CHAPTER IV

REFLECTIONS OF COMMAND ADMINISTRATION:
BACKGROUND FOR GORBACHEV REFORM
When Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, he initiated a major reform programme to overhaul every aspect of the Soviet system. Perestroika and Glasnost, democratisatsia and uskorenie entered into the Soviet political vocabulary just as NEP and Sputnik did earlier. Soviet politics again became interesting. Why did he initiate this programme? In what ways were the Soviet Institutions functioning? What were the Socio-economic conditions in the Soviet Union? These are the major questions which would be dealt within this chapter.

STAGNATION:

In the background of Khrushchev's reforms on various aspects and his antagonism with Soviet bureaucracy and apparatchiki, Leonid Brezhnev engineered the overthrow of his predecessor in 1964 and remained in power upto the day of his death, eighteen years later. During the whole period of his rule Soviet Union showed both positive as well as negative developments. Unlike Khrushchev's, his device was "no experimentation". He firmly believed in the "stability of cadres", which is to say that leading communists
should be replaced only in case of gross disloyalty or incompetence. The fact that a district party Secretary or the head of a factory showed only a mediocre capacity was not enough to cause his demotion.

During his tenure, the nomenklatura never had it so good. He also liked those around him to enjoy themselves. All in all it was a period of utmost unprecedented calm and, if one believed the official statistics, also an era of substantial, steady growth. The party and the KGB kept their secure position as pillars of the regime; the lot of the lower echelons of the party and state bureaucracy improved; new orders and awards were established such as the Order of October, of Friendship of People, of Workers' Glory and others. Brezhnev helped himself to as many of them as feasible; in the end he had seven Orders of Lenin and was a Hero of the Soviet Union four times over, not to count many other awards and distinction. He also received the Lenin Prize for literature for his autobiography, "a work of monumental insignificance which apparently was not even written by him", as claimed by Walter Laqueur.¹ He had more orders and medals than Khurushchev and Stalin combined and more military distinctions than Marshal Zhukov, who had

saved Leningrad and liberated Berlin during World War II.2

According to official histories the two Brezhnev decades witnessed enormous progress in virtually every respect. In Krasnoyarsk the biggest electricity plant was built and the biggest gas pipeline was constructed, as was BAM, the Baikal Amur railway line 3,200 Kms long. Thousands of new factories were completed during the decade; the GNP grew by 63 percent, productivity in industry by 56 percent. The Tiumen oil and natural gas field were developed, the output of commodities of mass consumption almost doubled and medical services were improved. A new constitution was adopted in 1977 and the media reported that not less than 140 million people had participated in the debates preceding it. Soviet historian believed that "it was an exciting period of heroic work of growing communist consciousness, of steady progress of Soviet political, economic and military power."3

When Gorbachev was to criticize in later years, the Brezhnev era was one of the Stagnation (zastoi), of poor leadership, the encouragement of servility, and the emasculation of critical discussion, his politburo colleague Egor Ligachev noted that this was not how he


remembered the 1970's. He had been district party Secretary of Tomsk at the time and he recalled the upbeat mood of the period.4

Not only Soviet writers and politicians praised the Brezhnev era but also scholars outside Soviet Union. One American writer on the Soviet Union called the Brezhnev era a "high level of stability and governmentability", all major groups of Soviet society had participated in the general improvement of living conditions and by and large the Soviet regime had been able to deliver the goods and to satisfy people's expectations for higher standards of living. The author of a French text book on the Soviet union noted that the intelligentsia, which elsewhere stood for contention, was integrated into the Soviet system, not alienated from it. As for the population at large, was concerned, essential needs such as security, education, health and leisure appeared to be satisfied.5 Some British academicians were greatly impressed by the lot of the Soviet worker under Brezhnev. There was greater unity between manual and non-manual labour, between managers and workers, between trade unions and the party than in the western world. The same academicians were impressed by the motivation of young people in the Soviet Union - the trade unions provided an integrating

5. Ibid., p.24.
mechanism giving, "young people a sense of belonging".6
Viewed in the light of the revelations of the late
1980s such comments make curious reading. One can
think of mitigating circumstances, specially with
regard to the early Brezhnev period in which a certain
optimism and belief in the omnipotent power of
technology were indeed widespread. Popular
expectations at the time were not high and the
essential needs were in fact satisfied.

The Gorbachev leadership brought about a debate on
the Soviet and Russian past and their relationship to
the system of the 1980s which was more far reaching
than any had seen since the 1920. In the first
instance, this led to a reassessment of the Brezhnev
era, hailed at the time as one of 'developed socialism'
but increasingly derided, under Gorbachev, as a time of
stagnation, corruption and moral decline. For
Gorbachev, addressing the 27th party congress in
February 1986, the Brezhnev era was one of the
postponed decisions and missed opportunities, when a
'curious psychology - how to improve things without
really changing anything' - had been dominant.7

Due to the negative phenomena of stagnation,
criticism of Brezhnev era became more uncompromising

6. David Lane and Felicity O'Dell, The Soviet
7. 27th Congress : Document and Resolutions (New
Delhi, 1986), p.3.
over the years that followed. Brezhnev, Gorbachev explained in his address on the 70th anniversary of revolution in 1987, had helped to bring about a change in the method of economic management soon after his accession. A programme of economic reform had been devised, and major schemes for the development of new parts of the country and new branches of industry had been elaborated. The country’s scientific potential has increased, its defence capacity had been strengthened and living standards had risen. Many developments in foreign policy had enhanced the Soviet Union’s international prestige. The promise of these achievements, however, had been dissipated by failure to carry the reforms through their logical conclusion, and still more so by a failure to make the changes that had become necessary in social policy and political leadership. The gap between words and deeds had steadily widened, and a pre-crisis situation had developed in the economy. In society at large, an unequal distribution of benefits had undermined public support for socialist principles and encouraged the growth of social alienation. Therefore, from the revelations during the age of glasnost, it became undisputable that between 1979 and 1982, the Soviet economy virtually stood still, that life expectancy

8. M.S. Gorbachev, Izbrannye rechi i stati 6 vols; (Moscow, 1987-89), vol.5, p.408.
declined and infant mortality rose, that alcohol sales tripled, that the agricultural policy was a disaster, that working conditions became worse and queues longer, that the quality of goods produced was often abysmal, the eleventh five year plan was not fulfilled and the standard of living of various strata of the population actually deteriorated. But the worst thing as Abel Aganbegyan put it, was not the lack of increase in production or the failure of living standards to improve; it was the loss of morale among people, the loss of interest in work, corruption and the abuse of power of office.9

The Soviet economic crisis was clearly visible in declining growth rates, increasing scarcity of exploitable resources and most important, the worsening imbalances between military production and that of the general economy, specially consumer goods. The Soviet economy and society seemed mobilised for war much more than even Nazi Germany at the height of World War II. In the consumer sector a very large portion of the capital stock not only under productive but was also simply at the limit of its physical capacity.10 And this was due to the declining rate of productivity.


from the early 1970's to late 1970's enterprises
productivity declined and workers real wages also fell.
This led to the stagnation and deterioration of their
living standards. According to Paul Gregory, this
economic problems was due to the lack of incentives as
well as apathy, laziness, poor moral standards on the
part of management and workers.\textsuperscript{11} By the late 1970s
the feeling was gaining ground that the system was not
working well at all, that there was something radically
wrong and that a further deterioration seemed likely.\textsuperscript{12}

According to Timothy Colton there was a feeling of
euphoria when Brezhnev's seventieth birthday was
celebrated in 1976, a feeling that great things had
been achieved and that yet greater achievements were
around the corner.\textsuperscript{13} Other analysts, however, felt
that there was an undertone of deep pessimism well
before in the writing of many Soviet Novelists
especially among the village writers (Derevenshiki),
such as Abramov, Shukshin and Rasputin, to mention only
the most famous among them.\textsuperscript{14} The crop failure of 1975

\begin{itemize}
\item[12.] John Bushnell and Stephen F. Cohen etc. eds., \textit{The Soviet Union since Stalin} (Bloomington, 1980), p.36.
\item[14.] Walter, n.1, p.27.
\end{itemize}
should have been a last warning sign; a close observer noted that Soviet (economic) middle class pessimism was, in fact, palpably felt well before the agricultural disaster, whereas the working class, by and large, had never quite shared the optimism of the middle class because that had never shared the privileges and rewards of those who had been included in Stalin's big deal.

Laqueur believes that there were other reasons for the growing pessimism which had little or nothing to do with the economic situation. Communism had envisaged not just a tremendous growth in industrial and agricultural output; it had promised the emergence of a new type of Soviet man. A man and woman had indeed emerged, but there was no enthusiasm about the result. There was the general feeling that not only had the quality of life deteriorated but also the relationship among human beings. Elementary human solidarity seemed no longer to care about one another. Culturally the seventies' were a desert; all that mattered was money and of course, connections with the right people.

Bureaucratic corruption and crimes:
Brezhnev and his colleagues were not entirely unaware of the growing malaise facing the country, such as the incompetence of the central planners, the shortage of

15. John, n.12, p.36.
16. Walter, n.1, p.28.
metal and fuel, the disasters in agriculture, the do-nothing attitude of officials in high places and in almost all offices, who never fulfilled plans, falsified statistics and merely paid lip service to instructions from above. In two speeches, in 1978 and 1979, he cajoled and threatened the bureaucracy and as usual, everyone agreed with him and promised to mend his ways. Again, as customary, nothing happened. At the same time nepotism and corruption spread. The district and regional Secretary of the party ruled the country like nineteenth century viceroys, as Laquear says, and so did the first Secretaries of the Central Asian and Caucasian republics, when Brezhnev or other leading members of the politburo came to visit them, there would be royal welcome with red carpets, impressive ceremonies and many presents. The local leaders would report tremendous achievements in all fields, industry, agriculture, social service—much of it pure fantasy most grossly exaggerated. In various places, mafia-like organization spread in collaboration with the local administration, and more or less, they officially collected protection money.17

The enormous Soviet bureaucracies including the party apparatus, shifted from the limited autonomy of the Stalin’s era towards a more corporative system.

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17. Ibid., p.28.
They increasingly neglected their goals of service to the state and society in favour of self-aggrandizement. Political and economic corruption—tempered somewhat by fear—increased systematically in the years before Gorbachev came to power. The size of the "second" or illegal "shadow" economy eventually accounted for 25 to 30 percent of the market and became essential to the functioning of the economy as a whole. Moreover, corruption was less and less camouflaged and by the end of the Brezhnev era many in the bureaucracy were almost openly accepting sizeable bribes. According to Bailar, it is likely that the party apparatus had previously been less involved in illegal enrichment than the administrative bureaucracy. But party bureaucracy was becoming as bad as other bureaucracy especially at its lower levels. 18

Usually party and state official were involved in the rackets, and sometimes the militia and even KGB. It appeared that even the highest officials in the Central Asian republics had known about crimes and to a certain extent had benefitted from it. The same seems to have been true with regard to Azerbaijan and Georgia, where recurrent purges became necessary. The life style of the nomenklatura in these parts was such that their official income was not even remotely sufficient to sustain it. But this state of affairs

was by no means limited to the non-Russian republics. It emerged that the party boss in Rostov was the chief protector of the local mafia; the situation in Moldavia was similar, and Grishin and Ramanov, the Moscow and Leningrad party Secretaries, seemed to have closed their eyes to criminal activities. Therefore, corruption became an integral part of the system.19

If the incidence of crime was no great surprise, the participation of members or former members of the army and the organs of state security was a novel feature. Thus according to official sources, Soviet militia colonel named Soltanov had hired killers to murder a woman, who had campaigned against corruption and had exposed bribe-taking by his wife. A Secretary who gave evidence against Soltanov's wife was found hanged.20

A wild west style armed robbery of an armoured car, transporting money, took place on the Mozhaisk Boulevard in Moscow. People were killed and injured during this attack, helicopters took part in chasing the bandits and it was all over, it appeared that among the members of the gang who had undertaken the raid there were former employees of the KGB and the MVD, as well as the State Attorney's office.21

Another unprecedented revelation concerned the hijacking of a plane at Ufa airport by members of an elite unit of the "internal forces" of the ministry of interior. Those engaged in the attempts wanted to leave the Soviet Union at any price; in the course of hijacking two men who resisted them were shot. Those involved in the plot had made no secret of their plan, yet no one had paid attention.22 A great many heads rolled as a result, including those of the Chief of the "internal force", the Chief of Staff and those of the Directorate. But there was still no satisfied answer to the question, how could it have happened?

Crimes of violence by Afghanistan Veterans became a frequent occurrence. Thus Andrei Bobanov, a former parachutist, an exemplary member of the Komsomol became head of an armed gang who for the better past of a year, engaged in robberies and murders.23

Only few statistics of corruption and crimes was published; some figures had been revealed but they were incomplete.24 The minister of internal affairs had made it known that while there was too much of it, these was considerably less than in America. The colonel in charge of public relations at the Moscow

police headquarters announced in September 1987 that "on the whole", the crime rate had gone down by seven percent, especially murders, rapes and muggings, but that the number of burglaries and car thefts had increased.

One of Russia's leading crime reporters sarcastically observed that while Soviet media published the most detailed figures about theft not only in America but also in Paraguay, Uruguay and Madagascar, there were none at all about crimes committed in the Soviet Union. From many reports it appears that such thefts had become a major plague and that professionals had been involved in hundreds of such crimes.

Even the elite of higher bureaucracies including Brezhnev's immediate circle were fully involved in corruption and malpractices which were exposed during the age of glasnost.

The corruption and crimes of the bureaucracies only separated them further from the people they were supposedly in place to serve. This situation only led to depolitization of the people and due to which cynicism, hopelessness and passivity developed among the people as a shield against the authorities. It thus became increasingly difficult to mobilise the population amongst any sphere of life.

In this regard, Bailer argues that this situation was developing due to very weak political control over bureaucracy. This was so because the quality of the Soviet leadership was deteriorating not only at the top, but also in the middle. This was true not only in terms of intelligence and organizational talent, let alone commitment but also in a physical sense. The members of the politburo of the central committee of CPSU were aged, dogmatic and lacked spark as Bailer declared. The respect and fear they once generated were rapidly declining. Yet the party and government elite loved Brezhnev. Khrushchev might have given them security from threats to their lives but Brezhnev gave them security in office, the good life, the blessing of domestic tranquillity and tolerance — unless of course, they crossed him personally.26

Regarding the practices like corruption, nepotism and arbitrary rule by the bureaucracy in Soviet Union was not a new phenomena as Walter Laqueur believes. These practices were very much there in Russia under the Tsars and continued subsequently also. The only unusual thing in this regard during the stagnation period is that the new records were established in the 1970's, but even these might have been accepted had there been the feeling that the leadership was in

strong hand. Bailer also agrees with this. The average age of politburo members in 1980 was seventy and there was not much evidence of either wisdom or vigor. Their public appearance became less frequent, their speeches shorter and more repetitive. "It was embarrassing to watch tottering old men being helped to their seats on state occasions".27

"Developed Socialism", the official definition of the late Brezhnev era, became a synonym for senility on the top and apathy among the masses. For years, the feeling was spreading that something ought to be done to invigorate the leadership. But the impatient younger people were in no position to do so. The system had developed in such a way that nothing could be done until nature took its course – which happened to be the case on November 10, 1982, when Brezhnev died.

A former KGB head Yuri Andropov succeeded Brezhnev. He had acquired, for reasons not entirely clear, the reputation of an intellectual. He was a reasonably well educated man, certainly in comparison with most of his colleagues in the politburo. The characteristics which made his rise to high office possible were those of a seasoned apparatchiki and competent administrator rather than an original thinker and creative innovator.28

27. Walter, n.1, p.29.

Like the other leaders of the party Andropov lived sheltered from the harsh realities of Soviet life; neither he nor his wife had to queue in front of shops, nor was he dependent on his services provided by the Soviet health service for ordinary mortals. But owing to his job, he was in a unique position to know the real state of the Soviet Union, over the years the KGB must have supplied him with a steady stream of information about the Soviet economic, social conditions and the mood of the people, the growing corruption apathy and cynicism on the home front.29

Yet during the fourteen months he was to stay in power, hardly any change for the better could be registered in domestic affairs, in foreign affairs, on which he should have been especially well informed, there was actually a deterioration in the situation. Soviet policy showed no initiative except some truculent gestures which led to self isolation. It is not difficult to think of mitigating circumstances. Andropov was approaching old age when he was elected and in any case, fourteenth month hardly gave sufficient time to effect far reaching reforms.

In the beginning of this period, he was preoccupied with consolidating his position by ousting some of the old Brezhnevites, and bringing in his own people. Once his base of power had been strengthened

his health deteriorated to such an extent that he could no longer take an active part in the daily conduct of the affairs of state.  

Andropov appeared as a strict disciplinarian: there were systematic police raids in Moscow and other cities to harass black and grey marketers and to find out whether people were not present during working hours. This practice was so unpopular that it had to be discontinued after a while. Measures against corruption were tightened and also against dissidents. He called for the intensification of ideological warfare and on a few occasions he was shown on television mixing with workers in a Moscow factory and other ordinary people. But he lacked the common touch; there was nothing natural, spontaneous and easy in these appearances, as Laqueur believes; and thus they did not contribute either to his stature or the feeling that new era had downed in Soviet union. It was a period of quarters measures of decisions adopted but not carried out and thus not essentially different from the late Brezhnev era.

Andropov was perhaps the first Soviet leader to admit that he had no ready answers to all problems this referred above all to the economy. His advisors told

him, that agriculture was in a shocking state, the supply of goods of mass consumption was insufficient, that new incentives were needed and that egalitarian wages (Uravnilovka) had gone too far. And so, on a few occasions and despite the fact that he had no special interest or experience in economics, he made suggestions which, while not novel in any way, were sensible and were later on picked up and continued by Gorbachev — specially the need for a new system of management and central planning.

He even hinted on an occasion that it might be desirable to take the public more into the confidence of the party leadership "to speak with people seriously, frankly and not avoiding difficult subjects." In his major speech addressing the Central Committee in June 1983, the word was first mentioned which was later to be invoked so often: glasnost. He said that there was the possibility of further democratizing the process of decisions concerning great questions of state and public life. But he made immediately clear that he referred above all to accountability on the part of unions, women and youth organization. He said that it would surely help to bring the activity of party and state closer to the needs and interests of the people, which was not the

same as consulting the population before certain important decisions were taken.\textsuperscript{33}

After Andropov's death, Chernenko succeeded as General Secretary. He was singularly a unfortunate choice. Walter Laqueur portraits his personality and traits in an interesting way. "He was quite unknown to the Soviet public. After his first appearance in public with the cruel TV cameras and microphones focusing on him, the embarrassment became acute, there was another leader who had no gravitas, exuded no charisma, stumbled through his speeches, showed no sign of dynamism, of creativity, who seemed only half alive, a figure head and an ill chosen one at that's rather than a forceful leader".\textsuperscript{34}

The Chernenko's misfortune was that he came to power when he was long past his prime, always breathless, beset by various diseases, on the other hand, there was growing disenchantment and impatience among the Soviet people who had watched within the last few years two leaders go through a process of sad physical and intellectual decline, who craved a leader who was strong and intelligent enough to take the growing problems facing their country. Chernenko was a sad disappointment to the people at large and became the butt of many jokes as Laqueur says. The

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.29.
\textsuperscript{34} Walter, n.1, p.32.
embarrassment of the people who were actually running the country, the apparatus of the Central Committee, was, if possible, even more acute.

Chernenko personified the maintenance of the status quo and for this reason he had the support of the old Brezhnevites afraid of loosing their jobs. Furthermore, many bureaucrats feared the inevitable shake up which would follow the appointment of a new and more vigorous leader; the underworld was relieved because of the harassment by the security organs while Andropov had been in power.

GORBACHEV'S ATTACK ON COMMAND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND ITS BUREAUCRATISM

In the beginning of 1985, the symptoms and causes of stagnation forced the Soviet society to renovate itself and overhaul the entire system. The new Gorbachev leadership initiated the movement and felt confident to undertake this mammoth task.

Gorbachev realised that the various problems facing the Soviet society lay in the demerits of the command administrative system and its bureaucratism. Therefore command administrative system came under the severe attack in Gorbachev's various speeches and writings.

Almost at the beginning of his career as the General Secretary of the CPSU, he was absolutely scathing in his denunciation of the ministries in his
speech on 11th June, 1985; "the ministries in their present form have no interest in the economic experiment".35

In his speech in the 27th congress of the Communist Party, he stressed the need for the overcoming of inertness, stagnation and conservatism and everything that was holding back social progress.36 He condemned the command administrative system and its failure to not assessing the "changed economic situation ... and active use of the achievements of scientific and technological progress in the national economy".37 He also strongly criticised the corruption and bribe taking by bureaucracies: "A reliable barrier is needed against all attempts to extract unearned income from the social property. There are still 'snatchers', persons who do not consider it a crime to steal from their plant everything that comes their way and there are also sundry, bribe-takers, and grabbers who do not stop at using their position for selfish purposes. The full force of law and of public condemnation should be applied to all of them".38

Gorbachev noted how the various ministries and its bureaucracies came in the way of modernization of

35. Quoted in Jerry F. Hough, "Gorbachev's strategy", Foreign Affairs (Newyork), Fall, 1985, p.42.
36. 27th Congress n. 7, p.27.
37. Ibid, p.29.
Soviet economy. In this regard he gave one example that the lubricant for increasing the service life of machinery parts had not been used for more than thirty years "because of the blinkers worn by some high ranking executives of the USSR ministry of petrochemical industry.\textsuperscript{39} Due to this act many millions of rubles could not be saved. He added that sometimes departmentalism made them reject inventions made by others and at other times it was "typical practices of red tapism which results in ordeals for scientists".\textsuperscript{40} He also maintained that bureaucrats exercised petty tutelage over enterprises and thereby fostered servility among the direct producers.

In a speech made at Vladivostak on 28th July, 1986 he blamed the Moscow based ministries and departments for neglecting the construction of housing and the provision of social and cultural amenities in the region of the Far-East.\textsuperscript{41}

In a speech delivered on 27th January, 1987, Gorbachev took senior officials to task. He said that they "abused their authority, suppressed criticism, sought gain and became accomplished in, if not

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p.37.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.37.
\textsuperscript{41} Daily Review (Moscow), July 29, 1986, p.15.
organisers of criminal activities. He also referred to the ugly manifestation of such practices in Uzbekistan, Moldavia, Turkmenia...., and also Moscow and some other cities, regions, territories, and in the system of the ministry of foreign trade and the ministry of internal affairs.

In the 27th party congress he noted the causes of stagnation. He said "the main thing was that we have failed to produce a timely political assessment of the changed economic situation, that we failed to apprehend the acute and urgent need for converting the economy to intensive methods of development and for the active use of the achievements of scientific and technological progress in the national economy. There were many appeals and a lot of talk on this score but practically no headway was made".

In the June plenary meetings of the CPSU Central Committee of 1987, he offered a forum to party leaders to discuss the various tasks, relating to a radical restructuring of economic management: Gorbachev presented a report at this meeting in which he stated


43. Ibid, p.10.

44. 27th Congress, n.7, p.29
that as the Soviet Union entered the 1980's, it met with economic stagnation and that it was the system of management based on rigid centralism over regimentation of work, directive assignment and budget appropriation which was responsible for the stagnant Soviet economy.\footnote{45} He then explained how the present system of management has taken root. According to him the foundation for the present system of management were laid down way back in the 1930's. In that difficult period, the country which was, far from being the most economically developed and which was up against the whole capitalist world, needed to rapidly overcome its technical economic lag and bring about quick structural changes in the national economy.\footnote{46} Therefore centralized command administration was the main constraint to the development of heavy industry. Gorbachev also added that flawed approaches and subjective decisions on the part of the leadership must also be held responsible for the consolidation of centralized management,\footnote{47} obviously he was blaming J.V. Stalin for the emergence, and Brezhnev for the growth


\footnote{46. Ibid, p.36-39.}

\footnote{47. Ibid, p.36-39.}
of centralized command administrative system in which bureaucracy was all-powerful. He was quite outspoken on this subject, when he addressed the party meeting on the occasion of 70th anniversary of the October revolution. He stated that "Stalin believed in the universal effectiveness of rigid centralization and in the methods of command as the shortest and best way of resolving any and all problems. As a result a party and government leadership system of administrative command emerged in the country, and red tapism gained strength even though Lenin had warned about its danger in his days, and corresponding structure of administration and planning began to take shape.\textsuperscript{48} At the same time he also attacked Brezhnev for "an addiction to habitual formulae and schemes which did not reflect the new realities", and also for his want of concern over the aberrations which had arisen in the social, spiritual and moral spheres and the resultant "social alienation and immorality in various terms".\textsuperscript{49}

In his book \textit{Perestroika}, he deals with the same thing and criticized the then management system as "It was severely centralized, every assignment, regulated down to the last detail. It strictly posed tasks and


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, p.31.
allotted budget sums. In this regard, he further continues "we can't wholly ascribe such management to objective conditions, however there were mistaken premises and subjective decisions.

Be that as it may, the management system which took shape in the thirties and forties began gradually to contradict the demands and conditions of economic progress. Its positive potential was exhausted. It became more and more of a hindrance and gave rise to the braking mechanism which did us so much harm later".

He criticized the braking mechanism on the ground that it led to bureaucracy-ridden structures and to expansion at every level of bureaucracy. And this bureaucracy acquired too great an influence in all state administration and even public affairs.

As Gorbachev mentioned the result of this situation led to the scarcity of material resources and due to this it became harder to get it at more expensive price. On the other hand he noted the extensive methods of fixed capital expansion which resulted in an artificial shortage of man power. In an attempt to rectify the situation somehow, large,

51. Ibid, p.46.
unjustified, i.e. in fact unearned, bonuses begun to be paid and all kinds of undeserved incentives introduced under the pressure of this shortage, and that led, at a later stage, to the practice of padding reports merely for gain as Gorbachev believes. Practical attitudes were on the rise, the prestige of conscientious and high quality labour began to diminish and a "wage levelling" mentality was becoming widespread. He further says the imbalances between the measure of work and the measure of consumption which had became something like the linchpin of the braking mechanism, not only obstructed the growth of labour productivity, but led to the distortion of the principle of social justice.53 He goes on to say that it was obvious to everyone that the growth rates were sharply dropping and that the entire mechanism of quality control was not working properly; there was a lack of receptivity to the advances in Sciences and Technology; the improvements in living standards was slowing down and there were difficulties in the supply of food stuffs, housing, consumer goods and service".54

Therefore due to negative impact of command administrative system "decay began in public moral; the great feeling of solidarity with each other was weakening; alcoholism, drug addiction and crime were

growing; and the penetration of the stereotypes of mass culture", as Gorbachev noted, "which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness, increased.55

Gorbachev severely criticized the crime and corruption by bureaucracy. In perestroika he noted that "at some administrative level there emerged a disrespect for the law and encouragement of eyewash and bribery, servility and glorification. Working people were justly indignant at the behaviour of people who, enjoying trust and responsibility, abused power, suppressed criticism, made fortunes and in some cases even became accomplices in - if not organizer of criminal acts".56

In his address to 19th All Union Party Conference on June 28, 1988, he observed that "the political system established by the October Revolution had subsequently undergone 'serious deformation', leading to political repression and the development of 'command administrative' rather than democratic structure of management. The role of bureaucratic apparatus had increased out of all proportion - there were more than 100 central ministry, for instance, and 800 more in the republics and the bloated administrative apparatus had begun to 'dictate its will' in political and economic

55. Ibid, p.22.
56. Ibid, p.23.
matters. Many millions of working people, elected to state and non-state bodies had been removed from real participation in state and public affairs".57

In the 11th Convention of Supreme Soviet's 12th session on Nov. 29, 1988, he made a categorical reference to the habit of Moscow officials to decide on matters, which were connected with the republics which, quite often, they had never even visited.58

In the light of Gorbachev's attack on command administrative system and its bureaucracy certain observation can be made. Though his attack on command system was mainly concentrated at middle or intermediate level of bureaucracy, however, he did not leave higher level or even top political leadership and all types and forms of bureaucratic structures. The criticism against bureaucracy was original and it came from top leadership firstly and then people as a whole, secondly, therefore it was unique in character. Its uniqueness was due to the fact that the attack came from within the Soviet Union. However, many western Sovietologists attacked the bureaucracy i.e. Fainsod (1953), Rigby (1964), Kassof (1964), Tony Cliff (1964), ---


Meyer (1965), Conquest (1967), Bettelheim (1976) etc., but all of them were from outside the Soviet Union. Before the age of glasnost and perestroika nobody were allowed to criticize it within the Soviet Union. This reflects its character of all pervasiveness and its strong influence on Soviet society, so by blaming the bureaucracy of being responsible for many shortcomings in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev lends credence to what a number of sociologists have stated in this regard.

According to Gorbachev, it was mainly the middle level bureaucracy which put hurdles in the way of progress. In this regard Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a well known Soviet sociologist also criticized this level of bureaucracy in her Novosibirsk report in April 1983.59

Her report pointed out that a wide gap had arisen in the Soviet Union between the near-stagnant production relations on the one hand and the dynamic production forces on the other. Despite the development of seven decades, the system of management was very much the same; it still adhered to the practices of 1930's. The report also said that the CPSU leadership had realized even in the 1970's that the centrally administered economic management evolved in the Stalinist era was no longer relevant. The

leadership could not, however, introduce the necessary change in management, largely because of opposition from the middle level bureaucrats, whereas the highest and the lowest links in the state management of the Soviet economy had become weak, "the functions of the intermediate link of management - the ministries and departments (with their territorial organs) - have suffered from hypertrophy". Those who belonged to the middle level feared that any serious reorganization of economic management might throw them out of their privileged position. Some others thought that a reorganization might require them to improve their skills and knowledge; yet others were afraid of new obligation and botherations as a result of reform in administrative framework. The middle level bureaucracy was, therefore, opposed to any change in the system and management.

According to Jerry F. Hough too, the Brezhnev era witnessed the emergence of what might be called "feudalistic" socialism in the Soviet Union with the ministries really acting like independent bureaucracies under a weak king. Such ministries always resisted change. As a result production relations lagged behind


productive forces. It also explains why Soviet leadership primarily criticized the intermediate level of Soviet bureaucracy and was eager to rid itself of the domination of the middle level bureaucracy.

Hence, the need to hold bureaucratic officials accountable to society, was the theme that ran throughout the speeches of Gorbachev and the writings of some of the Soviet scholars. In fact Soviet struggle against bureaucracy was the struggle for democracy. Now the question arises - what was so new about Gorbachev's struggle against bureaucracy. Due to the command system of management, bureaucratism has been a constant problem throughout Soviet history. Many Soviet leaders earlier attacked it and tried to mitigate its disfunctions. But their stances were within the system itself and made little impact on the system's deep-rooted disorders.

Moreover, they realized that the bureaucracy was the very basis of Soviet System and to attack it would be to destroy the system itself. So they, maintained the status quo.

What was refreshing about Gorbachev then was not so much his anti-bureaucratic stances, but rather his realization of the inherent limits of bureaucratic hierarchy as a mode of societal organization, which until Gorbachev period evaded successive Soviet leadership. Gorbachev realized that the problem of bureaucracy in Soviet Union was at its root and was a
political and economic problem, not an administrative or a technical one. Thus, he endeavored to remove the root cause of the problem rather than removing its outward manifestation, thus hitting out at the root itself.