russian society marked the defining point when
philosophies and trends of thought emerged from the educated population only to be
crushed by the political authority.

According to de Madariaga, the split between the state and the intelligentsia occurred
for several reasons, but most notably as a result of the Empress's growing intolerance of
radical thinking and a cultural diffusion found in society that had not existed before
educational facilities were founded. Arguably, the French Revolution of 1789 was the
most influential event for Catherine, alerting the Empress to the possibility of
insurrection and rebellion in Russia. The once powerful European monarchy came under
challenge by a rising opposition. Therefore, Catherine began a regressive policy
concerning the censorship of publications, hoping to avoid a similar fate in her own
empire.

The plight of opposition to the Russian monarchy began with Alexander Radishchev
who was educated in Leipzig and worked in the Senate and the military. When he

15 Ibid., 547.
published *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* in 1790, an account of the oppressive conditions that consumed nearly the entire population of Russia, Radishchev was arrested and, although originally sentenced to execution, was ultimately exiled. Catherine resented Radishchev's claims that autocratic rule should be challenged by the moral authority of society. Under such conditions the Tsarina refused to tolerate dissension from the established order, a position that was beneficial for the ruler but not for the ruled. Denying the privilege of communication through publication led to a breakdown between Catherine and her subjects, a trend that developed the revolutionary attitudes of the next century.

The increasing dictatorial position of the Tsarist regime, with regard to communication, initiated a social behavior that failed to mature to a productive and respected force, but instead languished in fits and starts of revolutionary fervor which resulted in further social dysfunction. Radishchev describes the situation in *Journey*:

> Censorship has become the nursemaid of reason, wit, and imagination, of everything great and enlightened. But where there are nurses, there are babies and leading strings, which often lead to deformed legs; where there are guardians, there are minors and immature minds unable to take care of themselves. If there are always to be nurses and guardians, then the child will walk with leading strings for a long time and will grow up to be a cripple... Everywhere these are the consequences of the usual censorship, and the sterner it is, the more disastrous are its consequences.\(^\text{16}\)

Jesse V. Clardy evaluates Radishchev's position as one which urges freedom of thought and the right to expression. Without such fundamental truths the society will learn nothing more than concession to authority, and the authority will only become less receptive to the formation of different trends of thought and expression in the interest of

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guarding its power. De Madariaga’s analysis of Catherine’s reign emphasizes her reluctance to allow the nobility political discussion even though the nobles were liberated far more under Catherine than under any of her predecessors. The effects of foreign revolt no doubt played an influential role in prohibiting progressive communication among society, but the atrocities committed by the revolutionary opposition in France contributed to Russia’s desire to distance itself from European affairs.

The emergence of the Russian intelligentsia during the reign of Catherine the Great created tension in the autocracy, demonstrated throughout the 19th century until the final rule of Nicholas II (1892-1917). The fluctuating policies that allowed for a minimum of political interaction only fueled sharper criticism among the service gentry, the new classification of citizens who possessed nobility heritage. According to Andrzej Walicki, the liberalization of the gentry class gathered momentum, particularly during the reign of Alexander II (1855-81), which witnessed growing dissension from the political power in the form of organizations of opposition. In order to build a consensus of thought among the radical opposition, a growing segment of the intelligentsia promoted ideas by publishing articles expounding on social change designed to promote balanced government and facilitate modernization. As Walicki stresses, the years following the reign of Nicholas I (1825-55) produced “high-minded optimism and national harmony” but culminated in the enforcement of political allegiance following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.

Nicholas Chernyshevsky, one of the sixties radicals, authored during his incarceration What Is To Be Done? in which he expands on his philosophy concerning necessity and

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the historical evolution of life. Walicki notes that Chernyshevsky's chief observation was "the greatest evil in Russia was autocracy—which because of censorship he was obliged to refer to as 'bureaucracy.'" Despite Chernyshevsky's imprisonment, his book escaped publication censorship and received popular acclaim throughout Russia, becoming one of the literary inspirations of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. However, while the impetus for social progress required intellect and ideas put into words, in Russia the force for change was weak.

W. Bruce Lincoln argues that, precisely at the time enlightened thinking came to Russia by the middle of the 19th century, the number of people able to participate in a discussion concerning reform was minute. The percentage of gentry stood in small contrast to the majority of peasants, and there existed no political body to interact with the autocracy on behalf of society. The lack of distributive power both in economics and intellectual education allowed neither for reform nor modernization because those who participated did so according to a single standard of power. Lincoln explains the situation:

Russia lacked any national consultative or legislative body, for such was inconsistent with the premises upon which autocracy...had been based. At the same time rigid censorship meant that public commentary about her pressing problems remained impossible....A course thus had to be found that would preserve autocracy and its traditional instruments but, at the same time, allow Russia to reenter the competition with Europe....Russia's economy—especially her industry—must develop as had that of Europe and her social order must be adjusted to meet the needs that reasonably stemmed from that course of action.

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19 Ibid.
The bureaucratic administration and society required participation in the reform process, yet Alexander II was as jealous of power as all of his predecessors had been and granted fractional liberty. The complexities of economic and social development demanded distribution of power, not only in administration but intellectually.

In 1861 the Tsar abolished serfdom in Russia in response to growing sentiment among the intelligentsia for emancipation. Emancipation of the serfs revolved around economic issues which became increasingly worrisome to national stability. Nineteenth-century Europe had moved toward urbanization and industrialized economies, but Russia’s agrarian population remained mired under legislation that prohibited mobility. Alexander II’s emancipation reforms were burdened by his determination to preserve the status quo in the political and social arenas. While serfdom formally ended, the continuing autocratic government was not conducive to progressive action economically or socially.

Lincoln contends that Alexander II reacted to European expressions of power, ideological and economic, as a threat to the national identity of Russia as epitomized in the words of S.S. Uvarov: “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.” However, there were terms such as glasnost that began to circulate among the Russian enlightened circles.

According to Lincoln, the term glasnost was coined in the middle of the 19th century to define the bridge between the public and the government. Specifically glasnost referred to information that went public and was used in conjunction with the term zakonnost, or lawfulness. As Lincoln points out, the understanding in Russia of public information and lawfulness amounts to a narrow definition that suggests the public must comply with the government when dispensing information through dialogue or in

21 Ibid.
Ultimately the notion of glasnost was to involve the society but only insofar as that involvement did not contradict the dictates of the law. Such a twist on participation is especially difficult for Western ideologists to comprehend, and in fact Lincoln explains that the enlightened Russian bureaucrats struggled to reconcile the standard of law with autocratic power and to understand the purpose of glasnost. Lincoln's analysis of the meaning given to glasnost is supported by censor V.A. Tsie who wrote in 1856:

> It is necessary to note that, with the expansion of [administrative] authority [on the local level], it is essential to resort to a single device, namely *glasnost*, in order to retain it within lawful limits. This is the most reliable, one can say the the only, means for ensuring that the beneficial plans of the central government will not become a dead letter but will become fully beneficial in their consequences. . . .Nowhere does *glasnost* have such a fundamental and undoubted utility as in legal proceedings. . . .It provides the oppressed the opportunity to enjoy the protection of the law, and it alone, with its all-shattering power, can shake and finally eradicate the most shameful ulcer of our country—corruption.²²

Many enlightened members of the Russian bureaucracy saw the promise of glasnost, including Prince Petr Dolgorukov, described by Lincoln as "a controversial and tempestuous figure during the first years of Alexander II's reign,"²³ and Alexander Herzen who was also a supporter of reformist efforts. In 1860, O.A. Przhetslavskii of the Censorship Administration wrote *On Glasnost* in *Russian Journalistic Literature* which defined the term glasnost as contrary to the designs of Russian politics. According to Przhetslavskii, glasnost "does not conform to our civic order, the peculiarities of our national character, the level of our present development, or our future requirements."²⁴

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²² Ibid., 184.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid., 187/8.
The definition became Russia's standard of understanding glasnost, meaning essentially that public opinion should conform to political authority.

Because glasnost was inextricably linked with the premise that lawfulness equated autocratic government, there was little motivation to pursue alternative definitions which might reach different outcomes. The single-mindedness of principle in glasnost's definition was unique to the Russian perception and, as such, presented few controversial perspectives among the intelligentsia. Unity of thought and purpose was the underpinning of the Russian government, established and maintained through resolute acceptance of the autocratic order. Entertaining different approaches to the established law could only be achieved in Russia by radical dissent because there existed no legal means of challenging the authority.

The Revolution and Perfection of Autocratic Rule

The prelude to the Bolshevik Revolution began with careful thought and preparation on the part of Vladimir I. Ulyanov, later known as Lenin. In addition to the revolutionary direction supplied by Lenin other factors contributing to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 were a Tsarist ruler with no progressive intentions, a frustrated intelligentsia that rallied together, and a massive population that was overshadowed by the Bolshevik's new leadership objectives. In point of fact the most instrumental factor contributing to the collapse of the Tsarist regime was leadership because under Lenin, the Bolshevik Party supplied a viable opposition to conduct the revolution.

However, in reviewing the outcome of the Russian Revolution history presents a grim picture of dictatorship that repressed and tortured the very citizens it claimed to defend.
The established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics evolved to become an industrialized nation led by a militarized regime. The Soviet population of workers fell into one of two categories, either as an industrial or agricultural worker, or as a member of the military whose job it was to defend the state interests. What is most interesting about such an arrangement is who exactly was defending the interests of the workers?

According to Gorbachev's interpretation, the worker population became the "state enemy" if they disagreed with socioeconomic or political policies. Therefore the concept of the "enemies of the people" literally translated into the society being against the state, a consequence that rendered the population helpless to challenge state authority.

The most infamous of the Party's repressors, Joseph Stalin, succeeded in the Soviet industrialization. He was also publicly denounced and ostracized by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 at the de-Stalinization speech, an event which triggered the process known as the "Thaw" in the post-Stalin years. Stalinization left deeper scars in the Soviet society and made a far larger impact on Soviet identity and progress than any of the effects of industrialization. Former General of the Communist Party, Dmitri Volkogonov, summarizes Stalin's contribution to the Soviet Union as blatant "lawlessness and totalitarianism" and characterizes Stalin as a man with no conscience.25

Khrushchev's bold condemnation of Stalin broke through important social barriers in the Soviet Union, allowing for the emergence of critical thinking, even if at a very superficial level. The documentation Khrushchev had obtained from P. N. Pospelov, editor of Pravda, pointed to fabrication and injustice committed by Party officials against other Party officials, rank and file members, as well as millions of Soviet citizens. The

release of information proved to be as damaging to the Soviet identity as to the leader who committed crimes against his own citizenry. Khrushchev responded by beginning the massive military build-up against alleged American imperialism, hoping that competition on an international scale would boost Soviet morale and redefine national purpose. Volkogonov credits Khrushchev with inadvertently beginning "new thinking" even though his leadership was short-lived due to the inability of the Party to comprehend the seriousness of Stalin's legacy.

However, there is a legacy that becomes far more influential than Stalinism. Lenin, as the front-runner of the intelligentsia responsible for organizing opposition politics in Russia, created the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Harold Shukman, the editor of Volkogonov's latest publication which deals exclusively with Lenin, describes the founder of the Soviet Union as follows:

From its inception to its end the Soviet state was identified with Lenin, whether alive or dead. Without him, it is generally accepted, there would have been no October revolution. . .He was made into an icon, a totem of ideological purity and guidance beyond questioning.²⁶

Shukman goes on to explain that Lenin "remained untouched" after Stalin was implicated in Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Party Congress. What was it about Lenin's mystique which held generation after generation captive to the socialist ideal for over seven decades? Volkogonov argues that it was Lenin who created the Communist Party with all of its notorious injustices, injustices which have been assigned to Stalin as the monster dictator of the regime. The argument has gained popular recognition only since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dethroning of the Party in 1991. Still, the

question remains one of the peculiar enigmas that trouble Soviet and Western scholars about Russian history and politics.

Volkogonov’s conclusions are that Leninism virtually castrated the Russian nation by wresting any hope of democratic socialism from the Provisional Government of the 1917 February revolution. Perhaps Lenin’s socialist vision suffered because of the crippled socioeconomic conditions already present under the Tsarist system, however the transition proved to be inadequate as a socialist democracy. Before the Bolshevik Party had been organized, Lenin began his education from the intelligentsia of the 19th century courts. Nicholas Chernyshevsky challenged liberalism to be inadequate in progressive change when applied to the economic and historical development of nations. Chernyshevsky advocated measures and is described by Nikolai Valentinov as “the generally acknowledged leader of the Russian revolutionary current.” Ascribed to Chernyshevsky is Lenin’s rejection of the liberal perspective primarily because liberalism advocated Western political procedure. Consequently, Lenin’s position led to his embrace of revolutionary politics in pursuit of Populism which emerged in the mid-1800’s as an ideology promoting societal involvement. However, the intelligentsia literature was not the only influence on Lenin. According to the popular mythology about Lenin, the execution of his brother Alexander in 1887 as a result of the planned assassination on Alexander III fueled the determinism in Lenin to continue in the footsteps of the revolutionary, and overthrow the Tsarist government.

In Russia, terrorism was acknowledged to be the only possible challenge to a centuries old autocracy that threatened to drag on for eternity. For Lenin revolution was both ends and means. Valentinov comments that, although Alexander Ulyanov and his younger brother Vladimir were both revolutionaries, the difference between them was a question of morality. It is difficult to evaluate the perspectives held by Alexander because of his execution at the age of 21 years, but Valentinov suggests that Lenin’s elder brother retained an idealistic faith in humanity and that Lenin had not the disposition or the faith of his brother, instead relying on more aggressive actions.

Revolution in Europe had redefined governments. Lenin was influenced by the French revolution which had happened a full century earlier but which left deep impressions as to the power capable in revolution. Although Lenin immersed himself in literature from Marx and Chernyshevsky, he developed his own personal ideals of political objectives and how to achieve them. The Leninist ideology subscribed to one definition of morality: “‘Whatever serves Communism is moral.’” For Lenin the goal of securing political power in Russia involved revolutionary methods, as outlined by Chernyshevsky and suggested by Marx. However, according to Volkogonov, Lenin completely disregarded the earlier humanist writings of Marx, preferring to resort to any means to one end. Volkogonov describes Lenin’s intentions in this way:

After his return to Russia on 16 April 1917, when he was whipping up a mood of frenzy, harnessing the masses’ impatience, promising peace and land in exchange for support for his Party, Lenin bent every effort to turn that Party into a combat organization, capable of seizing power. . .This had nothing to do with socialism. The society which Lenin and his adherents began to build had to resort to unrestrained violence, in accordance with the leader’s views, in order to survive. As the highest principle of revolutionary development, the dictatorship trampled and subordinated everything to its own will. Having once espoused the idea of

socialism in one country, Lenin pushed questions of morality well down the Bolshevik agenda. 29

The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was led by the radical revolutionary Lenin, who saw revolution in Russia as a struggle for political power, nationally and internationally. Ultimately the needs of the society were not only compromised but violated.

An example is found in Volkogonov's research which includes an authorization by the Party in 1919 to liquidate jewelry valued at millions of rubles in order to fund the Comintern, the Communist Party's international branch for advancing communism. In 1921 the Party refused to allow the improvement of children's rations in the Soviet Union. As Volkogonov comments, "difficulties faced by the regime do not justify the refusal to meet this need. While millions were dying of hunger and disease, the Politburo was lavishly disbursing tsarist gold to ignite revolution in other countries," 30 Such events illustrate the priorities that Leninist principles held which are contradictory to socialist democracy. Revolution for the cause united Leninist followers in a strange assembly known as the Communist Party. Lenin created the Party, but what did the Party hope to accomplish other than a continuous revolution? To what ends were Party members devoted? As Volkogonov asks, "How can the dictatorship of one class—or more accurately one Party—be reconciled with the principles of people's power, liberty and the equality of all citizens?" 31 According to Volkogonov, the answer revolves around the

29 Ibid., 69
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
convoluted principles of Leninism that overthrew the Tsarist regime to implement a new regime, the Communist Party.

Lenin established the Party to be the epicenter of the Soviet Union, unconditionally and without accountability. The socialist revolution became the mantra of Leninist ideals, but the rhetoric disguised the violence that accompanied Lenin’s Bolshevik Party to power. The Bolsheviks embraced violence in the interest of power. Volkogonov describes the opposition faction called the Mensheviks as “the only true social democrats.” Socialist democracy was alien to the formation of the Communist Party primarily because Lenin declared himself a communist in 1914, a position that technically divorced Lenin and the Communist Party from affiliation with the German Social Democrats who approved of WWI. Additionally, Lenin’s earlier theory concerning social democracy failed to take effect once the Bolsheviks gained political power. By the Seventh Congress of 1918 the Party officially took the title Communist Party of Russia.

The transition of power from the Tsarist Russia to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics became a reality in Lenin’s lifetime. Still, the reality was not the benevolent socioeconomic system that Marx had discussed.

Revolution had won Lenin the political authority he desired and fought for throughout his lifetime. Yet, the Communist Party failed to implement socialism or socialist democracy because to do so would threaten the supremacy of the Party’s political power. The maintenance of the Party in a position of command meant the denial of liberty to
society. The survival of the Party required total submission, without representation, without elections, without question.

The Party never installed socialist or democratic institutions but instead implemented its own unique institutions capable of maintaining political power and social control. Lenin had come to power through revolutionary methods, and he knew that such avenues were open to anyone who opposed Party rule. Lenin's genius was reserved to eliminating the same options for revolt as he had selected. The first consequence was a massive restriction placed on society that was enforced through militia power. The Cheka, or Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counterrevolution and Sabotage, institution guaranteed allegiance to the Party. Founded in December 1917, the Cheka became the secret political police, not unlike Ivan IV's Oprichnina, that was empowered by the use of terror against the Soviet population, one of Lenin's favorite methods of rule.

Another institution founded by Lenin was the GULAG prison camps that performed mass executions and abuses against political prisoners and dissidents of the revolution. The revolution was fueled by the forced imprisonment and labor of Soviet citizens at the insistence of Cheka force. With the Cheka and the GULAGs in place Lenin could assure the future course of Soviet power and the dominance of the Communist Party as the only vanguard of the system. Lenin organized terror in the formation of the Communist Party in the single interest of political power.

Leninism embodied the socialist revolution in name only. The reality for Soviet society was that the political power remained firmly in place over the economic needs or social issues of the peasant workers and proletariat masses. The irony of such a situation is that the socialist revolution became synonymous with Leninism as if he were the
creator of some benevolent utopian ideal in his name. Leninism was never socialist democracy. However, Leninism was capable of masking reality with untruths, coercion, repression, and fear because for over seven decades the Communist Party held political power in Lenin's legacy of socialist revolution.

For men like Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, and Gorbachev, Leninism came in place of the national identity. Such a concept allowed institutions like the Cheka to evolve into the KGB, or the Committee for State Security, with the sole purpose of keeping the Communist Party in power. The most damaging aspect of all was the lack of social participation in a government that sustained itself on the rhetoric of the socialist democratic ideology, consequently leading to hypocrisy. What Lenin created in the militarized Soviet state his successors were left to maintain in any way they could. Over the course of five decades, Stalin expanded the terrorist approach, Brezhnev tightened the bureaucratic rule, and Khrushchev's ambiguous appeals for reform cost him his leadership position. Andropov resorted to the usual reactionary politics that would consolidate Party power and keep the population disempowered, exactly as Leninism had initially done.

The order of the Party continued to be the paramount objective by the time Gorbachev ascended the ranks to become the seventh Soviet leader in March of 1985. Yet the Party only had power within the borders of the Soviet Union. Lenin's socialist revolution had not replaced capitalism or democracy, but instead created a bipolar existence in which the Soviet system was rapidly losing ground to the United States in a battle of military might. More importantly, the Soviets were waging revolution against the democratic
capitalism of the West, but the Leninist legacy failed to realize the socialist democracy that it had espoused. Volkogonov explains:

The leadership could not accept that Soviet society was not merely mired in stagnation, but also in a state of psychological disaffection and doubt about values that had previously been universally accepted. The gap between what people said in public and what they thought was widening to the extent that it had become an everyday fact of life. The public mood was like Lenin's physical condition after 10 March 1923. Leninism seemed on the surface to be alive, but it was incapable of a single fresh idea. . . The Russian people had not yet understood that Leninism was not amenable to reform, that either it must remain what it had been for decades, or be totally discarded.34

As Volkogonov argues, what evolved under Lenin's dictates was a political direction completely antithetical to socialist democracy. Leninism developed as a result of the Bolshevik revolution mentality that thrived on Lenin, constant revolution against a constant enemy, both external and internal; by 1985 it was becoming increasingly harder to maintain this idea in the status of the prevailing mentality.

34 Ibid., 476.
CHAPTER THREE
CLASH OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES

Gorbachev as Communist Party Leader

The most interesting point which Volkogonov makes emphasizes the precarious position that Gorbachev inherited. Leninism was the Soviet national ideological identity that had never been evaluated or challenged by the Party because Leninism, like the Party, had to remain in a position of undisputed power. When Gorbachev came into power as the General Secretary he was a Party official and devoted to the Leninist ideology.

However, as General Secretary, Gorbachev realized he had much to consider. The Soviet Union was failing to compete at an international level in terms of economic and technological development. Additionally, the Cold War was dragging out into its fourth decade, sapping the military expenditures of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., but particularly taxing the Soviet system. Initially, Gorbachev interpreted the lag in Soviet economics as due to production inefficiencies in the system, a viewpoint emphasized by Dusko Doder and Louise Branson. According to Doder and Branson's analysis, the Soviet system was no longer efficient, prompting Gorbachev to implement the reform of perestroika as a restructuring of the system.
The importance of Gorbachev's intentions to restructure a system that was, as Volkogonov asserts, incapable of being restructured is paramount. The primary contradiction rests in the fact that Gorbachev was absolutely in line with the Marxist-Leninist ideals. As a young Soviet citizen Gorbachev lived in the collectivized agricultural regions of Stavropol krai, or territory, farming with generations of his family. Perhaps because of Gorbachev's early association with the land and family he developed an appreciation of the role of the Party in collectivized economics. The idea that advantage could be secured if one were of strong constitution and pledged allegiance to the Party was an indelible lesson to the peasant-worker populations that grew out of rural territories such as Stavropol. Although Gorbachev had the experience of farming as a young man, it was academics at which he would excel.

In 1955 Gorbachev graduated with a degree in law from the Moscow State University where he was awarded the highest grade for writing a paper on "the demonstration of the advantages of socialist democracy over bourgeois democracy."¹ After graduation Gorbachev returned to Stavropol where he was appointed as an official at the Komsomol, or Communist Youth League. Gorbachev proceeded to advance through the ranks of the Party, becoming second, then first secretary of the Stavropol province by 1970. As Gorbachev received recognition and status in the nomenklatura, he succeeded in making important governmental contacts, a necessity for Party members who desired to become officials. At the same time Gorbachev was forging his political presence as a committed and responsive administrator, the "Thaw" of the Khrushchev era was in progress. In response to the torment and tyranny that had characterized Stalin's Soviet leadership,

¹ Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 44.
Khrushchev delivered his de-Stalinization speech to the XXth Party Congress in 1956. Attending his first Party Congress in the autumn of 1961, Gorbachev witnessed the dethroning of Stalin's "personality cult" that literally removed statues and relocated Stalin's gravesite at the Kremlin wall.

According to Gorbachev's reflections on the "Thaw" and de-Stalinization campaign, the crux of the problem existed in the Party apparatus, and not solely as a result of the unsavory character of one Soviet leader. However, during the events of the early sixties, Gorbachev rallied to the Party effort to minimize Stalin's legacy of terror because he was as invested in Party politics as any of his comrades. The strategy to ensure survival existed in every strata of life throughout the Soviet Union, but nowhere did it thrive as strongly than in the Communist Party.

Gorbachev's affiliation in the Party connected him to Yuri Andropov, also from the Stavropol region and the head of the KGB from 1967 to 1982. In such capacity Andropov engaged in subversive crackdowns against political dissidents and participated in the corruption of power involving the Party apparatus. In their account of Andropov's role in the Party and the KGB, Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova suggest that Andropov engaged in conspiratorial actions in order to raise Russian nationalism, largely in response to the ineffective Brezhnev's propaganda. Solovyov and Klepikova describe Brezhnev's eighteen years in power as follows:

He exhausted the country—perhaps irreversibly. He brought agriculture, which was already unprofitable, to the point of final collapse; he made the national economy dependent upon foreign investments; he weakened the reins of government within the country; he loosened the bonds of Eastern Europe;
he retreated before America in such a key area as the Middle East; and he reduced the Soviet Union to the role of a second rate power.²

Andropov's succession to Brezhnev occurred, according to Solovyov and Klepikova, as a result of long-established patterns of opportunism acquired from his years in the KGB and due to the lack of progressive vision. Once Andropov took office in the Kremlin his objectives were to "return to Stalinist-type labor legislation,"³ an approach involving criminal indictment followed by discipline procedures.

It is important to establish Andropov's position in the Party to illustrate the influence he had on Gorbachev. Andropov's education was minor, comparatively on the same level as Stalin's, while Gorbachev was academically accomplished. Consequently, Andropov's reaction to the situation inherited from Brezhnev was to turn away from ideology and tighten the police state in order to motivate economics. At the time Solovyov and Klepikova published their volume on Andropov in 1983, Gorbachev remained one of the "new class" Party officials, as many of his colleagues who came from outlying provinces and were consequently untainted by Moscow politics.

However, Gorbachev's evaluation of the state of the Soviet system mirrors closely Andropov's. According to Solovyov and Klepikova, Andropov's concept of crime ranged from "alcoholism, petty hooliganism, parasitism, absenteeism, the theft of government property, bribery, nepotism, corruption,"⁴ and political dissent. Upon taking office in 1985, Gorbachev attributed the sluggish economic situation in the nation to the same social ills as Andropov established. Unlike Andropov, Gorbachev rejected the

³ Ibid., 281.
⁴ Ibid., 283.
approach of increased coercion and discipline to force compliance to the system, as
evidenced by his speech delivered at the seventieth anniversary celebration of the
October Revolution in 1987.

The speech illustrates Gorbachev's decision to increase ideological awareness in the
Soviet Union, specifically the Leninist ideal that created the Soviet nation. It is important
to note that, throughout his speech, Gorbachev did not refer to the national ideology as
communist, but Leninist. Such a distinction is critical to understanding Gorbachev's
position in the Party. Gorbachev's decision to use Leninism as the preferred course of
thought and practice in the nation demonstrates his departure from Andropov's approach.
Moreover, for Gorbachev, Leninism embodied the spirit of the Soviet Union. Doder and
Branson describe Gorbachev as a dedicated Marxist-Leninist, committed to the political
structure of a one Party system and to socialism as the answer for socioeconomic
advantage. Indeed, in his speech and in his volume *Perestroika*, published two years after
he became General Secretary of the CPSU, Gorbachev does speak with conviction about
the Leninist ideal and socialist democracy.

Particularly in *Perestroika*, Gorbachev presents himself as a man with a vision, in
much the same way Lenin did in his publications before the Bolshevik revolution.
Although it cannot be asserted that Gorbachev was appealing to the nation by invoking
Leninism, the rallying message certainly is primary throughout the book. One particular
section is entitled "Perestroika is a Revolution" which comments:

I think we had every reason to declare at the January 1987 Plenary Meeting: in its
essence, in its Bolshevik daring and in its humane social thrust the present course
is a direct sequel to the great accomplishments started by the Leninist Party in the October days of 1917. 

Although Gorbachev declines to equate perestroika with the October revolution, his intention to link Leninism with perestroika as a revolutionary process is undeniable. Volkogonov comments that Gorbachev “declared with conviction that ‘a bridge must be thrown from Lenin, connecting Lenin’s ideas and Lenin’s approach to the events of his time to the affairs of today.’” Conceivably Gorbachev’s Leninist approach to reform allowed him to demonstrate his loyalty to the Party while appealing to the masses to build socialism in the revolutionary manner of 1917.

In addition, Gorbachev’s return to the Leninist ideal allowed him to connect perestroika with the New Economic Policy that was begun under Lenin in March of 1921. Perestroika was characterized by Gorbachev as a restructuring of the economics of the Soviet Union. As did many of his predecessors, Gorbachev showcased economic restructuring as reform for the nation. Beginning with NEP, the Soviets began a cycle of economic reform that would allow the Party to appear in charge of building the socialist society. According to Gorbachev, it was Lenin that created and implemented NEP, going so far in his seventieth anniversary speech to discredit Nikolai Bukharin in favor of Lenin with regard to the NEP policy. However, Volkogonov sharply contradicts Gorbachev’s defense by asserting:

Nor did we realize that the NEP was not an economic strategy, but merely a tactical maneuver forced on Lenin by the devastating collapse of the genuinely Leninist policy of War Communism. Lenin, far from being the initiator of NEP, was in fact its long-time foe.

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7 Ibid., 478.
Considering Gorbachev's position in the Party as leader of economic reform, it was to his benefit to link Lenin with NEP and then to perestroika. In such capacity he could appeal to both the Party and to the public to support perestroika, as a revolutionary cause with a distinctive nationalistic flavor.

The previous economic policies that were implemented in the Soviet Union had consistently focussed on Party planning under the bureaucratic structure of Gosplan, started in 1921 in conjunction with NEP. Plotting Five-Year Plans was invariably the responsibility of Gosplan, as the state planning committee, but the plans were not progressive enough to make the nation competitive with the global economy. According to Shane, the Soviet Union was accustomed to taking second place behind the U.S. in terms of technological development but when "certain Asian countries, toward which they had always felt a patronizing superiority"8 surpassed the Soviets, the modernization of their economics became urgent.

An important consideration of Gorbachev's perestroika reform is that the primary intention was to rejuvenate the economic situation, a traditional albeit innovative action. Gorbachev's initial reform was termed "acceleration," designed to increase rapidly economic development. However, acceleration was a short-lived slogan that produced only more brainstorming to fix the pressing issues of economic stagnation.

According to Gorbachev, perestroika was mainly concerned with economic restructuring and political restructuring to the degree that the Party should be

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8 Scott Shane, Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1994), 69.
strengthened by accountability to perestroika. Gorbachev’s Party logic is evident in his publication on perestroika that emphasizes repeatedly the authority of the Party in leading the social order to economic progress. Doder and Branson’s account illustrates Gorbachev’s intent was “to change the nature of the Communist Party without endangering its primacy.” However, he began to sense the urgency was not about economic acceleration but rather the factor of accountability.

Doder and Branson chronicle the process of perestroika noting that, in 1986 when Gorbachev spoke in terms of democratization in the Soviet Union, he was candid about the lack of “opposition” in the Party. By the following year he admitted that the nation had not experienced democratic traditions but expressed the hope that “we have to search for truth together.” Gorbachev’s reform glasnost was presented after perestroika, as a secondary initiative because the evidence that perestroika had not invigorated economics was apparent by 1986. As explained by Doder and Branson, Gorbachev’s realization that perestroika was not motivating the Party to effect change in the political sphere meant that he had to appeal to the masses. It is of particular importance to understand that Gorbachev evaluated glasnost as a way to enlist support for perestroika with the sole objective being the rejuvenation of economics. If he could not count on the Party for support he would use glasnost to stimulate the people to support perestroika.

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9 Gorbachev, Perestroika.
11 Ibid.
The very idea of a Soviet leader relying on the people and not the Party to effect change was a move toward democratization. For decades the Party’s Central Committee directed every area of life in the Soviet Union without any legitimate democratic participation from the people. Glasnost allowed the openness necessary to advance perestroika, an approach Gorbachev describes in *Memoirs*:

It was obvious that the policy of perestroika was seen by many as just another campaign, which would soon run out of steam. We had to eliminate doubts of this kind and convince people of the need for the new course, and so the theme of glasnost — ‘transparency’ — came up in the report. ‘Democracy does not and cannot exist without glasnost.’

Gorbachev’s appeal to the Soviet population was that they were now legitimately involved in his reform process and, consequently, in the political processes of the nation. Gorbachev’s recognition of the democratization factor that glasnost provided was genuine, as evidenced in his book, yet the critical turning point revolved around his interpretation of democratization.

**Gorbachev’s Democratic Reform Glasnost**

It is essential to understand how Gorbachev interpreted glasnost’s objective, democratization through openness, to comprehend fully why, after more than seven decades, a Soviet leader of a communist superpower would embrace democracy in reform. Perhaps, one of the key points can be found in W. Bruce Lincoln’s analysis involving glasnost in the courts of Alexander II. According to Lincoln, glasnost meant an

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eradication of those characteristics that lead to corruption in government. Glasnost was set forth for the definite objective of advancing politics, as explained by Prince Petr Dolgorukov in 1857 when he decried corruption in the administration and advocated openness to expel such tendencies:

Without the broad development of glasnost, the government will never have the opportunity to recognize all the abuses [in its administration] and thus will never have the opportunity to eradicate them. . . .Glasnost’ is the best physician for the ulcers of the state. . . . A wise use of glasnost’ is the best weapon for destroying false rumors, secret schemes, absurd and evil hearsay. By permitting all civic interest groups to express themselves openly, but peacefully and properly, the government will give peaceful and calm expression to all legal demands. A reasonable and proper discussion of various questions will supply the government with information about the needs and requirements of Russia.

Dolgorukov’s appeal mirrors Gorbachev’s in that both men urge openness in the society as a way to enforce accountability in the government. Particularly, Lincoln assesses Dolgorukov’s position on glasnost to “become the mortar to bind Tsar, educated opinion, and the masses into an invincible force that could overcome all reactionary sentiment and all self-interested opposition to reform in Russia.” The defining feature of glasnost in the 19th century was as a way to engage public sentiment according to lawfulness. Such an analysis extends easily to Gorbachev’s glasnost approach more than century later.

In his book Perestroika, published at the beginning of his reform campaign, Gorbachev invokes the use of glasnost, but only marginally and specifically in support of the perestroika objectives. In urging glasnost, Gorbachev remarks in his book:

We have begun drafting bills that should guarantee glasnost. These bills are designed to ensure the greatest possible openness in the work of government and

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14 Ibid.
mass organizations and to enable working people to express their opinion on any issue of social life and government activity without fear.  

In calling for democratic reform Gorbachev is careful to align glasnost with the proper objectives, that of a socialist state. The reconciliation is difficult for the Western perspective primarily because glasnost, implying democratization through participation, seems predisposed to challenge the Soviet system, not to conform to it. However, it is important to gain the Russian, and therefore Soviet, perspective, which leads back to Lincoln's conclusions regarding glasnost.

Gorbachev is consistent in connecting glasnost, democracy, and socialism throughout Perestroika, establishing glasnost as the impetus for bringing democracy to improve socialism, therefore ensuring the success of perestroika. Gorbachev's claims that "[u]pon the success of perestroika depends the future of socialism," and only five paragraphs later contends, "Soviet people are convinced that as a result of perestroika and democratization the country will become richer and stronger." Gorbachev's desire to unite socialism and democratization through glasnost is clearly stated in Perestroika, yet for all his good intentions Gorbachev's vision was flawed.

Primarily, Gorbachev could not inspire both democratization and the strengthening of socialism in a nation that never enjoyed democracy or socialism. With regard to democratization, Gorbachev admits that the Soviets were "going through a school of democracy again. We are learning. We lack political culture." The principles of democracy had been a fundamental topic to the Soviets since Lenin assembled his

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16 Ibid., 58.
17 Ibid., 82.
revolutionary forces, yet, as Volkogonov argues, "it is difficult to understand what Lenin meant by democracy." It becomes no less difficult a task to understand what Gorbachev meant by democracy.

At the start of his book Gorbachev states that "according to Lenin, socialism and democracy are indivisible." However, Gorbachev goes on to emphasize the importance of "expanding democracy. . .[to] unfold the entire potential of democracy." Additionally, Gorbachev sets up socialism as the desired outcome for his nation, calling for "more socialism and therefore, more democracy." For Gorbachev, socialism and democracy were also indivisible but not as a unified socialist democratic order. Gorbachev evaluated democracy as the means to achieving the socialism end. Democracy was an independent factor in the rush to strengthen socialism in the Soviet Union, a position that becomes apparent in the way Gorbachev uses both terms. Socialism and democracy are used independently throughout the majority of his writing, establishing his conviction that socialism was the system of choice and democracy was only necessary to the finite degree of obtaining such a system.

The premise that Gorbachev viewed democracy as a means to a greater end carries over to the glasnost reform. For Gorbachev, glasnost meant an opportunity to enlist the participation of society in a single objective. His strategy to involve the population was well intentioned yet, "[a]s an empiricist, who treated ideas primarily as tools of practical judgement," he failed to realize the power that intangible ideas and thoughts are

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18 Volkogonov, Lenin: A New Biography, 69.
19 Gorbachev, Perestroika, 32.
20 Ibid., 37
21 Doder and Branson, Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin, 73.
The inherent contradiction involving glasnost was that Gorbachev perceived reform as one-dimensional, as evidenced in his insistence that one goal must be achieved:

> In my opinion, any honest, open talk, even if it arouse doubts, should be welcomed. But if you try to fit somebody else’s suit on us, beware! Glasnost is aimed at strengthening our society. . . Only those whom socialist democracy and our demands for responsibility prevent from satisfying their personal ambitions, which are, anyway, far removed from the people’s interest, can doubt this.  

The primacy of socialism is also apparent by the way Gorbachev literally places the socialist term ahead of democracy in his speeches and writing. Such indicators reveal the major importance in Gorbachev’s reform to be socialism, a position that, according to Shane, legitimately characterized Gorbachev.

Democracy through glasnost was a secondary factor in Gorbachev’s reforms because democracy never existed in either Russia or the Soviet Union. Although Gorbachev embraced glasnost in the reform process, referring to glasnost as providing more truth and light, he did not conceive of glasnost as potentially threatening to the reform objective of socialism. To the contrary, Gorbachev considered glasnost as in line with the Party directives, otherwise he would have never called for such a reform.

The task of comprehending what Gorbachev had in mind when he urged a democratic reform to achieve a single objective becomes complicated due to the socialist standard that Gorbachev was influenced by throughout his life. In the Soviet Union, as so many scholars and authors have argued, democratic socialism was never accomplished with the Bolshevik Revolution. Consequently, Gorbachev’s ideal of democratic society or socialism with a democratic flavor, was never grounded in anything that had previously

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22 Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 79.
existed in reality. Therefore, the Soviet leader legitimately struck out in a different direction when he called for democratization in his country. The pivotal point was that glasnost epitomized democracy, especially due to Gorbachev's definition, but the Soviet leader refused to concede that glasnost would effect anything other than restructuring the Party in terms of making it less corrupt and more efficient as the vanguard of the working population. In achieving this particular objective Gorbachev felt that more public participation was required in directing the economic and political course of the nation to fulfill the true socialist goals put forth by Marxist/Leninist ideals. The refinement of Marxism-Leninism led Gorbachev to encourage public interaction with the political authority of the Party.

According to Gorbachev's prescribed course of action, glasnost was to free public communication to benefit the goals of the Party in redirecting the economic structure. Specifically, glasnost would allow the liberty to communicate within media forms such as radio and television broadcasts, news and magazine publications, and public forums of discussion. Such venues provided, according to Gorbachev, the perfect opportunity to advance socialism.

Glasnost would carry the message of socialism to the masses and inspire them to contribute to the cause in the spirit of a true workers government. Gorbachev believed in the power of glasnost to democratize the Soviet Union, but under his terms. His convictions are prevalent throughout his writing in which he calls for truth, light, and sincere communication, citing glasnost as "a vivid example of a normal and favorable atmosphere in society." Gorbachev's support for glasnost is evident as he urges a return

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23 Ibid., 75.
of consciousness to the population yet the restrictive overtones in his words cannot be escaped.

As Shane observes, Gorbachev was the quintessential communist, dedicated to the Marxist-Leninist ideal. As a result, Gorbachev “operated . . . inside the Soviet illusion,” a position that afforded only restricted viewpoints. Significantly, Shane explains that Lenin too was heartened by the possibility of radio broadcasting in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the twentieth-century but only to promote Soviet propaganda and combat the opposition. Lenin was very aware of the power of the press. As the founder of his newspaper Iskra, or “The Spark,” in 1900, Lenin used words to fuel the Bolshevik revolution. However, once accomplished, Lenin promptly dismissed the idea of information from media sources made available to the population, because his ideological judgment and method of government could not afford to be challenged.

For Gorbachev, acceptance of the Leninist principles was inbred. Gorbachev, like Lenin, did not fathom the necessity to challenge the Soviet system. Glasnost was therefore only to stimulate thought along the same channels of the accepted train of thought. Gorbachev clung to Lenin throughout the entire reform process, depending on the image of the Communist icon to shore support for glasnost. As if Lenin were the essence of democracy, Gorbachev relied on every aspect of Leninism to give credibility to glasnost. Doder and Branson point out that glasnost, as a term, became particularly valuable to the reform process when researchers discovered Lenin had used the word twenty-three times. The most critical point is that Gorbachev believed glasnost would

24 Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 70.
25 Doder and Branson, Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin, 75.
develop socialism along the lines of Leninism and in so doing create a stronger more
efficient socialism because he also believed that goal to be correct.

Why “New Thinking” Was Incompatible With The “Old Party”

Characterizing glasnost as a democratic reform capable of resurrecting the stagnant
economics and the weary Soviet population, Gorbachev set about implementing glasnost.
It is of particular interest that he referred to the legislation of glasnost as some type of
benevolent release of communication controls in the pursuit of truth. Perhaps his
underestimation of the power of glasnost was not so much attributed to his lack of
democratic experience as to his unyielding expectation.

Attempting to set a personal example of openness, Gorbachev adopted the slogan of
“new thinking” to define his intentions for the Soviet nation and its place internationally.
It cannot be argued that Gorbachev’s first priority was the improvement of the economic
system, particularly in achieving an improved position in the global economy. However,
Gorbachev’s concern was also the improvement of the image of Soviets, domestically
and globally. Much of his writing reiterates the “glorious revolution,” and expounds on
the greatness of Lenin. The pragmatic politician neglected to understand that thinking
cannot be confined to a single thought nor directed to a single goal, especially when
dealing with a nation of multiethnic peoples all experiencing a diverse array of history
and culture.

Gorbachev preferred to bask in the success of the Bolshevik revolution, pretending
that everyone in the Soviet Union idolized Lenin and the Party equally. Calling for truth
through glasnost, Gorbachev expressed the hope that society would support the Party, a
mentality that is consistent through Perestroika, as he continues to place the Party at the center of government and the society as spectators. Commenting on the importance of truth Gorbachev explains:

Truth is the main thing. Lenin said: More light! Let the Party know everything...[t]he Party wants every citizen to voice his opinion confidently...[w]e have been drafting bills that should guarantee glasnost.26

Unity of voice was Gorbachev's hope for glasnost, and he encouraged truth sincerely toward the socialist principle. As allowed by Gorbachev and the Party, glasnost provided truth and inspired new thinking.

The media responded rapidly to glasnost with a burst of competitive energy. Anxious to release information so long silenced under the Party's authority, news broadcasts expanded their format to include as much information as possible during the allotted time. According to Shane, television news programs caught the biggest share of viewing audiences primarily because television was the most efficient means of providing information. Television was capable of influencing millions of viewers, a fact that was never lost on Gorbachev who saw television as a productive political forum.

As Gorbachev correctly surmised, content was the decisive issue. Unfortunately the content that was presented across the airwaves on programs like Vzglyad, or View, and featured in news publications as Moscow News and Ogonyok captured attention as never before. Shane states that:

The unveiling of Stalinism had helped drive circulations of the boldest publications to unheard-of heights: between 1985 and 1989, for instance, Ogonyok's subscribers had quintupled, from 596,000 to 3 million and climbing. Komsomolskaya Pravda, the lively national youth newspaper, reached 20 million; the fact-packed weekly Argumenti i Fakti, which a few years earlier had been distributed to just 10,000 Party propagandists, would top out at 35 million, 26Gorbachev, Perestroika, 75-77.
becoming the most widely circulated periodical in the world. But the biggest television audiences still dwarfed the draw of the press, and the live broadcast of the Congress of People’s Deputies was among the most-watched broadcasts of all time.\(^{27}\)

Just as Gorbachev had hoped, glasnost began a radical transformation of the public through openness of information and communication but it was the content of information which stirred the public into action.

Shane recounts Freud’s assertion that, “what is repressed, has a tendency to exact revenge.”\(^ {28}\) In the case of post-glasnost Soviet Union no truer words could be stated. Glasnost produced an avalanche of information that had been secured in KGB archives, restricted to unspoken memories or purposefully whited out, as in the Soviet historical records. The flood of information turned out to be deeply anti-Soviet in content, one explanation as to the incredible surge in the reading and viewing statistics. Before glasnost there was limited interest in the Party version of what constituted news, but after glasnost produced an information society, the response was prolific.

Most significantly, the Soviet citizens were ecstatic about the privilege of speaking out on issues. The most intriguing information that was presented and consumed was directed against the Party, capturing massive amounts of listeners, viewers, and subscribers. Television reporters, press correspondents, and publication writers found both a new celebrity status and a wealth of information from the Soviet public. The Party found glasnost to be a critical threat to their power.

Shane emphasizes, the central threat came directly to the heart of Gorbachev’s argument for strengthening the socialist state. Leninism was Gorbachev’s hallmark of

\(^{27}\) Shane, *Dismantling Utopia*, 145.
\(^{28}\) Ibid., 54.
the socialist revolution and he used the image of Lenin to build a platform of support for the perestroika revolution, but Gorbachev was not prepared for the backlash against Leninism and the Party, an unexpected side-effect of glasnost. Instead of uniting the nation, glasnost coaxed the silent majority to express disillusionment with the system and particularly toward the Party and its founder, Lenin.

According to Shane, by 1991 most people had completely lost faith in the Party and its leaders to lead the nation. Data collected through the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion showed a significant decrease in, not only the Party, but the entire Communist system in the Soviet Union. Shane remarks that "[t]he death of the Soviet illusion...took place between 1987 and 1991...and there are no real historical precedents." As Shane points out, prior to glasnost the public gave tacit support to the politics of Soviet Russia, yet there was never anything vaguely close to glasnost from which to gauge the validity of such support. Between 1989 and 1991 the Party felt the impact of glasnost in the most critical of ways. The Party was regarded as being without ideological credibility.

Gorbachev possessed a paradoxical role in the demise of Soviet communism. On one hand he was the leader with democratic dreams willing to risk a change in thinking to improve the status quo. On the other hand Gorbachev saw himself as a leader of the status quo that had perfected an illusion of benevolent dictatorship in a workers utopia. Shane aptly characterizes the paradox:

Gorbachev often emphasized that the Party itself had launched perestroika and demanded glasnost, which was true enough, implying that people should therefore

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29 Ibid., 215.
be grateful to the Party. But if a swindler admits that he had cheated you, your fury at being cheated may well exceed your gratitude for his confession.30

“New Thinking” took Gorbachev’s objectives into an entirely different direction, rapidly disintegrating Leninism and eliminating Party control in all spheres because new thinking literally implied a new trend of thought. More importantly, new thinking implied plurality of thought, characterized as “socialist pluralism” by Gorbachev.31 According to Gorbachev, plurality of thought and opinion was to be in the interest of socialism, a definition that Shane observes as a prelude to the conflict that would soon split the Party into political opposition.

The loosening of Party controls in allowing new thinking contributed to the ultimate success of glasnost. However, the Party was ill prepared to deal with the onslaught of information for one very important reason. The content of the information was extremely damaging against the Party as the ruling elite. If the content had been supportive to the communist revolutionary spirit, or socialist democracy, or Lenin and the Party as the sole authority in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev’s objectives would have been realized. Instead glasnost encouraged truth, and the truth that poured out of the Soviet population did not support the Party or socialist principles.

As glasnost led to increasing hostility against the Party and the Soviet state Gorbachev began to retract his position concerning glasnost. Plagued by the continuing Cold War foreign policy as well as a growing unease within the Soviet republics, Gorbachev shifted from the new thinking agenda to enforce allegiance to the national position. Glasnost had not produced a unified socialist alliance but had fractured the

30 Ibid., 219.
31 Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 77.
internal organs of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev chose to disregard glasnost when, by 1989, he was aware that socialism had been rejected and the revolution discredited among the population.

Shane states that Gorbachev refused to concede the communist ideology, choosing instead “to cling to the Soviet illusion long after most of his compatriots had given it up.” Gorbachev’s responses to upheaval against the Party government that flared up throughout the republics were a statement of his defiance against dissident activity. Beginning with the Baltics’ bid for independence, Gorbachev reacted with a vengeance, and not with the tolerance that he suggested glasnost could bring to the nation. The unexpected results occurring under glasnost left Gorbachev frustrated and confused on the reform position because glasnost was not yielding the expected results.

Primarily, Gorbachev was a politician with a goal to increase power. Hailing from a single-Party nation which had held authority for over seven decades Gorbachev never anticipated the end of the Party rule in the Soviet Union because he believed, as Shane, Doder, Branson, and even himself have asserted, that the course which Lenin had chosen had been a correct one. Unfortunately the results that came about through glasnost revealed another truth that was inescapable. Gorbachev’s gamble with glasnost succeeded in redirecting the Leninist revolution to another destiny that was not as glorious for the Party as it would be for the society.

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32 Ibid., 238.
CHAPTER FOUR
GLASNOST'S TRUTH

Another Soviet Citizen's Perspective:
Andrei Sakharov

For Academician Andrei Sakharov the point of departure from the dogmatic Soviet system occurred as a result of personal perspective. The respected scientist and recipient of the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize comments:

By the beginning of 1968, I felt a growing compulsion to speak out on the fundamental issues of our age. I was influenced by my life experience and a feeling of personal responsibility, reinforced by the part I’d played in the development of the hydrogen bomb, the special knowledge I’d gained about thermonuclear warfare, my bitter struggle to ban nuclear testing, and my familiarity with the Soviet system.¹

Sakharov’s compelling position is underscored by his own admission of existing in a system where he created the power of massive destruction yet was helpless to the consequences of such a creation. Sakharov’s concern revolved around two factors which ignited the technological and ideological conflict of the Cold War. The primary factor was power to be achieved at an international level, an objective that topped the political priority of both the Soviet Union and America during most of the twentieth-century. The second factor became a force that Sakharov could not effectively reconcile with his government.

Ethical considerations were seldom regarded to be as important as gaining and maintaining power in the Soviet Union. Sakharov reflects on a nation that was well versed in struggle, a blend of cynicism and fear that shaped "the cult of personality" by the middle of the 20th century. Moreover, Sakharov became aware of a shift in the Soviet power position, from the initial revolutionary fervor led by the Bolsheviks to a dismissal of any and all that dared interfere with the growing power of the Communist Party.

Sakharov explains the contradictory nature of Lenin's Party accordingly:

> Lenin's initial impulse, and that of most of the other revolutionaries, was in essence humanitarian and moral; it was the logic of their struggle and the tragic twists of history that turned them into what they later became and dictated their course of action. But not only that. There was something inherently false in their basic political and philosophical premises. That is why objectivity so often was supplanted by pragmatic considerations and humanism by fanaticism, and why the Party line and Party struggle triumphed over moral principles.²

As a Soviet, Sakharov was exposed to the propagandized versions of history and fantastic accomplishments and goals of the Party. However, as a scientist who was educated to the magnitude of destruction possessed through technological means, Sakharov developed a sense of respect for creation, especially humanity.

Typical of all academicians in the Soviet Union, Sakharov was trained and directed to fulfill the expectations of the Party in their objective for authority. Unlike many of his colleagues, Sakharov never joined Party organizations, rejecting outright an invitation to join the Communist Party based on principle, yet his work as a gifted physicist won Sakharov recognition by the Party. Receiving awards three separate times as a Hero of Socialist Labor, Sakharov was a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. His contributions to the sciences in the area of nuclear physics established him as one of the

² Ibid.,33.
Soviet intelligentsia; however, Sakharov's intelligentsia activities were not limited to
the improvement of Soviet military capabilities.

Sakharov's career in physics commenced from the early days of his education. His
father was a physics professor and taught at several institutes and universities in the
Soviet Union. Because Sakharov also excelled in mathematics and scientific studies he
followed the same career as his father. As Sakharov recounts, his family swore no
particular loyalty to the Communist regime and regarded nationalism as little more than
political justification for exploitation. The defining feature which Sakharov claims
influenced his perspective was the family's love of the Russian culture. Literature and
the arts provided inspiration for them, and not political power posturing on the part of the
Communist Party.

As recounted in Memoirs, Sakharov was involved in research on thermonuclear
physics for twenty years, living and working in the secret city where Soviet nuclear
weapons were developed, tested, and produced. Sakharov joined the Tamm group of
scientists in 1948, the Soviet equivalent of America's Robert Oppenheimer group of
nuclear scientists. Sakharov comments on the remorse that Oppenheimer felt in his
contribution to nuclear capability, sharing Oppenheimer's disillusionment concerning
"the terrifying, inhuman nature of the weapon we were building." Sakharov's concern
was one also shared by his colleagues that worked at the Installation, including Igor
Tamm. Sakharov attributes Tamm as influencing him further in appreciating the
intelligentsia's position in national power struggles and describes Tamm as an

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3 Ibid., 97.
"independent spirit in matters large and small, in life and in science." For the scientists at the Installation, it was not simply a matter of creating the means of destruction but of understanding the motivation behind such projects and recognizing that true power emerges as a result of communication, and not through force.

Sakharov emphasizes that the critical turning point for him occurred two years prior to the Prague Spring in 1968. Concerned about the potential rehabilitation of Stalin at the Twenty-third Party Congress, Sakharov's signature appeared on a letter that expressed the intelligentsia's desire to advance social causes over the political. In particular, Sakharov argued:

I believe that statements on public issues are a useful means of promoting discussion, proposing alternatives to official policy, and focusing attention on specific problems. They educate the problem at large, and just might stimulate significant changes, however belated, in the policy and practice of top government officials. Appeals on behalf of specific individuals and groups also attract attention to their cases, occasionally benefit a particular individual, and inhibit future human rights violations through the threat of glasnost [public disclosure].

Sakharov's position illustrated his intention of supporting human rights in the Soviet Union. As a member of the intelligentsia Sakharov was compelled to behave responsibly in issues of power. The Party's primary goal of securing political authority had undermined human rights in the Soviet Union, a fact that Sakharov became increasingly aware of by 1968.

Upon making the acquaintance of history Professor Roy Medvedev in 1966, Sakharov gained great insight concerning "dissidents and events of social significance. . .they did

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4 Ibid., 128.
5 Ibid., 271.
help me escape from my hermetic world." When Sakharov read Medvedev's manuscript *Let History Judge*, which describes Stalin's crimes against the people, he was compelled to place blame not only on Stalin but upon the Communist regime which consolidated power in such a way as to suppress individual rights without benefit of accountability, politically or ethically.

At about the same time Sakharov met Medvedev, he began receiving, in secret, information about political dissidents, arrested and confined in psychiatric institutions or prisons for anti-Soviet violations. Sakharov found himself among the ranks of intelligentsia that objected to the practice of repressing Soviet citizens according to Party standards. Encouraged by publications such as Medvedev's and Valery Skurlatov's samizdat circulation *A Code of Morals*, Sakharov wrote letters to Party officials on behalf of dissidents, a decision that cost him his lead position at the Installation as well as a salary reduction. Undaunted, Sakharov continued to utilize literary publications to express his views on individual rights including a 1967 investigative article on toxic pollutants in Lake Baikal. Despite Sakharov's personal calls to Leonid Brezhnev and Andrei Kosygin, his article was dismissed; however, his dissident activities had caught the attention of Party officials.

According to Sakharov, the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, known as the Prague Spring, coincided with his essay *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*. Sakharov describes the Prague Spring in this way:

What so many of us in the socialist countries had been dreaming of seemed to be finally coming to pass in Czechoslovakia: democracy, including freedom of expression and abolition of censorship; reform of the economic and social

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systems; curbs on the power of the security forces, limiting them to defense against external threats; and full disclosure of the crimes of the Stalin era. Even from afar, we were caught up in the excitement and hopes and enthusiasm of the catchwords: "Prague Spring" and "socialism with a human face."  

Acknowledging the effects of the Prague Spring as "harbingers of the human rights movement" in the Soviet Union, Sakharov describes the KGB response as "taking tough countermeasures: firing, blacklisting, public reprimand, expulsion from the Party." According to Sakharov, the title he chose for his essay reflected the concerns that the citizens in the Soviet Union held. Regardless of ethnic or cultural division, Sakharov's intent was to bring awareness to universal issues that affected all of humanity. His essay spoke on the disadvantages of nuclear arms in the world and argued for "convergence" between capitalist and socialist societies. Additionally, he argued the virtues of such a world order would have democratic features and honor diversity of thought, existing as "an open society." Although Sakharov's essay revealed, as he describes, his utopian premise for a world government, he stood committed to principles involving humanitarian progress, a position that encouraged him to send a copy of the essay to Brezhnev rather than engaging in the typical clandestine activity characteristic of Soviet reformers.

The events of the 1968 Czechoslovakian invasion by Soviet troops closely reflected the circumstances in the Soviet Union. Antonin Novotny established himself as a Communist Party member under the Stalin regime, becoming President of Czechoslovakia in 1957. As a Party official Novotny's principle was consolidating

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7 Ibid., 281/2.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
control with the same dictatorial precision that Stalin used to secure his power.

Z. A. B. Zeman describes Novotny's regime as "manipulators [that] had absolute power, without having accepted absolute responsibility." Absolute power included authority over publications and circulation of information, a situation which Zeman points out was unheard of for the Czechs under the Habsburg empire. In 1967 the Czechoslovakia press law was legislated providing strict censorship for writers and publishers, stating that articles must comply with the "ideological guidance issued by the Communist Party." As Zeman points out, Czech writers have traditionally integrated political commentary in their literature. The suppression of information by an external government went directly against the Czech consciousness and encouraged a national uprising.

In addition to the Czech rebellion the Slovak population resisted Moscow's dictates in political and socioeconomic policies. In January of 1968, Slovakian Alexander Dubcek replaced Novotny as Czechoslovakia's President, a move that precipitated the rise of Czech and Slovak nationalism against the Party. As president, Dubcek led a reform movement intent on restructuring the system toward empowering social issues. The "April Action Programme" called for division of power and freedoms to communicate and be informed, urging competition to ensure democracy. Zeman comments that:

the most sensitive and crucial issue in Czechoslovak politics at the present time, the early summer of 1968. . ."if the Communist Party does not provide for the fastest development of its effective control from the outside, it will have no guarantee that it will not degenerate at some later time. The communists have been asked to recognize what the non-communists have known for years: That socialism sacrifices democracy at its own peril."

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11 Ibid., 47.
12 Ibid., 127
Dubcek’s appeal for a unified opposition of Czechs and Slovaks against a single authority was interpreted by Moscow as a direct threat against the Communist Party. Amid Warsaw Pact manoeuvres the Russians conducted talks with the Czechs, stressing the importance of controlling publications in order to control the position of power. The Czechs rejected Moscow’s line of reasoning which prompted Moscow to force compliance. Without warning Soviet tanks moved into Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968 and arrested Dubcek with “other Czech and Slovak leaders...in the name of the ‘revolutionary government of the workers and peasants.”¹³ The defeat of Czechoslovakia’s bid for democratic liberties alerted Sakharov and other Soviet dissidents to the social injustices present throughout the Soviet Union at the expense of personal freedom.

When interviewed by Scandinavian broadcast correspondent Olle Stenholm concerning the 1973 Anti-Sakharov campaign conducted by the Party, Sakharov specifically spoke about the lack of freedom as the most critical issue facing Soviet society. In the interview Sakharov characterized the Soviet Union as “extremely irrational and also terribly egoistic...[a] tendency that actually aims at preserving the system, maintaining a good appearance to conceal a very unpleasant internal state of affairs...for us all social things are more for show than for reality.”¹⁴ The crux of the interview centers on ideological structure, with Sakharov describing the Soviet Union

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¹³ Ibid., 167.
¹⁴ Sakharov, Memoirs, 624.
as anti-democratic, a society of “ideological monism” which has strangled society’s potential and leading to a debilitation throughout the nation. When asked what is needed Sakharov responded:

Our extreme state socialism has led to the elimination of private initiative in areas in which it would be most effective. . . the suppression of individual initiative leads to strict constraints on personal freedom. . . I am talking about personal enterprise in the field of consumer goods, education, and medicine. All of this no doubt would have a very positive significance in weakening the extreme monopolistic structure of the state. The Party monopoly of administration has reached such unheard-of levels that even the ruling class must realize it can no longer be tolerated. So—what is needed? We need first of all greater glasnost, openness in the work of the administrative apparatus.¹⁵

Sakharov goes on to expand on the need for competitive elections and for freedom of the press. He comments that the intelligentsia has been driven into “ideological degradation” as a result of the low lifestyle and ill regard toward intellectualism in the nation.

In 1973, when the interview was conducted, Sakharov’s position on the societal needs in the Soviet Union resembled closely that of Gorbachev more than a decade later. The defining point between Sakharov and Gorbachev when discussing glasnost and society is the role of the Party. While Sakharov views the Soviet Union under the leadership of the Party as anti-democratic and anti-socialist, Gorbachev holds fast to the Leninist ideal that the Party remain at the pinnacle of power, a perspective that diminishes the glasnost principle of openness.

Political Dissidents: Citizens or Comrades?

By 1968 when Sakharov became engaged in publishing his own thoughts and opinions about the idea of an “open society” in Reflections, he also began to acquire a following of

¹⁵ Ibid., 629
Soviet dissidents. The presence of a distinguished intellectual such as Sakharov was an encouraging sign that perhaps, real communication on reform issues for society could begin with the government. Sakharov's own commitment to reform was largely inspired by the ethical considerations which surrounded the scientific profession during the Cold War era. According to Sakharov, the point of departure from the establishment came between the years 1965 to 1967 when he acknowledged global fundamental issues to be political and ethical and not the military and economical behemoth that occupied the Soviet agenda.

The distinction of Sakharov's turning point was critical, a departure from the ideological framework of communism that Lenin had created and which was perpetuated by decades of propagandized information. In order to maintain the position of power the Party resorted not only to massive propaganda campaigns, but also to a narrowly defined code of conduct befitting the model Soviet citizen. In a nation that portrayed itself as a socialist utopia the members of society found themselves at a crossroads with regard to national identity. Under Soviet terms people were considered comrades, that is a person wholly dedicated to the socialist system with the pretense that the system defined them and knew what was best for everyone in the system. As Shane explains:

> From the beginning the Soviet regime was built on a system of belief, a mythology that citizens learned from earliest childhood and that suffused every aspect of life. Soviet nine-year-olds were given a book about Lenin called *Our Very Best Friend*, marking their entry into the Pioneers. Its 1978 edition told them: "We see how day by day, hour by hour, with enthusiasm, joy and pride the Soviet people are building the radiant edifice of Communism. You, kids, also will build Communist society, and not only build but work under Communism."  

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Shane emphasizes that all societies have their mythologies in order to stimulate allegiance to the system, yet the Soviet approach insisted on that allegiance from their citizens, refusing to accept any deviations from the Party line.

In maintaining its autocratic structure the Party legislated control factors designed specifically to restrict controversial trends in the nation. Many Soviet comrades were not allowed to educate themselves or obtain information suited to their personal interests without government intervention, and by the mid-sixties, Soviet officials were avidly prosecuting any dissenters who refused to honor the Soviet law concerning information and communication.

The RSFSR, or Russian State Federation of Soviet Republics, implemented the Criminal Code that defined unacceptable publications. As supplemented by Peter Reddaway, Article 70 states:

`Agitation or propaganda carried on for the purpose of subverting or weakening Soviet power or of committing particular especially dangerous crimes against the state, or the [verbal] spreading for the same purpose of slanderous fabrications which defame the Soviet political and social system, or the circulation or preparation or keeping, for the same purpose, of literature of such content, shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term of six months to seven years, with or without additional exile for a term of two to five years, or by exile for a term of two to five years.'

Article 190-1 reads:

The systematic dissemination by word of mouth of deliberate fabrications discrediting the Soviet political and social system, or the manufacture or dissemination in written, printed or other form of works of the same content, shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a term not exceeding three years, or by corrective labour for a term not exceeding one year, or by a fine not exceeding one hundred roubles.\(^17\)

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\(^{17}\) Peter Reddaway, ed., *Uncensored Russia*. (Jonathan Cape, 1972), 11.
According to Sakharov, Article 70 preceded 190-1 in making the publication and circulation of anti-Soviet material a criminal action, and Article 190-1 served more as a deterrent for dissidents of the system. Sakharov argues that, despite an amended commentary in 1971 explaining that "the circulation of fabrications which are not known to be false by the Party responsible, as well as the expression of mistaken opinions or suppositions do not constitute crimes under Article 190-1," the courts routinely bypassed the commentary in order to prosecute more dissidents. Anything deemed by the courts to be of anti-Soviet information was interpreted as proof of dissident activity and punishable by law.

The incidence of political dissidents implicated under Article 190-1 increased substantially. Sakharov's involvement as a human rights activist initiated him into the world of the dissidents, who objected both openly and in secret against the intrusions of the Party in matters of communication and information. In addition to protesting the content of Article 190-1 Sakharov was a co-founder of the Human Rights Committee of 1970. Together with Valery Chalidze and Andrei Tverdokhlebov, the Committee gained international recognition for their efforts in combating injustices involving freedom of expression and the right to dispense information. The committee was launched largely in response to a rising number of dissident prosecutions in the Soviet Union, although Sakharov acknowledges the formation in 1969 of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights, as the first organization to formally appeal to the United Nations on behalf of human rights in the USSR. Still, with the Human Rights Committee of

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18 Ibid., 270.
19 Ibid., 318.
November 1970 the publicity for dissidents began to attract attention at an international level. The contrived accusations by the Party against members of society only worsened after Sakharov's attempt at publicizing the human rights issues in the USSR. Moreover, as Sakharov recalls, dissidents were subjected to inhumane abuses which were condoned by the Soviet political system in an effort to force compliance. Sakharov was among a growing population of Soviets who understood, in the mid-sixties, that recognition of system injustice was essential to the progress of humanity in the USSR.

Because the Party was unable to suppress completely all the channels of communication, such as radio broadcasts and the open circulation of information, the incidence of dissident activity increased. At a time when Soviet citizens experienced disillusionment with the utopian illusion of the socialist system, the nature of dissident activity was broadly interpreted by the authorities so that trivial indulgences, such as listening to foreign broadcasts or reading literature unacceptable to Soviet Party standards came under the criminal code of conduct.

Shane reviews the case of Andrei Mironov who was arrested in 1985 for consorting with foreigners and engaging in anti-Soviet activities. Particularly, Mironov was punished because he shared "subversive" information and opinions with the public. Shane chronicles Mironov's struggle with Soviet authorities as he attempts to circulate books, newspapers, and magazines that had been banned by the Party's publication censors, Glavlit. Additionally, the KGB charged Mironov with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda with the aim of undermining and weakening Soviet power, spreading slanderous fabrications, discrediting the Soviet state and social system." Among his

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20 Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 40.
criminal actions Mironov had copied and distributed copies of the “samizdat”, or self-published materials, a crime that ignited the forces of KGB agents intent on apprehending the culprit before forbidden information could reach too many citizens. Mironov explained to Shane that the KGB expended so much energy in tailing and observing his illegal information activities that it became ridiculous. Still, the KGB accomplished the imprisonment of Mironov with “five fat volumes of evidence” in violation of Article 70.

The birth of samizdat in the Soviet Union came in 1966 at precisely the time Sakharov and other intelligentsia members recognized the contradictions present in a nation that professed socialism to be the ideal system yet, persecuted growing numbers of citizens who rejected Party values in the interest of diversification of personal knowledge. The contradictions were represented in samizdat publications such as the Chronicle, that regarded the right to expression as fundamental to citizens regardless of state ideology. Unfortunately, the Party did not regard the right of free expression to be in keeping with the Communist ideology, a single-minded logic that perceived alternative mentalities as a threat to the system. Still the Communist ideology and the Soviet state was not a system of choice for the millions of citizens who now fell in the Soviet Union’s borders, and the contributors to samizdat became “the U.S.S.R.’s only forum of free thought.”

Challenging the suppression of information in the only way possible became a calculated risk for many citizens. However, the exhilaration of freedom of communication only encouraged contributors to samizdat journals such as the Chronicle. Censorship could be escaped long enough to explore other realms of thought and created an impetus to form the Democratic Movement, described by Reddaway as being

21 Ibid.19.
consistently diverse. According to Reddaway, the defining quality of the Democratic Movement rested in its objectives to address the realities of the Soviet system, rather than conceding to Party dictates. Specifically, Reddaway regards the de-Stalinization speech which Khrushchev delivered in 1956 as a “feeling...among the liberal intelligentsia that the Communist Party did not—contrary to its claims—know all the answers, moreover was capable of gross errors.”\(^{22}\) In effect, Reddaway argues the role of the intelligentsia was integral in calling attention to social injustices committed by the Party against the citizens.

The Chronicle was founded in the spring of 1968, and according to Reddaway, strove to define Article 19 of the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.\(^{23}\)

Essentially, the publication, although operating covertly, embodied the truer principles of democracy by allowing diversity of thought among the population. The primary objective of the Chronicle, according to Reddaway, is “openness, non-secretiveness, freedom of information and expression...in the one Russian word glasnost.”\(^{24}\) The contrary point was that the Soviet Union’s single political Party could not afford to allow diversity of thought in an open forum because it threatened its power consequently, the rights of society had to be sacrificed for the stability of the system.

The presence of samizdat in the Soviet Union indicates that a certain segment of the society was at odds with the system, refusing to concede entirely to Party censorship and

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\(^{22}\) Reddaway, Uncensored Russia, 22.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 24.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 26.
risking punishment to communicate freely with fellow citizens. The comrade would have obeyed Party standards without question, but the Soviet citizen was consumed with questions, and in the spirit of glasnost, he desired truth in the answers.

Why Glasnost Triumphed in Society

Most notable to glasnost is that the desire to communicate freely and without restriction was already prevalent in Soviet society. Despite millions of political prisoners and the arbitrary rule of Soviet law, which denied a more progressive standard with regard to communication and freedom of information, there existed in society the natural instinct to expression. The evidence lies in the testimonies of the political dissidents, numbers too massive to be accurately accounted for, yet their plight has not gone unrecognized.

Ironically, those that have been silenced by the system continued to communicate, proving that communication cannot be forever controlled by political policies. One of the exemplary literary figures of the Soviet era was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. While serving in World War II Solzhenitsyn was sentenced to eight years in a labor camp and then exiled for writing in a personal letter a criticism of Stalin. After Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech Solzhenitsyn was rehabilitated and published his first novel in 1962, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Although the Soviet writer was nominated for the Lenin Prize in Literature for his work he was denied it because of the controversial nature of the novel's content. Solzhenitsyn continued to write, but his stories were seldom published by Soviet journals that argued the literature could be used by foreign powers to attack the Soviet regime. Consequently, Solzhenitsyn was published in the
West, a situation that always compromised political reliability of Soviet authors. As a further consequence, Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the U.S.S.R.'s Writer's Union in the autumn of 1969, an event that the Chronicle described as "the extent to which Soviet dissenters of all persuasions look to Solzhenitsyn for a moral example." As documented by Reddaway, Solzhenitsyn responded to the expulsion with a letter that emphasizes the need for openness:

Shamelessly trampling underfoot your own statues, you have expelled me in my absence, as at the sound of a firealarm, without even sending me a summons by telegram, without even giving me the four hours I needed to come from Ryazan and be present at the meeting. You have shown openly that the RESOLUTION preceded the 'discussion'. Was it less awkward for you to invent new charges in my absence? Were you afraid of being obliged to grant me ten minutes for my answer? I am compelled to substitute this letter for those ten minutes.

Blow the dust off the clock. Your watches are behind the times. Throw open the heavy curtains which are so dear to you—you do not even suspect that the day has already dawned outside. It is no longer that stifled, that sombre, irrevocable time when you expelled Akhmatova in the same servile manner. It is not even that timid, frosty period when you expelled Pasternak, whining abuse at him. Was this shame not enough for you? Do you want to make it greater? But the time is near when each one of you will seek to erase his signature from today's resolution.

Blind leading the blind! You do not even notice that you are wandering in the opposite direction from the one you yourselves have announced. At this time of crisis you are incapable of suggesting anything constructive, anything good for our society, which is gravely sick—only your hatred, your vigilance, your 'hold on and don't let go'.

Your clumsy articles fall apart; your vacant minds stir feebly—but you have no arguments. You have only your voting and your administration. And that is why neither Sholokhov nor any of you, of the whole lot of you, dared reply to the famous letter of Lydia Chukovskaya, who is the pride of Russian publicistic writing. But the administrative pincers are ready for her: how could she allow people to read her book [The Deserted House] when it has not been published? Once the AUTHORITIES have made up their minds not to publish you—then stifle yourself, choke yourself, cease to exist, and don't give your stuff to anyone to read!

They are also threatening to expel Lev Kopelev, the front-line veteran, who has already served ten years in prison although he was completely innocent.

25 Ibid. 339.
Today he is guilty: he intercedes for the persecuted, he revealed the hallowed secrets of his conversation with an influential person, he disclosed an OFFICIAL SECRET. But why do you hold conversations like these which have to be concealed from the people? Were we not promised fifty years ago that never again would there be any secret diplomacy, secret talks, secret and incomprehensible appointments and transfers, that the masses would be informed of all matters and would discuss them openly?

'The enemy will overhear'—that is your excuse. The eternal, omnipresent 'enemies' are a convenient justification for your functions and your very existence. As if there were no enemies when you promised immediate openness. But what would you do without 'enemies'? You could not live without 'enemies'; hatred, a hatred no better than racial hatred, has become your sterile atmosphere. But in this way a sense of our single, common humanity is lost and its doom accelerated. Should the Antarctic ice melt tomorrow, we would all become a sea of drowning humanity, and into whose heads would you then be drilling your concepts of 'class struggle'? Not to speak of the time when the few surviving bipeds will be wandering over a radioactive earth, dying.

It is high time to remember that we belong first and foremost to humanity. And that man has distinguished himself from the animal world by THOUGHT and SPEECH. And these, naturally, should be FREE. If they are put in chains, we shall return to the state of animals.

OPENNESS, honest and complete OPENNESS—that is the first condition of health in all societies, including our own. And he who does not want this openness for our country cares nothing for his fatherland and thinks only of his own interest. He who does not wish this openness for his fatherland does not want to purify it of its diseases, but only to drive them inwards, there to fester.  

Solzhenitsyn's expulsion was met with criticism from the Writer's Union who claimed that the writer slandered the system in his literature. Solzhenistsyn's followers, including the scores of other Soviet writers, intelligentsia, and foreign literary publishers, spoke against the Soviet system, and their opinions found expression in samizdat.

Solzhenitsyn, like Sakharov, found an audience of Soviet citizens through samizdat that supported the concept of openness in society. The fact that both Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov were celebrated dissidents helped to attract outside attention from foreign

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26 Ibid., 341/3
media. However, the consequences of challenging the Soviet system did not escape either Sakharov or Solzhenistsyn since both received the punishment of exile. The objective of samizdat publications like the Chronicle hoped to call attention to the fact that the number of ordinary Soviet citizens that had joined the ranks of dissidents far exceeded the estimate. Reddaway emphasizes that:

Not only do the Chronicle’s contents tend to be overlooked, but the fact is also ignored that just as the journal has grown steadily in size, so too—despite all arrests—have the number of correspondents and their geographical distribution. Certainly the Chronicle has a small circulation—at a guess perhaps a few thousand copies. But many of its readers and correspondents, while politically on the fringes of society, are professionally at its core: physicists, chemists, biologists, geologists, economists, teachers, doctors, journalists—people without whom society cannot progress, nor missile programmes prosper.²⁷

Notably, when Reddaway documented the pages of the Chronicle, the challenges to the system appeared to be at an increase. According to Reddaway in 1971, the idea that Sakharov could be arrested for his part in human rights activities seemed remote especially taking in consideration the incompetence of the Brezhnev regime.

However, Sakharov’s arrest and subsequent exile to Gorky in 1980 served as evidence that even if the Brezhnev administration were faltering in leadership, the system itself was solid enough in terms of stagnation. What was indeed a threat to the foundations of Communist Party power was reform, and to this scenario Reddaway provides an extraordinary commentary seemingly intended for Gorbachev:

[If] a strong leader were to emerge, and were then somehow to redynamize the regime, he would certainly hesitate to arrest certain prominent members of the Democratic Movement.²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., 30.
²⁸ Ibid., 39.
Reddaway continues to explain that the Democratic Movement's objectives are to reform the system "to create closer unity, both practically and spiritually,"\textsuperscript{29} for the individuals in society. The rallying point indicated by Reddaway, on the basis of his interviewing the contributors to samizdat, revolved around information, the right to obtain information and to dispense information without being subjected to Party censorship primarily because "the movement's general aim has been the democratization of Soviet society."\textsuperscript{30} Only by taking an information publication like the Chronicle underground could the right to communicate interactively be engaged in the Soviet Union, precisely because the citizens lacked that democratic privilege under the leadership of the Communist Party. The presence of samizdat indicates that a great number of Soviet citizens desired the right to communicate freely, receiving information which they selected as a matter of personal preference.

Additionally, the premise for democratic rights was present in Soviet society at the time Gorbachev took office, as he admitted to in both Perestroika and Memoirs. For over seven decades the Soviet Union had existed as a communist nation, however, the absence of democratic rights was increasingly obvious to the people at large after the major industrialization period in the Soviet Union came to a close. It is true that the Post World War II economic trends contributed significantly to the disparity between the Eastern and Western nations. In terms of economics, by the time the technological wave descended on Western countries, incorporating Asian nations in the expansion of

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 15/16.
technological global markets, the Soviet Union began to feel the effects, especially in terms of inadequate information systems. Even though the advanced industrialized nations had made great technological strides to the benefit of their economies, there were also improvements made in the humanities, such as improvements in education and medical care, which are not always reflected on economic charts. The fact that the world was progressing in terms of efficient communications and information systems could no longer be ignored by the Soviet government. Gorbachev's call for glasnost can be evaluated as his awareness of the demands for global economic competition, but his refusal to view honestly the damage that inadequate Party politics had wrought on the morale of Soviet society led to serious confrontations after glasnost was formally condoned.

Shane's account explains the contradictions that Gorbachev faced in the mid-eighties as he tried to reconcile Soviet style socialism values with the need for progressive democracy in opening the channels of information. According to Shane, Gorbachev made the following remarks:

'Glasnost,' he said on his Siberian tour in the autumn of 1988, 'is necessary. But it must be based on our values. It must be everything that serves socialism and serves the people.' Again, a couple of weeks later, addressing top editors and broadcast executives, he seemed to be speaking in oxymorons: 'Publish everything. There must be plurality of opinions. But plurality aimed at defending and strengthening the line of perestroika and the cause of socialism. . . . We are not talking about any kind of limits on glasnost and democracy. What limits? Glasnost in the interest of the people and of socialism should be without limits. I repeat—in the interests of the people and of socialism.'

Shane goes on to explain that the Party had approved of glasnost only in terms of strengthening the Party principles of communism, a position that Lenin had initiated after

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31 Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 66.
taking power in 1917. Consequently, Gorbachev too, relied on the Leninist approach to

glasnost in a socialist society. The defining issue for Gorbachev was that the Leninist

approach used to create the Party autocracy never called for democracy. The term
democracy, used in context with glasnost, implied freedoms and rights that the Soviet

population had always desired as far as communication of information was concerned.
When Gorbachev used the term “democracy” to explain the premise that glasnost was

founded on, the Party was in effect relinquishing the specificity of definition which had

traditionally accompanied glasnost, as public opinion that existed within the law.

By 1988, glasnost had released enough information to exact a decisive impact

throughout the Soviet Union. The contention became apparent as glasnost gained power

among the people, displacing the Party in power. Consequently, while glasnost was

lifting the silence that had shrouded the nation, Gorbachev became increasingly alarmed

at the results glasnost was producing. Shane describes an exasperated Gorbachev who

realized by 1991 that glasnost was spinning out of control, by his standards. The Party

was not used to being upstaged in terms of authority, and glasnost had accomplished an

eradication of the Party’s authority in three years time.
CHAPTER FIVE
PARADOX

Information Revolution and the Liberalization of Society

When Gorbachev employed the use of glasnost to challenge the Party's inadequate administration, the availability of information continued to be controlled. Until glasnost, the Party measured the availability of information in the Soviet Union, filtering, isolating, and distributing on a “need to know basis.” As described by Shane throughout his book, Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union, the majority of Soviet citizens were duped for decades into acceptance of a narrow perspective that highlighted only that which the Party deemed to be of importance, and, as a consequence, that which depicted the Party most favorably.

It was the literal definition of glasnost that betrayed the Party, a truth that Gorbachev could not reconcile with his call for upgraded socialism in a nation dominated by a single Party leadership. Glasnost, defined as openness, or publicity, literally took into account every individual’s perspective and opinion. As Gorbachev recounts in Memoirs:

Thanks to glasnost, perestroika began to find an increasingly broad social base. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this...Freedom of speech made it possible to go over the heads of the apparatchiks and turn directly to the people, to give them the incentive to act and win their
support...Glasnost was a powerful weapon, and people soon realized it.⁹⁸

Although Gorbachev recommended the use of glasnost, hoping for a stronger Party presence in an economically improved nation, the people were the ones that implemented the reform to its full capability. As soon as glasnost was condoned by Gorbachev, the reform took off on its own course primarily because glasnost included the people and was no longer limited to exclusive Party participation.

The ironic consequences glasnost delivered upon the Soviet Union came about because, “Gorbachev’s experiment with information produced...a revolution, thus proving fatal to his Party, his country, and his own political career.”⁹²⁴ The factors that proved to be most contradictory centered around Gorbachev’s insistence that glasnost was devoted to the Party principle and also to the truth. Those factors proved to be a combustible combination that exploded in Gorbachev’s Kremlin within months of the implementation of glasnost.

In the avalanche of information that poured out of the Soviet Union, the most damaging truth of all asserted that the Party was grossly corrupt and had mismanaged the affairs of the Soviet empire. From the centralized economy of the Soviet Union to the societal infrastructure, the Party had dominated the system in a vigilant and authoritarian manner. Unfortunately, by the time glasnost came into practice, the system was at a stage of decay, the result of an antiquated Party policy concerning information. The ironic consequences which awaited the Party, and Gorbachev, was that the information which the Party had guarded for decades in order to keep power was strangling the life out of the Soviet Union. No aspect had been left untouched by

¹ Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Memoirs (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 303/207.
the untruths the Party held up to the public as reality. Glasnost truly did let in the light, as Gorbachev had desired, but the shadows that appeared fell the darkest around the Communist Party.

According to Shane, "[t]he death of the Soviet illusion, for most people, took place between 1987 and 1991—an astonishingly rapid demise.... and there are no real historical precedents."^3 Shane’s information, acquired through polling results conducted by the first organization to study public opinion in the Soviet Union, measures the extent to which the population was affected by glasnost. The results show a steady decline in the legitimacy factor of the nation’s government, falling from a 25 percent lack of trust as of December 1989, to nearly 70 percent rejection of Party politics in July 1991. As Shane emphasizes, it was not an onslaught of tanks and bombs which destroyed the credibility of the Party but an onslaught of information. As glasnost began to take effect, revitalizing the citizens to begin participating in the renewal process just as Gorbachev requested, information became available that challenged the Party’s ideological structure.

By 1987 the Party was called upon to account for events, long passed in Soviet history, but which continued to be a source of pain for many members of the population. The most aching remnant of Soviet history was undoubtedly Stalinism, a time that scarred the nation by developing a mentality of shame and fear. Shane gives a compelling account of the “restoration of history” in the Soviet Union particularly

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2 Scott Shane, Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1994), 46.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 215.
underscoring the tragedy of Stalin's totalitarianism as an era which "had torn the
country's heart out in the late 1930's". As a result of glasnost, an abundance of
information revealed the horrors of Stalinism, painting a shocking picture of rape and
ruin of an entire population under one phobic dictatorship. Beginning with the murder
of the Romanov family in 1918, the list of terror accumulated with glasnost including
the assassination of Sergei Kirov which touched off the Great Purges, the execution
of Nikolai Bukharin and other Bolsheviks. In addition, thousands of Red Army
officers and citizens began to be accounted for according to the principle of glasnost,
not the Party. The truth which Gorbachev had heralded as the Soviet's epiphany,
spoke not of heroic conquests under Stalin's leadership, but rather a concerted effort
by the government to master a situation of terrorization against the citizens.

More importantly, the violations that occurred in the illusion of creating a socialist
utopia were silenced at the expense of the people, denying them openness of
communications and the right to information. Even more disturbing were the efforts
of the Party to cover up the truth of Stalin's crimes and the perpetuation of the Soviet
illusion under waves of Party manufactured propaganda. When Gorbachev chose to
implement glasnost, he had absorbed enough Party pragmatism to make him
confident that Party objectives were legitimately concerned with the betterment of
society. Information proved differently.

The information which poured into the Soviet Union after glasnost arrived
amounted to a diverse array of subjects, from the literary arts to economics to sex.

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\(^5\) Ibid., 126.
The circulation of information consumed society. The Soviets were hungry for a
difference of perspective, a sincere re-telling of historical events, and a new brand of
entertainment that exhilarated the public. The information that now made its debut in
the Soviet newspapers, magazines, and on radio and television broadcasts had already
been received in the West as a result of publication legalities. Yet, the Soviet
audience embraced this "new" information with a passion that exceeded the degree of
interest that the same literature had received with its initial publications in the West.
According to Shane, the Soviet Union held the leading position as publisher of books,
but the content was dictated by the Party standards and, unfortunately for the Party,
"not what people wanted." As Gorbachev had guessed, the people were most hungry
for the truth, as evidenced by the tremendous response glasnost brought to Soviet
publications and broadcasts.

The ironic part of the equation was that Gorbachev missed the impact that glasnost
would carry on the population in terms of the "demand economics" so prevalent in
the capitalistic countries. In fact, the population energetically consumed information
such as book publications just released from censorship, Solzhenitsyn's _Gulag
Archipelago_ and Boris Pasternak's _Doctor Zhivago_. Television broadcasts catered
exclusively to topics of public interest, with programs such as Leningrad's _Public
Opinion_ and in Moscow, _Vzglyad_, or the View, retaining a major audience. In
addition weekly publications noted tremendous increases in subscriptions as a result
of provocative stories and articles that fired the interests of the people. According to

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6 Ibid., 184.
Isaac J. Tarasulo, the magazine, Ogonyok, doubled its subscriptions from 561,415 in 1987 to 1,313,349 and the total periodical increase in the Soviet Union was over 18 million by 1987. The most compelling part of the increase in the circulations revolves around content. The information available was satisfying the need for diverse information that was not approved of before glasnost.

Shane notes that the periodical Druzhba Narodov ran a serialization of Anatoly Rybakov’s Children of the Arbat, which takes place just before Stalin began his purging campaign. The circulation of the periodical increased by seven times as much before Rybakov’s story appeared. Not only celebrated authors were published. Shane chronicles the work of a fifty plus broadcast journalist who pursued the truth concerning the whereabouts of executed victims during Stalin’s crimes. Alexander Milchakov conducted his own interviews, collecting information, compiling witnesses testimonies to the tragedies committed by Soviets against other Soviets. Without access to archives Milchakov produced an expose, published in the September 1988 journal Sem’ia, or Family, entitled Ashes of the Executed, that not only described the events of Stalinism but indicated approximate burial places where the remains of the victims were unceremoniously buried. By 1988 the KGB conceded to Milchakov’s vigilance and produced information from Soviet archives disclosing the names and fates of executed citizens. Shane describes the impact of information as singularly creating an information industry that quickly toppled the Party press, Pravda, and its affiliate broadcasting network, Vremya.

Now Marx’s dictum that under communism the state would wither away appeared to be working in reverse: as Communist ideology shriveled, so did

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the totalitarian state. It was butting out of people’s lives, no longer telling them what to think, where to work, whom to vote for, whom to hate. . .A new popular culture was born, and people who were not caught up directly in politics, whether their interest was Orthodox liturgy, rock music, or sexual techniques, became beneficiaries of glasnost.8

The democratization of Soviet society involved a diversity of material made available to appeal to many different personal preferences. Glasnost escaped the Party line of restricted information because differences existed among the public, and glasnost’s public consciousness proved to be stronger than the single-minded communist consciousness that the Party insisted was the truth.

Plurality of tastes and opinions, and of thoughts and attitudes emerged with glasnost, and the people embraced the refreshing divergence. Again Shane has documented the response of Soviet citizens who drank in glasnost, among them 82 year old Maria Andreyeva whose comments epitomize the impact that glasnost had:

‘Ogonyok used to lie around at the hairdresser’s [and]. . . Now the whole country reads it. Korotich has uncovered all kinds of evil doing by Stalin. He’s telling us the truth.’ Maria Andreyeva was. . .old enough to remember the Revolution and to have cast her meaningless vote in dozens of meaningless elections. ‘You know what’s good?’ she said. ‘These people aren’t standing in line for sugar, not for bread, not for meat. They’re standing in line for ideas.’9

Another recollection comes from Vitaly Korotich, the editor of Ogonyok who explained “in a 1988 television appearance ‘For me, glasnost is simply a return to the norm,’ ”10 The response to glasnost was deafening not only because the information that was available came from the public, but also because the Party resistance to public disclosure increased glasnost’s value tremendously. Once the process of

8 Ibid., 185.
9 Shane, Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union, 501.
10 Ibid., 136/7.
liberalization began, it was impossible to stop because freedom of expression in society became not only necessary to heal but to progress.

Power Politics and the End of the Soviet Union

At the point of realization that glasnost was breaking from his intended course, Gorbachev began to recant his reform policy, calling for an adherence to the Leninist principle. Because, as Doder and Branson recognize in their account of glasnost, Gorbachev perceived his power as initiating reform from above and below with no accountability, he also regarded popular response to fall in line with the Soviet political agenda of perestroika and reject any deviation as a matter of Soviet socialist principle, Leninism. Gorbachev's position reflected the Party perspective, vigilantly protecting Party interests of power. Contrary to Gorbachev's position, under glasnost the revolution from below not only rejected the Party's political agenda but its entire operation precisely, as a matter of democratic principle.

The critical eye of glasnost settled finally on the Communist Party, and what was revealed was disagreeable to the population that was experiencing a resurgence of freedoms. As Doder and Branson succinctly explain, "Only after Gorbachev's glasnost did the public begin to face the facts: that the Soviet way of life was miserable. . .and that the Party was losing its sense of direction and purpose."11 The damning evidence was contained in information that glasnost held up for public scrutiny, and within months the Party was under a persistent and wide-spread attack because it had assumed to know all of the answers to the economic, ideological,

philosophical, and political directions a communist nation should follow. The Party had endowed itself with absolute knowledge and absolute power within the system. With the effects of glasnost spreading rapidly throughout the Soviet Union, the Party had to face absolute consequences of its socioeconomic policies. As a result of political authority that for decades rejected democratic practices to maintain power, Gorbachev and the Party were faced with an admission of guilt in executing an ideological premise that deviated in practice to become a full blown exploitation of the masses. No greater evidence of such exploitation was required than the information that glasnost produced.

The Constitution of the USSR, legislated in 1936, stated that freedom of speech, the press, of assembly, and other communications were expressly guaranteed by the law. Glasnost revealed another truth to the Soviet citizens who for decades believed that their personal freedoms were genuine and protected. Instead, with the implementation of glasnost, a different truth emerged that exposed the Party as negligent in upholding democratic rights.

That Stalin was guilty of mass executions of his population in the cause of exterminating the "enemies of the people" was no longer a shocking admittance to many who had read personal accounts through samizdat sources or had relatives that lived through the terror. The disturbing trend that persisted was that the Party leadership under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev continued to grasp onto the idea that the Party was on course with the Marxist-Leninist principle and advocated sincere democratic socialism in the nation. However, as Shane, Doder, Branson, and even Gorbachev relate in their publications, the ideal was one formed in error from the conception of the Communist Party. The
credibility of the Communist Party was challenged by a careful examination of the methods that were an actuality in the political system and then reforms, such as glasnost, that illuminated the necessity for democratic means. Gorbachev comments on the transition that the Party underwent when faced with glasnost’s plurality of consciousness:

After the 1st Congress of People’s Deputies, power began to pass to the Soviets. The Party, as is proper in a democratic society, would no longer direct the nation’s development and had to begin operating by political means. . . . Thus began the most difficult stage for the Party—in which it sought its place in a society that was renewing itself.\(^{12}\)

Gorbachev points out that the Party recognized the time for change by the time his reforms were initiated. Yet, the critical realization revolved around the reconciliation between the Party that had occupied the central position in socioeconomic affairs with the society who, as Gorbachev emphasizes, found themselves in a revolution against the Party authority for mismanagement of socioeconomics and politics.

The fact that the Soviet Union had no plurality divisions in its political system made the Party particularly vulnerable, being the only accountable entity for the state of affairs in all areas of the nation that were increasingly coming under review by the press and broadcasters. Instead of basking in the light of benevolence that Gorbachev had anticipated, as he delivered his seventieth-anniversary speech for the October Revolution in Red Square, November of 1987, a curious defection began among the Party apparatus itself.

Particularly troubling for Gorbachev, who extolled the virtues of Leninism during the bulk of his anniversary speech, was the fact that glasnost’s effect had splintered

\(^{12}\) Gorbachev, Memoirs, 350.
the government into factions that conducted polemical arguments now in full public view. Doder and Branson comments that:

> With glasnost blooming as never before, the entire country seemed to have become a vast debating society. From the point of view of the Brezhnev era, the Soviet Union was in the grip of an almost subversive spirit, lacking in due respect for Bolshevik propositions, and toying with dissident ideas for which people only a few years earlier were sentenced to long prison terms.  

Gorbachev embraced the new sense of political participation in the nation, but with reservations. When the issue of territorial security came to the fore with nationality upheavals in parts of Central Asia and the Baltics, Gorbachev pretended not to notice the issue of self-determination to which glasnost had led.

The fact that the Soviet Union encompassed eleven time zones and 110 ethnic groups presented a crucial consideration to the Party’s political stance. A one-party system that advocated a single ideological commitment could not practice glasnost’s democratization without facing one very important fact. Not everyone believed in Leninism as profoundly as the Party expected, and when it came to politics, the Party had to force allegiance to the communist objective, as demonstrated by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or the 1968 Prague Spring.

Gorbachev had expressly refused to employ force when he initiated his reforms, as Doder and Branson argue, because he was trying to avoid connections with Stalinism in power politics. However, as a result of Leninism, Gorbachev was faced with trying to sell the idea that communism was advantageous to republics that had been brutally imperialized by the Soviet power. His argument fell on deaf ears and consequently provided a springboard for the republics to declare their independence.

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13 Doder and Branson, Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin, 315.
from the USSR. The most prevalent theme in the nationality urgency became a recognition by Gorbachev that truth did not ultimately lay at the feet of Lenin and the Party he created in Russia. The crisis that loomed before the Soviet leader is succinctly characterized in Doder and Branson's analysis:

Here was the central paradox of Gorbachev's rule—the more he sought to disburse power, the more he found it necessary to concentrate power in his own hands. . . . He was trying, as Sakharov chided him publicly, "to get a democratic process through undemocratic means."14

The democratic factors of openness and public interaction that accompanied glasnost mixed badly with the authoritarian realities of Soviet politics, a combination that literally exploded Gorbachev's idealism of communist destiny.

John Miller offers an interpretation concerning Gorbachev's position that also illustrates the contradictions present between the Party objective of socialist equality and the democracy found in glasnost. Specifically, Miller points to the emergence of the Soviet middle class who required "support in finding an independent voice,"15 a new role that was politically democratic in nature. As Miller goes on to explain, the consequences of new and independent voices in the public forum heralded a plurality of interests not only among the society but among the government officials as well. Essentially glasnost slipped from a reform that was fashioned to advance socioeconomic without disrupting the political principles upon which the Party was erected. By the time Gorbachev realized the dissension that was emerging within the Party infrastructure, he became defiant, but glasnost's energy had become a fact of Soviet life.

14 Ibid., 353/4.
The establishment of the Congress of People’s Deputies by Sakharov and Boris Yeltsin created a parliamentary structure that consisted of both non-communist and communist members and which defined the break from single Party politics. The presence of Yeltsin profoundly disturbed the stability of Party politics for one very important reason—a rejection of communist identification that was so integral in the founding and consolidation of the Party for decades. Doder and Branson relate an incident in which Yeltsin publicly declared himself a socialist democrat to which Gorbachev responded, shortly after, that he was a dedicated communist. The incident depicts the split of identities and opinions accompanying glasnost and also illustrates the necessity for a forum to air constructively such differences. Gorbachev’s response to Yeltsin’s declaration began a struggle within the Party apparatus that ultimately escalated tensions until, as Miller accounts, Gorbachev found himself at the epicenter of three distinct competitive forces—the military, Yeltsin’s Russian administration, and the non-Russian republics.

The coup of August 1991 relegated the position of Gorbachev, as President of the CPSU engaging reform meant to stimulate the Soviet socioeconomic position, to one that reflected the growing frustration among the population that was publicly dissenting against the Party form of sociopolitical administration. Increasingly Gorbachev clashed with the splintering effects brought about through glasnost primarily because he was a dedicated communist and could not fathom any deviation from Party supremacy in political affairs. Even as Gorbachev sought a reconciliation to the nuclear conflict of the Cold War, the prevailing conflict existed within his own national borders, a conflict of social principles that he had initiated when he called for glasnost.
The coup ultimately illustrated the deep rift between the old guard, Brezhnevites that yearned for the stability that controlled information brought to society, and the radicals led by Yeltsin that defied the system’s defects, openly, as glasnost allowed. Ironically, Gorbachev was caught in the middle of the rift, betrayed by his communist colleagues that had staged the coup, and rescued by Yeltsin, the political “new thinker” in the Kremlin who had publicly renounced communism as a “dream beyond the clouds,”¹⁶ a remark met with disapproval by Gorbachev who viewed the rebellious nature of Yeltsin as a threat to the stability of the socialist system and communist ideology. Another ironic development, as Shane presents, is that Gorbachev kept informed throughout the coup by means of foreign broadcasts, BBC, Voice of America, and Radio Liberty while Soviet audiences were entertained with classical music performances for hours. Glasnost had not failed the Soviet leader during the political showdown with Party hardliners yet glasnost did fail to revitalize the Party as Gorbachev had hoped. Instead, as a consequence of glasnost, the Party was challenged openly to be politically accountable for the myths under which the Soviet socioeconomic system operated. The coup was not the Party’s shining moment to re-engage control of information which in effect would control the population once again. Glasnost had denied that possibility to the Party, and the coup of August 1991 was played out on a world stage as testimony to the impact that glasnost produced in the Soviet Union.

¹⁶ Shane, Dismantling Utopia, 240.
Irreconcilable Differences: Why Democracy Survived and
The Communist Party Fell From Power

The lack of democracy in the Soviet Union was apparent for two reasons, the refusal of the Party to incorporate civil liberties for fear of disintegrating political power and the covert actions in which the population engaged, in an effort to have a voice. Primarily, the measures that the Communist Party engaged in to control the population's resources of information resulted in a backlash against the government once glasnost was permitted to exist. The right to information faced a peculiar interpretation according to Soviet legislation which convoluted all forms of information. Most notably was the introduction in the nation of a state censorship bureau, *Glavlit*, or the Chief Administration for matters of Literature and Publishing, that was established in June 6, 1931. *Glavlit* embodied the Party's objective to secure every form of information under legal statute, thus ensuring control over the population in matters of artistic expression, education, and virtually every type of communication.

In addition to the institution of controlled information, the Party legislated Articles 70, 190-1 and 190-3 on September 16, 1966, which placed punishment upon those engaging in anti-Soviet information. With the KGB acting as protectorate of Party interests the population had no choice but to take illegal communication underground, and the birth of *samizdat* opposed *Glavlit* in terms of disseminating information. The fact that the Party consistently diverted freedom of communication and the right to information in legal constraints illustrate the insecurity that was a factor in the Party. Ironically, the Party feared the exact force that brought the Bolsheviks to power, and
to combat future insurrection the Party resorted to repression of the same resources that Lenin utilized.

During the 1905 Revolution in Tsarist Russia Lenin commented on the great advantages gained through public discourse, the liberty of the press to disseminate information, and the educational communication to further critical mindedness. Yet, after the Revolution of 1917 brought an end to the old order, information that was previously viewed as valuable was now interpreted against the new regime. The point was well taken because, as Shane suggests, Party loyalists opposed glasnost precisely because of the damage information could bring against the Party.

Gorbachev, on the other hand, had a blind-sighted belief in the tenets of socialism and especially in Leninist socialism. Yet his belief existed for him, as a Party member, in an isolated world where Party members received the rights denied to other members of society. For decades the other members of society desired the opportunity to voice an opinion, to publish a piece of work that reflected a unique point of thought, or to engage conversation around an issue of personal importance. The evidence of persecution against Soviet people who attempted to communicate naturally is well documented and disturbing.

Airing an opinion that fell from Party mentality cost greatly in terms of human integrity. Such intolerance is heavily chronicled in Reddaway's work on participants in the Democratic Movement and the distribution of samizdat publications. Those who were punished for taking part in an exchange of information or in speaking out for civil liberties were dealt harshly with by the regime. The nature of Soviet society was always to communicate freely and without fear, but the nature of the Party was
always to preserve power even if that involved subjecting the population to governing authority because the Party violated fundamental rights from the beginning.

The language of the dissident reflects the absence of democracy in the Soviet Union just as the language of authority reflects the absence of democracy within the Party. In the case of celebrated dissidents Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuly Daniel in 1966, a plea made by Sinyavsky to the Soviet courts illustrates the degree of frustration at the lack of democracy in the system.

The arguments which have been flung at me are such that it is impossible to explain anything. . . . ‘Where are your positive heroes? Ah, you haven’t got any! Ah you are not a socialist! Ah, you are not a realist! Ah, you are not a Marxist! Ah, you are a fantaisiste and an idealist, and you publish abroad into the bargain! Of course you are a counterrevolutionary!’

Having to defend themselves for writing literature that came under the interpretation, by the Party, as anti-Soviet demonstrates the lack of democracy. Under the Party standards only propaganda was accorded rights of publication and circulation, a blatantly biased position that exhibits no tolerance for any differing thought or expression. Yet the Party’s idea of freedom of communication can be found succinctly stated in Article 109 of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR which states that freedom of speech, the press, of assembly, and of demonstrations are permitted as a fundamental civil right. Ironically, the timing of such legislation coincided with Stalin’s purges, which obliterated not only basic rights but human dignity.

When Gorbachev spoke of the need for democratization in the nation, he was aware, as all Party members, of the gross violations of rights under Party government.

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In *Memoirs*, Gorbachev recounts the words of a speech delivered to the XXVIIIth Congress in which calls attention to the discrepancies in the system and the need for change—political, economic, and ideological. Such words from the Soviet General Secretary points to the recognition that a lack of democracy existed before glasnost and continued to exist then. Khrushchev's secret speech of 1956 accounts for the recognition that democracy was not present during Stalinism. Indeed, the absence of democracy is evidenced in 1921 when Kronstadt Insurgents documented displeasure with the new regime:

After carrying out the October revolution, the working class had hoped to achieve its emancipation. But the result was an even greater enslavement of the human personality. The power of the police and gendarme monarchy passed into the hands of the Communist usurpers, who, instead of giving the people freedom, instilled in them constant fear of falling into the torture chambers of the Cheka, which in their horrors far exceed the gendarme administration of the tsarist regime. The bayonets, bullets, and gruff commands of the Cheka *oprichniki*—these are what the workingman of Russia has won after so much struggle and suffering.

But most infamous and criminal of all is the moral servitude which the Communists have inaugurated: they have laid their hands on the inner world of the toilers, forcing them to think in the Communist way. . . . Having gained power, it is only afraid of losing it, and therefore deems every means permissible . . .

The declaration emphasizes the character of the Party as powermongers, uninterested in the plight of the working masses, however, it also underscores the lack of democratic treatment in a system that was founded on a socialist democratic principle devoted to upholding the rights of the working class.

The truth, which Gorbachev stressed in *Perestroika* as so urgently required for the rescue of the system, was that democracy never existed in the Party in any form, bourgeois to socialist, and in fact the communist ideal denied democratic rights as a

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18 Ibid., 140.
way to secure political power. The lack of democratic rights was never so apparent as in the documents of writers that were denied publication because the material displeased the Party. The truth, provided by glasnost, failed to consolidate the Soviet system because glasnost actually provided democratization in the form of information liberties and the Party could not endure the content of information that poured from the population.

In many respects glasnost was democratization for the people because it allowed a valuable resource to communicate information without fear of persecution. Had the Party been democratic in nature, it would have been flexible enough to weigh other opinions in the spirit of participation. Gorbachev initially welcomed the advantage glasnost was to bring to his nation. By the time the truth was revealed, the leader shrunk from the reform to rally the people to engage in thinking that was typical for socialist enhancement. Shane comments that the most notable contradiction was that Gorbachev’s ideal of socialism was utopian in nature and escaped the reality of the system Lenin had created. Lenin’s system was void of democracy from the beginning, because when actual democratic reform came to the Soviet Union the nation ceased to exist.

The fact that Lenin had come to power illegitimately in 1917 and perpetuated the idea of revolution to a communist utopia eliminated public participation because Lenin, by reasoning of Marxism, had arrived at all of the answers relevant to the Soviet population. Lenin’s specialty, like Marx and Engels, was revolution and economics. However, economics does not produce a complete system. The need for participation in terms of thought brings progress to society, and when thought is
strangled for the good of the system, then one is left with stagnation, as Gorbachev encountered, of a system that will never move forward.

Notable to the definition of what constitutes democratization in a system is John Stuart Mill’s theory concerning liberty. Mill contends that the political order is responsible for preventing vice and promoting virtue and the best means for assuring such a combination comes through law, criminal and civil, and public opinion.\(^{19}\) Law exists as a tangible measure of permissible and impermissible, where public opinion exists as the intangible element that reflects society’s moral standard. Free expression is powerful because it allows a continuum of thought and ideas. The idea of progress as an evolutionary process of education and development requires new thought and ideas in order to be productive. Therefore, as Mill suggests, free expression is required for the privileges it bestows on society just as law is required to protect those privileges.

Gorbachev’s understanding of democracy, while flawed, was certainly well intended. In reviewing the former Soviet leader’s convictions on the socialist principle, he exhibits unfailing confidence in the system and in the future of his nation. It is an ironic convergence that both Lenin and Gorbachev use the word democracy yet have no real understanding of what democratic rights encompass. According to Volkogonov’s analysis of Lenin, the founder of the Communist Party had little comprehension of democracy. In the same vein Doder and Branson remark that Gorbachev paid lip service to democracy in speeches and in publications yet note

that "these rights and freedoms were debated in the context of economic reform. . .

Gorbachev does not speak of liberty in his book, and he rarely mentions individual
rights." The irony is that both the founder and the final Soviet Union leader did not
recognize the necessity for individual freedom, a cornerstone of democracy.

The necessity of democracy in the context of glasnost, free expression, is best explained according to Mill's theory concerning individual liberties within the society. Mill speaks to the necessity of a "moral compact" between the individual and society as a way to balance the interests of both. If society is allowed to repress the individual through laws, progress is hampered. By the same token if individuals have no allegiance to the good of the society in which they live, progress is also hampered. Thus, it is according to a moral standard, or law, that individuals should conduct themselves in their society. The moral standard is established according to mutual values which will benefit both the individual as well as the society. As for the role of society in the compact Mill contends:

\[L\]et not society pretend that it needs. . .the power to issue commands and enforce obedience in the personal concerns of individuals in which, on all principles of justice and policy, the decision ought to rest with those who are to abide the consequences. . .it easily comes to be considered a mark of spirit and courage to fly in the face of such usurped authority and do with ostentation the exact opposite of what it enjoins.\]

Mill's argument for the moral compact illustrates the necessity for democratic liberties in the interest of social progress because the pursuit for truth is an ongoing process and is necessary for progression.

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20 Doder and Branson, Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin, 251.
In contrast to Mill’s theory regarding democracy, Gorbachev submits his own interpretation of the process of democratization. It is interesting that Gorbachev also views the moral standard as imperative, commenting that the “moral aspect is of tremendous importance.” The defining difference in Gorbachev’s interpretation of democracy resides in his perspective that the Party must conduct the society and the individuals according to Soviet socialist objectives. With such an approach, Gorbachev still regarded the Party as integral in directing the citizens according to socialist principles. The liberty to act independently from the government as individuals determined, particularly in areas such as freedom of speech, of the press, or right to assembly, was considered counter to the socialist premise of collective effort in the Soviet Union.

It must be noted then that Lenin had instilled in the Party a vanguard mentality that the communist ideology was the ultimate truth. Consequently, communism not only supplied an end result for everyone, regardless of diversity in thought or opinion, but through the use of terror enforced the submission to the communist objective. Lenin also suggested that “democratic centralism” be instituted in the Party vanguard as a way to facilitate a forum for opposition where discourse could occur between the two levels of government concerning issues and, after suitable dialogue, a decision would be ultimately reached by the higher Party committee. Democratic centralism, as Lenin’s pre-revolutionary notion of social democracy, was non-existent in practice. Lenin’s legacy to the Party held no democratic credibility, a position that was unenviable when Gorbachev called for democratization in the use of glasnost.

Speaking of the need for glasnost in the media Gorbachev commented that
"[c]riticism can be an effective instrument of perestroika only if it is based on
absolute truth and scrupulous concern for justice."23 Ironically, when Gorbachev
urged truth in glasnost, the incorporation of public participation in submitting
opinions and engaging in debate, he unwittingly was engaging democratization by
acknowledging the legitimate need for individuals and society to have the freedom to
communicate. At the same time, Gorbachev sounded the death knell for the Party
who had restricted personal liberties for the sake of the political authority, but
Gorbachev’s decision to initiate glasnost was a testament to his belief in the virtues of
democracy, aside from his nation’s communist history. Gorbachev’s realization that
the society was faltering signaled his desire to reconcile individual interests with that
of society and the state. However, Gorbachev’s priority in introducing reform was to
bolster the state and societal structure together without giving credibility to the
participation of the individual. Clearly, the contradiction for Gorbachev revolved
around the society and the individual.

Mill argues that it is better for the whole of society if the individual prospers
without interference from the government, suggesting that:

The mischief begins when, instead of calling forth the activity and powers of
individuals and bodies, it substitutes its own activity for theirs; when instead
of informing, advising, and upon occasion, denouncing it makes them work in
fetters. . .The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals
composing it; and a State which postpones the interests of their mental
expansion and elevation to a little more of administrative skill. . .will find that
with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.24

23 Ibid., 79.
Gorbachev's task, to bring democratic procedure into the public forum, was complicated by his insistence that the socialist truth was absolute, and that the country could indeed prosper under a system that was grossly lacking in political plurality. In point of fact the Party that Lenin had brought to power knew only control through top down force which was plainly undemocratic.

The reaction to glasnost was a contradiction to Party policy as evidenced by Gorbachev's recanting of his reform. Shane contends that by 1991 Gorbachev "had dramatically retreated from reform,"25 because he witnessed the contradictions to his original goals. The fact that the Party tumbled from power in the face of the illegal, and ill-fated, attempted coup illustrates the power that glasnost had effected. Soviet politics could not continue as a single-Party system governing a society that desired the democratic value of pluralism in politics and society.

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Examining the sociopolitical course that Russia has taken, it is evident that Kavelin's state school theory is valid. Russia united fully under the Tsardom instituted with Ivan III, extending the ruling order to the fated 20th century when the Romanov's were finally eradicated in 1918. The Tsarist form of government accomplished two objectives, to unify Russia under a nationalist banner and establish a system that left little opportunity for opposition, externally and internally. Consequently, Russia existed as a secured state that could survive intercontinental challenges as well as strangling potential discord among the subject population.

Notably, under the authority of Ivan IV, the role of the Russian population was defined according to the needs of the state and also to the whims of the Tsar. Yanov's assessment that autocratic will was consolidated with the implementation of the Oprichniki explains the significance of future control procedures employed by the system, tsarist and Soviet. Therefore, the population was not only placed into a social role, not of their choosing, but prescribed by political rule, and as a response to potential opposition the political police assured compliance. Additionally, the founder of St. Petersburg envisioned a fortress that would serve as protectorate of the nation, fortified with military advantage and enforced by means of legalized national allegiance. Even though Peter the Great failed to witness the completion of St.
Petersburg, the legacy of his militarization became a cornerstone of future political direction in Russia.

If Ivan IV and Peter I defined the defense system of Russia, their successor Catherine the Great defined cultural standards. Emphasizing the Enlightenment of European courts, Empress Catherine paved the way for Russia's participation in the flowering era of intellectuals. In particular, the introduction of European personalities and cultural diversity, while limited chiefly to the political and social elite, significantly changed the landscape of Russian political and social discourse. The window to Europe that Peter opened was surely beautified with Catherine's impressive aesthetic contributions, but more important were the alternative considerations that came alive for Russian enlightened thinkers. In many ways, "new thinking" began under Catherine's rule, yet the Empress cared little for nurturing adverse political reactions to her policies concerning the social welfare of her subjects.

The theme of individual sacrifice for the stability of the state remained indisputable, and particularly those who would challenge the system as inadequate to social progress were summarily dismissed. The nationalist identity of Russia by the 19th century was unique primarily because the collectivization mentality resisted reform that would encourage personal advantage. While men such as Radishchev observed injustices present in the sociopolitical structure, the lack of interest by the population and the elite to redirect changes was an incredible factor in the intellectual fragility of the nation's system. There was little to gain and much to lose by challenging the present order, convoluted as it was, a view which Lincoln stresses in his analysis of the enlightened men of pre-revolutionary Russia.
By the end of the 19th century the economic factors came into play, affecting not only the masses of peasant and workers but the controlling power as well. Although industrialized Europe was engaged in the growing pains of urbanization and legislation to accommodate economic progress, Russia continued to survive in the tradition of peasant standards—the primary incentive was to merely survive.

Certainly the conditions that brought Lenin to the fore of revolutionary activity were a mix of rapid disenchantment with living standards and the antiquated system of rule that had persisted for centuries. At the turn of the century, the "enlightened bureaucrats" of Russia still were greatly insignificant and thus unable to be of influence to the autocratic order of political power, or to propose more conciliatory means than revolution in achieving that same end.

Certainly the forces against Tsar Nicholas II consisted of a multitude of factors brought about external coincidences, the First World War among them. Internally, Lenin and the Bolsheviks operated covertly in establishing their Party until political factions became legal after the Revolution of 1905. At the crossroads, Lenin led the revolution into a complete eradication of the Romanovs, subverted political opposition from the Mensheviks and the Provisional Government after the February Revolution in 1917, and directed an assault in the form of War Communism against the Russian nation in the name of the revolution. In seizing and consolidating power Lenin garnered support from those who favored political plurality, the inclusion of the worker population in sociopolitical issues, and the peasants that sought a progressive existence and not merely survival. Ironically, the very socialist revolution which the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's lead, encouraged to displace the monarchical order never came to fruition.
The reality that accompanied the Communist Party to power in 1918 consisted of autocracy, not socialism, and certainly never democracy. It is essential to establish that Lenin had little interest in social welfare or in any degree of democratic rights and liberties primarily because Gorbachev consistently called on the Leninist principles to encourage glasnost and perestroika. In many ways, this was the ultimate contradiction, and one that Gorbachev has never formerly addressed. Why Leninism was in line with Gorbachev's democratic socialism theoretically is puzzling in the context of Gorbachev's desire for economic and political progression in the Soviet Union. As Volkogonov comments:

To achieve power, the Bolsheviks became wedded forever to violence, while liberty was buried in the marriage. Lenin’s address ‘To the Citizens of Russia’, following his coup, and his decrees promising peace and land, say nothing about liberty as the main aim of the revolution...The Russian revolution, which formally gave the people peace and land, cunningly replaced the idea of liberty with that of the abolition of the exploitation of man by man. In giving the spectre of hope, Lenin had found and trapped man’s most robust and vital element, that of faith. He thus condemned the Russians for decades to contenting themselves with hope alone.¹

From the beginning Lenin operated under the revolutionary banner with no intention of allowing political plurality and certainly no civil liberties. Instead the mantra of the Communist Party became the elimination of the “enemies of the people,” but the “people,” as Gorbachev pointed out after his fall from power, had never been the citizens, but the Party.

In dismissing the civil liberties that would have been necessary for progressive reform, Lenin and the Party erected a political stronghold that carried over the same

traditions of autocratic rule from before. The pivotal point was that Lenin, as the heir to intelligentsia reform of the 19th century, utilized the press, assembly, and discourse in nations that granted those rights to the public. Lenin advantaged his revolutionary position through publications of his paper *Iskra*, or the Spark, which he began in London in 1900, and circulated in Russia, albeit covertly. After the legislation in 1905, the Bolsheviks practiced opposition politics legally, gaining seats in the Duma that was instituted under Nicholas II. After the Bolsheviks seized power, Lenin continued to publish articles on the Party and communist objectives on an international scale. Consequently, the regime overtook any democratic initiatives from the Bolsheviks platform of socialist democracy, and directed full revolutionary energy toward world dominance of the Party. In Russia, renamed the Soviet Union after the revolution, the most fundamental of personal liberties were extinguished, and the Party resorted to the traditional strong-arming policies of political policing to guarantee submission. In addition, 1921 communist legislation disallowed factions, and in 1918, Glavlit policed public discourse and prohibited written communications that led to exchange of information.

The Party rejected all information that deviated from the socialist objectives of the revolution yet the ironic point was that there never existed any form of socialism in Soviet Russia from which to deviate. For that reason, it was imperative that the Party secure power through any means possible, including restricting mobilization, and all forms of information found through educational resources as well as common communications such as personal conversation. In effect, every avenue that would threaten the power of the Party was checked and enforcibly controlled. More importantly, the same advantages which the Party took to secure their power, through
propagandized information, speeches, and massive campaigns, were denied to the rest of the public.

The crux of the issue was that the repression, which was enforced by the Party, portrayed their regime as benevolent and most accommodating to the needs of the people. The same policies that Lenin took advantage of to gain revolutionary favor with the masses, “Land and Bread,” served the policies of the Party for decades. Unfortunately the reality was that there never existed a legitimate socialist democratic policy to serve the people, and as a consequence, societal ills began to take a toll on the nation’s economy as well.

Gorbachev admittedly laid the blame for the sluggish condition of the society and economy on the Party apparatus, yet he also clung to the ideal of the Communist Party instituted under Lenin. Hope was still in the offing, as Lenin had led the nation to believe, some seventy years earlier. The difference between Gorbachev and Lenin was that Gorbachev lived the life of a communist comrade and witnessed first-hand the lack of motivation, ambition, and resolve that was so needed by the nation if it were to survive. Gorbachev, again like his predecessors, insisted the Party was capable of elevating socialism to its fullest potential. Unlike Lenin, Gorbachev employed democratization to help the process along.

Glasnost epitomized democratization primarily because it escaped the singular control that had defined Party politics, and in fact, most all of Russia’s political history. The impact of glasnost was twofold—shaking the stability of the Party authority and stirring the consciousness of the public to democratic participation. Without public opinion the backlash against the Party structure would never have
occurred, a consequence which Gorbachev had not considered in his visions for Soviet socialism.

Gorbachev is critically acclaimed to have conceded ultimately to Western democratic experiences, especially with the fall of communist centralized planning, specifically in terms of economics. True, Gorbachev possessed the foresight to begin restructuring in the Soviet Union, but his intention was never to dissolve the political epicenter in the nation. According to Gorbachev, the Party remained a viable entity that only needed rejuvenating to embrace true Marxism-Leninism. However, glasnost rejected the very premise that Lenin’s illegitimate seizure of power had begun seventy years earlier. In effect, glasnost escaped from its liberator, and Gorbachev remains today a victim of his own reform process, a fact which he acknowledges in his publications and interviews.

The absence of public discourse among the Soviet populace magnified the lack of democracy. Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, while politically at odds over how best to rectify the lack of personal liberties in the nation, both were committed to bringing awareness to society. In many ways they represent the value of democratic discourse, that is, opposing opinions that operate in an effort to understand another’s perspective. Sakharov’s call for an “open” society reflected the political need to include people in issues that affected societal welfare and progress instead of throwing up a wall of governmental intolerance. Solzhenitsyn appeals to a limited role for government in public discourse, a characteristic of democratic systems. Both men saw the injustices created by rejecting a public forum and not holding the political power accountable.
While it is not the intent of this thesis to hold Western democratic values up as the preferred standard, there continues to be merit in the political theories presented by J. S. Mill, especially in the context of the problems which resulted after glasnost was introduced. Summarily, Mill argues that the value which allows society to progress is tolerance of diversity of opinions, and if suppressed by the authority with majority approval, there is a violation committed against the people for failing to respect an alternative opinion. Mill's definition of liberty centers around the necessity for the public to engage in debate in pursuit of the truth. Therefore, the idea that authority can silence the public to avoid the unpleasant truth suggests that one opinion is infallible and rejects an alternative opinion. Such an attitude is maintained, not in the interest of progress and the pursuit of truth, but rather to enforce singleness of mind and to hold onto power for fear of opposition.¹

Most provocative are the words of Gorbachev in Perestroika that spoke of the necessity of truth in public information. Yet, as Gorbachev appealed to the virtues of public debate in order that perestroika could progress, he consistently reverted to Party practices of stranding any point of view that threatened the power of the Communist Party. The most revealing actions taken on the part of the Party to enforce compliance came about between 1988 and 1991, exactly corresponding to the time glasnost became powerful in raising awareness.

Glasnost, in effect, became Gorbachev's enemy for two reasons. Primarily because glasnost defied the Party's singular consciousness which was unacceptable to Gorbachev as leader of the Soviet Union. It was not a question of whether Gorbachev

believed in the capability of the Party, or the Marxist-Leninist doctrines which he thought had penetrated into the core of society without disturbing the autocratic integrity. It was not even a question of exploring "new thinking" to bolster the system that Gorbachev believed would endure. In reading Gorbachev's speeches and book *Perestroika*, it is evident that he had no intention of deviating from Leninist objectives. Thus, "new thinking" only meant for Gorbachev rearranging things to be more compliant to the goals which were put down in 1917.

Doder and Branson, Shane, Sakharov, and Solzhenitsyn all speak to the notion that reform for Gorbachev meant preserving the authority of the Party with fringe democratization. Notably, Gorbachev stresses in *Perestroika* that the system was flexible enough to withstand democracy and declares his reform program to be a success among working people. It is impossible not to detect the narrowness of his intended policies, economic resurgence and a more efficient bureaucratic administration. The whole perestroika "revolution" barely scratched the surface of inherent problems that haunted the Soviet state—the lack of democratic resolve. Yes, Gorbachev made reference to "letting in more light" under glasnost and yes, he called for an increase in democratic procedure, but in no way did he ever suspect that glasnost was completely incompatible with the system, past, present, and future.

The term, glasnost, was sparingly referred to in the *Perestroika* volume yet under glasnost the crux of the problems that had led Russia and the Soviet Union into an existence of decay became magnified. For centuries Russians have been exploited by their own government. When Lenin came to power it never occurred to him that the people were ready to be a part of the system of government, not just producers for the
state economy. Power under Lenin and the Party essentially excluded the people from sociopolitical issues, therefore sociopolitical progress.

Gorbachev's reform glasnost surpassed governing interests to include the people's opinions, the second reason why glasnost alienated Gorbachev. Glasnost defied Gorbachev's objectives because the former Soviet leader failed to understand the democratic need for social participation that transcended economics. Consequently, as glasnost began to encourage an airing of opinions, the public became consumers of information instead of producers of goods. Essentially, information became the enemy of the Party in a way for which Gorbachev was never prepared. As Shane comments, those who opposed perestroika and glasnost for fear of the collapse of the Party order were correct. Moreover, Gorbachev's contention in Memoirs that he sincerely wanted democratization for the nation while insisting that the Party line was most favorable suggests that he continued to hold Marxism-Leninism in higher esteem than the population of the Soviet Union. Such discrepancies in Gorbachev's perspective point to a lack of understanding in matters of civil participation. While he embraced reform, and encouraged glasnost, Gorbachev continued to stress the advantages of Leninism and of socialist democracy, neither one of which held any democratic agenda for the individual or society.

Glasnost could never fulfill Gorbachev's expectations as Soviet leader, but the democracy that glasnost effected propelled the information revolution through the entire nation within four years of being initiated. Consequently, glasnost toppled the Soviet myth, created by Lenin and perpetuated by decades of propaganda. More importantly, glasnost challenged the system that exacted terror against its citizens through ruthless enforcement, a trademark of both the Tsarist and Soviet regimes.
Openness of communication spirited away any hope of social unity under Party auspices, yet the open forum of information that glasnost created took on a power of its own. For the Russian people glasnost presented the truth about their one-Party system that brought a painful reality, but also the hope for continued democratic order. The August coup of 1991, staged against Gorbachev by Party hardliners was crushed by public opposition and a defiant political plurality never before present in the nation. The results of glasnost encouraged democratic principles of participation and competition. The actions of the conspirators spoke only of seizing political power in an illegitimate fashion, a typical Party characteristic that was not democratic. Shane comments on the events of that month as precariously tipped toward the old order of dictatorship, specifically the repression of information. The trend of glasnost defined “new thinking,” but not according to the old government, which the failed coup illustrates.

Primarily, glasnost, according to Gorbachev’s interpretation was not successful; however, glasnost, according to the interpretation of the public was a success. By extending the rights of expression through glasnost Gorbachev unintentionally allowed the public consciousness to come into being on a legitimate scale. Thereafter, the direction in which glasnost leads the former Soviet Union can only be attributed to the people. Plurality of opinion serves the interest of the people, and the necessity for freedom of information is a virtue in a democratic society. The mistake that Gorbachev made was in expecting that openness, glasnost, would lead logically to communist values and neglect the value of individuality. The real fault, as Shane
comments, "is laid at the feet not just of Stalin but of Lenin and the Revolution," for implementing a system of intolerance against the individuals that contributed to the nation. Glasnost not only challenged the system, at a public level, but produced a new social standard that finally embraced the democracy Gorbachev encouraged and finally eradicated repressive politics practiced by the Communist Party.

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3 Scott Shane, Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1994), 122.
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