CHAPTER - V

GORBACHEV'S REFORMS : FROM COMMAND ADMINISTRATION TO DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALIZATION
Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms fundamentally changed every aspect of the command administrative system which had evolved in the Soviet Union over decades. This command administrative system, in Lukyanov's words, "provided ideal condition for the development of the personality cult and due to its relapses stagnation phenomena were growing in the economy, in the social fabric and in culture"\(^1\) since the time of its foundation. This system, with its distinctive concentration of administrative power in the hands of the executive branch and reliance on administrative decrees, proved incapable of rebuffing the abuse of power, or careerism and opportunism as Lukyanov argued. Gorbachev also realized the seriousness of the negative phenomena of command administrative system when he became the General Secretary of the CPSU and experienced the operational method of the system and its impact on Soviet society. The system in Gorbachev's words "which took shape in the thirties and forties began gradually to contradict the demands and

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conditions of economic progress. Its positive potential was exhausted. It became more and more of an hindrance, and gave rise to a braking mechanism\textsuperscript{2} which did much harm to soviet society. He further said that the system’s "social and ideological consequences led to bureaucracy ridden public structure and to expansion at every level of bureaucracy. This bureaucracy acquired great influence in spheres of state, administration and even on public affairs".\textsuperscript{3} The same concern was shown in the 19th party conference's speech where "Gorbachev said that excessive governmentalization (control) of public life took shape under this political system. State regulation was extended to an broad sphere of public activities. The tendency of encompassing every aspect of life with detailed centralized planning and control literally straitjacketed society and became a serious brake on the initiative of people of civic organization".\textsuperscript{4} Due to these factors, according to Lukyanov, the masses social activities declined. Civic apathy grew, and people were alienated from the running of government.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{2} Mikhail Gorbachev, \textit{Perestroika: New thinking for our country and the world} (London, 1987), p.46.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 47-48.


\textsuperscript{5} Anatoly, n.1, p.16.
Therefore, it was necessary to renovate the system which effectively involves millions of people in running the country, ensuring the development of self-government and strengthening rule of law.

**POLITICAL REFORM:**

When Gorbachev came to power he initiated massive policy measures to reform the entire sphere of command administrative system and its negative phenomena on Soviet society as a whole. But his measures of reforming the system did not gain momentum and at the same time the measures were itself limited in the sense that they were related with limited issues like reform of economic and its management system mainly, political and other reforms were of secondary importance. First two years of Gorbachev's statements, policy measures and writings reflect the same thing. But "from Jan. 1987 political reform became one of the central priorities of the new leadership".6

The plennum of the central committee which took place in the same month, marked the beginning of a second, more broadly reformist stage in the development of the Gorbachev administration. In that plennum he declared that "economic reform is conceivable only in association with far-reaching democratization of the

political system designed to ensure that party control from above is combined with popular control from below". In this meeting he blatantly criticized the party leaders of violation of the principle of collective leadership; of placing themselves beyond criticism and accomplices in criminal activities. He argued the need for a profound democratization of soviet society, designed to ensure that ordinary people once again felt themselves to be master of their own destinies. The further democratization of soviet society, accordingly became the party's most urgent task.

The 19th party conference of June 1988 was a remarkable event in the last fifty years history of soviet union. In this conference, Gorbachev elaborated his conception of democratization fully. He called for "radical reform" of the political system, not just democratization. He identified the ossified system of government with its command and pressure mechanism as the main obstacle to perestroika.


8. Ibid., pp.34-35.

The conference adopted various resolutions for the purpose of democratizing the political system. In the resolutions it was stated that new electoral law would be enacted in which there would be competition between candidates; full time parliament; a constitutional review commission would be also established. 10 It was also adopted in the resolution that the process of reform would later extend to local government, the press, religion and trade union. On the basis of the conference decision, these proposals were further carried out in the subsequent Central Committee meetings. A series of constitutional reforms was the result of the conference and Central Committee meetings' decision which were completed from November 1988 onwards.

**Party Reforms:**

Within the framework of political reform party reform was the first and most fundamental task of the new regime. Since October revolution only one party had been allowed to rule the Soviet Union and CPSU had monopoly in this regard. Within the CPSU, since stalin's time, no differences of opinion had been allowed and with the entry of large number of administrators and professionals, it became highly bureaucratized. The principle of democratic centralism was always misused in which centralism was all

10. Ibid.
powerful while democracy was nowhere. Through the nomenklatura system and interlocking pattern of administration, each and every institution of soviet society was strictly controlled under the supervision of party bureaucracy. Due to the lack of democracy within the party, most of the policies and programmes were taken in haste and without rational evaluation which in turn caused colossal damage on every walk of Soviet life.

The role of the CPSU in administration, industry and state organs, therefore, had long been acknowledged to be ambiguous and a source of problems despite the fact that article 6 of 1977 Constitution had recognised it as a leading and guiding force of soviet society and the nucleus of its political system. However, the CPSU was not officially regarded as a state institution. Theoretically it was a "social organization and one that actively involved in forming and mobilizing other such organizations".

The government and bureaucracy were organizationally separate from the party and from one another, as were the Supreme Soviet and other lower soviets. The party rules (art. 42) provided that party


organizations must not act in place of soviets, trades unions, co-operative and other organisations. They must not allow either the merging of the functions of the party and other bodies or undue parallelism in work". 13 This formal and theoretical separation between state and social organisations, especially the CPSU, had not in practice reflected political reality over the years the party had become more and more involved in administration rather than in general guidance.

Explanation preferred by academics in the USSR included the absence of sufficiently clear criteria for delimiting the functions of party organs and state agencies; and empire building by party personnel who "do not fully trust those who under the law were obliged to direct a particular work sector and be responsible for the tasks entrusted". 14

The party rule expressively required party organisation and their committees to "implement party policy" and to direct local soviets and other organisation through the party group therein.

Hence the theoretical separation of the party from the state was not real in practice. On this view


it was impossible to separate the function of the party from that of administration and the constitutional theory that the two were and should have been separate was a myth. But Gorbachev wanted to turn this myth into reality when he said in the 27th Congress "that by improving the forms and method of leadership the party is emphatically against confusing the function of Party Committees with those of governmental and public bodies".¹⁵

Various measures were suggested in the 19th party conference, to reform the party. A measure for the elimination of all elements of bureaucracy from activities of the Communist Party was one of the themes suggested in the conference.

The execution of a proper cadre policy was another step taken in the direction of clipping the wings of the bureaucracy. The 19th party conference demanded that all party organisations should make full use of the cadre policy in the struggle against bureaucracy. The selection and placement of cadre must be conducted openly and on a competitive basis. Party organisations must cease to support those communists who while occupying important posts show a formalistic attitude towards their jobs and treat the needs of citizen with callous indifference. Such officials should be

dismissed without delay and attempt to shift them to other positions of authority must not be allowed. Moreover the conference viewed the 'formalistic approach' to the selection and placement of key personnel, an approach based on sticking to a rigid list of approved cadres as losing its effectiveness. The principal method the party committee should adopt in these matters must include the organisation of personnel training, retaining and education, as well as applying democratic procedures in recommending candidates to high level posts. Personal matter should be finalized by election. Furthermore, membership of the CPSU, it was agreed, should in future be determined by 'political qualities' of the applicant rather than by centrally determined quotas.

These pronouncements of 19th party conference remained the cherished ideal of the CPSU. In the selection of high level party posts and party cadres, the liking of concerned secretaries or local party bosses and local consideration were the main criteria


18. Ibid.
and not the democratic procedure or for that matter 'political quality of applicant'.

Democratization of the electoral process within the party was yet another step taken to combat the party bureaucracy. The 19th party conference proposed that the election of members and secretaries of all party committees - up to and including the CPSU Central Committee - should feature free discussion by the candidates, voting by secret ballot, and an opportunity to nominate more candidates than the number of seats to be filled. The 28th congress favored direct and as a rule competitive and secret elections for secretaries of party committees and delegation to party forums with free nomination of candidates. Another measure adopted to reform the party was the democratization of inner party relations. The 19th conference supported the proposal of bringing about the broadest possible openness in the work of all party organisations and their governing bodies. Steps to expand democracy within the party should be encouraged and taken so that all the elements of the CPSU can act in a spirit of comradeship, with free discussions of all topical questions of policy and


20. Resolutions of the 19th All-Union party Conference, no.109, p.45.
practice criticisms and self criticism, collectivism, conscious discipline and personal responsibility.21

The 28th congress also resolutely rejected the way the 'democratic centralism' took shape in the conditions of the command administrative system and rigid centralization and upheld democratic principles such as 'electiveness and their replaceability, openness and accountability, the subordination of minority to majority and the right of the minority to defend its views even in the mass media'. It further stressed that the democratization of party presupposed the participation of all its members and structures in evolving party policy and by ensuring the right of individual communists and groups to reflect their views in platforms, the collective and open work of all party bodies, and freedom of criticism.22

The question of changes in the party apparatus acquired considerable importance in the 19th conference. The conference maintained that the structures of the apparatus serving party committees would be fully geared to the task of enhancing political leadership and attaining the objectives of the new stage of perestroika. The party apparatus would be reorganized, reduced in size and made to operate more efficiently without delay. The principle

21. Ibid.

of party apparatus strict 'subordination and accountability to elective party bodies' would be observed unflaggingly.23

Many administrative departments in the party apparatus would be completely abolished or merged. Their personnel and functions of policy supervision over economic branches and cadre selection would be transferred to government. In turn party functionaries reassigned to the government would fall under the legislative oversight exercised by the full time, paid deputies in permanent legislative committees of the soviet of all jurisdictions.24

The 28th congress also emphasized that central district control bodies should be elected independently and should be independent of party committees; they should be accountable only to the congress and conferences which elected them.25

In addition, party apparatus were also encouraged to engage in a constructive dialogue with informal social and political associations and to seek their cooperation in the solution of a variety of

23. Resolutions of the 19th All-Union, n.109, p.46.
24. "Corresponding Round Table: Democratization of the Party - Democratization of the society", Kommunist no.9, June 1988, pp.31-44.
Soviet social and economic problems. The policy statement of the 28th congress also urged the party to strive for cooperation with movements and organisations of the socialist orientation and for dialogue and equal partnership with all progressive ideological and political tendencies.

These reforms gradually began to be implemented. Competitive elections to party office had indeed begun to take place as early as 1987, when a local party secretary in the Kamerovo region was chosen by secret ballot from two competing candidates. Further changes followed and party power suffered its first earthquake in September 1988 with the abolition of the departments of the Secretariat of the central committee, which traditionally carried out, anonymously and bureaucratically, the effective governing function. Central committee approved six new commissions dealing respectively with party affairs, ideology, social and economic policy, agriculture, internal affairs and law.

26. For discussion of the authorities' relations with the informal groups in Leningrad in 1989, see Yelena Zdravomyslova, "The informal Demand", Leningradskaya Panorama, no.8 August 1989, pp.16-19.
27. Documents and Material, n.22, p.94.
The Central Committee apparatus was simplified and reduced in size. From 1988 onwards there were nine departments rather than twenty, and their total staff was reduced by about 30 percent and there were similar changes at lower level.30

Radical elements inside and outside party were still demanding more reform in the party. Hence in Feb. 1990 a far reaching change was accepted by the central committee when it agreed to abandon the guaranteed leading role of CPSU. In this regard soviet constitution was amended in March 1990 and article 6 was repealed. Gorbachev was still concerned that the CPSU should play a 'consolidating' role in the soviet political life, indeed that it should remain a ruling party and the political leader of the society as a whole. Any position of this kind, however should be won by a competitive struggle for popular support not guaranteed in advance by the constitution.31 The party required further reform, and there was broad agreement that this should include a reconsideration of the

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doctrine of democratic centralism so that lower party organisations and individual members enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy. The proposals that were agreed at the Feb. 1990 plenum included the idea of 'platforms' within the party on a group or regional basis and a new and more decentralized structure of the party's leading bodies, with a committee of party leaders from the republics taking over most if not all of the functions of the politburo.32 The thrust of these changes was nonetheless clear: developing democratic practices within the party and marginalising Gorbachev's opponents within the full time apparatus as White argued.33

Due to democratization and reform in party the party committee officials could no longer replace the president of the local soviets and the administrators of the enterprises, since they no longer had privileged access to the use and distribution of resources and consequently lacked the basis for commanding. Thus Gorbachev's choice of party's interference in administration had materialized its most essential element: like exclusion of the local party apparatus from economic power, from the use of property and resources.34 At the higher level also,

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in republic and centre, party had to compete with socio-political groups and newly formed various parties for the control of government and its policies. From 1988 onward many new things had occurred Moscow and Leningrad local soviets were no longer in the hands of the old cadres; many new opinion groups and informal organisations had been formed.35

Electoral Reform:

One important aspect of political reform was electoral reform which was taken by soviet leadership with the aim of establishing a mechanism for systematic & smooth change in political leadership as well as overcoming the serious gap between government machinery and alienated public.

During the 27th party congress, Gorbachev stressed the need for 'necessary corrections' in electoral procedures.36 In the Jan. 1987 plenum of central committee the matter was discussed extensively and it was agreed that a lack of choice of candidate was the most remarked shortcoming in the existing electoral process; that the existing system had long ago ceased to convince soviet electorate that they wielded effective influence over the institutions that governed in their name. Plenum decided that there should be

35. Ibid, p.437.
36. 27th CPSU Congress, no.15, p.73.
several candidates and that larger constituencies should be formed.37 In this plenum Gorbachev assured that the elections to the local Soviets which were to be held later in the year would be held in an atmosphere of broader democracy with the active participation of the people. On 29 March 1987, a decree was issued which indicated that an experiment would be conducted in the local elections that were due to take place later that year. The most important feature of this experiment was that a number of larger multi-member constituencies were to be formed in which 'as a rule' more candidates would be nominated than seats available.38

On the basis of March decree, an experimental election was held on 21 June 1987. There were greater difficulties than usual in securing nomination, and in the election there were some notable casualties including party and state officials, factory directors and collective farm chairmen. For many officials the whole experience was evidently an unwelcome and even distressing one. At the popular level, however the response was much more favourable:39 there was a real


feeling that the people were choosing; according to press reports and surveys, only 55 percent took a positive view of the new arrangements; but seventy seven percent supported these afterwards.40

In the 19th Party Conference Gorbachev said that competitiveness had made the elections 'more lively, the voters more interested and the deputies more conscious at their responsibility'. He declared that the principle of electoral reform would be extended more widely.41 A supreme Soviet by election in January 1988 had already taken place on the basis at these new principles. So too did republican by elections in October 1988.42

At its extraordinary session at 29 November to 1 December 1988, the Supreme Soviet adopted a series of amendments to the Soviet constitution and a new law on Election that radically reconstructed the USSR's government institutions and opened the door for the Country's first competitive nationwide elections. The Soviet union thus embarked on the road to democracy.


42. Izvestia, October 26, 1988.
The new law on elections continues the long standing practice whereby the preparation and conduct of elections were duties entrusted to electoral commissions. These electoral commissions were formed in each territorial or national-territorial district by their respective Soviets on the basis of nominations that had been submitted by labour collectives, public organisations or meetings of voters in their place of residence. They were also formed in each of the public organisations at national level that had the right to name deputies to the Congress. Their work was supervised by a Central Electoral Commission (CEC), composed of 35 members who had been nominated by either the executive bodies of public organizations at the national level or by the higher organs of state power of the union republics and approved by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.\(^{43}\) The CEC had the right to establish the boundaries at the single member territorial and national territorial electoral districts, disburse funds to the electoral commissions in order to finance the cost of the candidates' campaigns and the election itself, and carry out other tasks related to the election, registration and recall of deputies.\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) Pravda, 4 December, 1988.

\(^{44}\) Ibid.
The New Law debarred deputies of holding governmental posts at the time they exercised their representative duties, and they were normally required to live or work in the area for which they had been nominated (Arts 11 and 37). Candidates, moreover, were required to present 'programmes' to the electorate (Art 45) and had the right to appoint up to ten campaign staff to assist them (Art 46). Electors for their part were required to pass through a book or room before casting their vote to make a positive indication of their preference unless (exceptionally) only a single candidate was standing (Art 53). The new law was to apply to all future elections, beginning with the national elections in March 1989; these, the central committee promised at its meeting in November 1988, would be 'unlike all those that had preceded them'.

On the basis of New Electoral Law, the 12th Extraordinary session of Supreme Soviet initiated the first stage of the electoral process by naming a 35 member Central Electoral Commission (CEC). At its first meeting on 6th December 1988, the CEC approved the boundaries of the 1500 districts in which public elections were to be held and submitted estimates to the government for the campaign and administrative

45. Ibid., 29 November 1988.

221
costs of the elections.46

After the new electoral law, the process of first national election began in the end of 1988. Of the 7558 candidates initially put forward during the first phase of nominations, 2,895 managed to have their names entered on the ballot by the close of the second. Almost identical numbers of candidates were registered in territorial (1449) and national territorial (1446) districts. The figures shown in Table-1 indicate that two-candidate races were the dominant trend. They also show, however,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of candidates Registered</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,9,10,11 &amp; 12</td>
<td>1 in each case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


that the idea of electoral competition had not yet caught on in a considerable number (384) of constituencies, especially those located in Central Asia and the Caucasus.47


222
The period of electoral campaigning that stretched from 23 February to March 25, the day prior to the national elections, represented a critical phase in the transformation of the Soviet political system. Urban has argued that "what had been discussed in the press and in journals, what had been resolved at the 19th Party Conference, what had been debated in the autumn and initiated in winter would now be acted out on a mass scale by the entire Soviet population. Real elections. Democracy. And more: an open struggle between the old guard and an emergent popular leadership".48

The contest for office unfolded, of course, differently in different places. In less politically developed areas, the new elections very much resembled the old ones. In Kazakhstan, all 17 obkom first secretaries stood for the office unopposed and were elected.49 In the more advanced regions such as Baltic, however, intense competition broke out between the apparatus and the well-organised popular movements.50 Indeed, the electoral campaign provided an unprecedented opportunity for opposition groups to focus their organizing efforts, concentrate their

50. Vozrozhdenie, n.9, 3 March 1989, p.5.
energies on a clear and specific goal and bring their ideas to the larger public. In Leningrad, for instance, dozens of small groups concerned mainly with the problems of ecology and the preservation of historic places had long been targets of heavy repression by the local authorities.\(^5\) The election gave them the chance to strike back by joining forces behind sympathetic candidates and working against those representing the local power structure.\(^5\) They did so on a broad scale with devastating results for the local elite.

In the election, independent political groups secured enthusiastic support from masses. Higher percentage of voter turnout was recorded and many apparatus candidates experienced humiliating defeat. The most spectacular of the electoral outcomes was Boris Yeltsin's victory over Evgeny Brakov, director of Moscow's Zil Automotive Plant. Yeltsin, the prime anti-apparatus candidate, captured an astounding 89 percent of the 5.7 million votes cast in this contest, while his well-financed opponent failed to reach the seven percent mark.\(^5\) Like Brakov, many apparatchiki candidates were defeated by left-democratic candidates. Even unopposed apparatchiki candidates lost the races.


\(^{52}\) *Leningradeskaya Pravda*, 7 April, 1989.

That was the case of Yu. F. Solovev, First Secretary of Leningrad Obkom, AN. Gerasimov, First Secretary of Leningrad. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Leningrad, the President of the Regional Soviet and the Second Secretary of the Leningrad Obkom were also all defeated the polls.54

Elsewhere around the country, a number of prominent members of the apparatus also experienced humiliating defeats. All of the party's 166 regional first secretaries stood for election, usually unopposed, and 23 of them were rejected by the voters.55

The result in the Baltic Republic witnessed landslides for the popular front candidates or those whom they had endorsed. With the exception of First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party, Janis Vargis, who managed to secure victory, the election resulted in a string of defeats for candidates from the apparatus; these included the chairperson of the Latvian Council of Ministers, the First Secretary of the Riga Gorkom, the second secretary of the Estonian Communist Party, the President of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet and the


55. Izvestion, 23 April, 1989.
Chairperson of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers.56

Reform in Governmental Institutions:

The System of Soviets:

Soviets (literally councils) first appeared in Russia during the aborted Revolution of 1905. Although crushed in the course of the restoration of Tsarist authority they re-emerged during the early days of Russian Revolution of 1917 and rapidly began to concentrate government powers into their hands.

Although the new regime 'Soviet Union' was inaugurated by this seizure of political power by the Soviets, it was not long before these Soviets themselves had receded into the background. Part of the reason for this lay in their own methods of organization and work. As early as 1918, strong criticisms from the Revolution's rank and file were appearing to the effect that inside the Soviets bureaucratic forms of organization were replacing democratic ones, and that Soviets were severing their vital connections with the population by closing their meetings to the public and failing to inform the citizenry about the work of their own government.57 A second and more important factor accounting for the short lifespan of Soviets as autonomous institutions of


government, however, was the restrictive policies pursued by the Communist Party.

The Communist leadership was not adverse to employing coercive measures against its political opponents within the Soviets, "correcting, where necessary, the result of the ballot box by force".58 But at its 8th Congress in 1919, the Communist Party developed a somewhat more sophisticated approach to the question that proved capable of killing the problems of opposition parties and unreliable Soviets with the same organizational stone. The Congress resolved, on the one hand, that each Soviet would be internally directed by a 'guiding nucleus' of Communist Party members within it and, on the other, that these guiding nuclei would themselves be directed by a newly formed apparatus of the Communist Party. As a result, all Parties save the Communists were expelled from the Soviets by 1922,59 and by the following years, the party apparatus was well on its way to exercising complete domination over the Soviets by vetting candidates for office and installing those whom it had selected in leading through the posts.60


As Soviet history entered its Stalinist epoch, a measure of the relevance that remained for Soviets as governmental institutions can be taken from the fact that they had largely dispensed with the formality of holding meetings, even for ceremonial purposes. Power was exercised in varying degrees by the administrative triumvirate of the Stalin system—the secret police, the centralized state ministries and the party apparatus—while the Soviets simply lapsed into political irrelevance. Efforts to revive them after Stalin's death yielded no more than cosmetic improvements until the Gorbachev leadership unveiled its programme for political perestroika.

The central objective of Gorbachev's political perestroika was 'all power to the Soviets' and more generally a shift of executive authority from the party to the state institution. The Soviets, in Gorbachev's view, served as a basis of a system of genuinely Socialist democracy during the revolutionary years, but very soon afterwards fell victim to bureaucratization and over-detailed regulation by Party Committees.

A number of proposals for the improvement of Soviets found a place in Gorbachev's speech of the 19th

61. Michael, n.19, p.3.
Party conference. The resumption of full authority by
the Soviets was in fact the central theme of the
proposals. The Soviets, he made clear, must have more
adequate, independent and stable sources of revenue,
and greater control over local enterprises. Some
deputies should be freed from their ordinary work and
allowed to become full-time representatives; and they
should be allowed to choose their executive committees
by secret ballot from a plurality of candidates. He
also suggested limitation of executive office for two,
or three terms in exceptional circumstances. That the
USSR Supreme Soviet was to become a smaller working
body of 400-450 deputies elected from the Congress of
Peoples' Deputies was the most unexpected proposal by
Gorbachev. In the proposal the whole state structure
would be headed by a Chairman of the USSR Supreme
Soviet who would nominate the Chairman of the Council
of Ministers and guide the work of a reconstituted
presidium.64 The proposals were broadly endorsed by the
Party Conference.65

Supreme Soviet of the USSR:

On the basis of 19th Party Conference's
directives, the constitutional amendments were carried
out by the Supreme Soviet, after a month of public

64. Ibid, pp.44-54.
65. n.109, p.38-40.
discussion, on 1 December, 1988 in which it was provided that all Soviets were to be elected for five rather than two and a half years at a time, and that no deputy can serve on more than two Soviets at the same time (Art 90 & 96). Art 109 of the constitutional amendment became most controversial one in which there was a provision that 30% of the seats of People's Deputies at all levels of Soviets were to be elected by the social organizations. 67

Due to this provision, a serious debate as well as severe criticism began to appear in the Soviet press. "How can we use the term 'People's Deputies' (narodnye deputaty)" wondered one critic, "when these individuals have not been elected by the people?" 68 In public debates, speakers often referred to this provision as a throwback to a type of feudal arrangements in which society has been ordered into various estates, thereby eclipsing the very ideas of citizenship and equality upon which any conception of democracy must rest. 69 To many the hand of the apparatus was obviously behind this measure. "It is simply a clandestine method to continue party rule",

67. Ibid.
68. V. Kopeikin’s letter in Argumenty i Facty, n.45, November 5-11, 1988.
said one. Another added that the "so-called 'public organisations' are really organs of state power, and this plan represents a cruel and deceitful step backward".70 "It is foolish to think that these deputies will be in any way elected within the public organizations, they will be chosen by the ruling apparatus in each case".71 In fact this method of selecting popular representatives had nothing to do with advancing democracy.

After the March 1989 election for the Congress of People's Deputies, which we have discussed earlier, a new Congress of People's Deputies (CPD) was constituted. The Congress had a smaller proportion of both top officials and rank-and-file workers than did the old Supreme Soviet, as well as a correspondingly larger percentage of official working at middle and lower levels in the system72 (e.g., directors of enterprises and farms). See table-2. The categories of top officials, executive officers of the Central Committee and ministers and deputy ministers of the USSR, declined precipitously in the congress (the latter as a result of the constitutional provision

70. Michael, n.19, p.70.
barring top administrators from serving as deputies in the Soviet at the same level), while other groups, such as ministers and deputy ministers in the republics, officials in academic institutions and members of the scientific and creative intelligentsia, increased enormously (see table-3).
### Table - 2

Comparative compositions of the Supreme Soviet Elected in 1984 and the Congress of People's Deputies Elected in 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Deputies</th>
<th>In Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Political Leaders</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher &amp; Middle Level Administrators</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level Administrators</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers &amp; Peasants</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Leaders</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioners</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table - 3

Comparative Compositions of the Supreme Soviet Elected in 1984 and the Congress of People's Deputies Elected in 1989 for selected categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Deputies</th>
<th>In Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Committee Executive Officers</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers &amp; Deputy Ministers of the USSR</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of Academics of Science</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders of Scientific Institutes &amp; Higher Schools</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific and Creative Intelligentsia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph - A
Organizational structure of the Government of the USSR (Supreme Soviet)

Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet

Presidium of Supreme Soviet  Council of Ministers

Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Union-Republics ➔ 53 members ➔ 71 members

Council of the Union: 271 members Council of National-Likelihoods: 271 members

Congress of People's Deputies

2,250 members

750 deputies elected in territorial Districts
750 deputies elected in national-territorial Districts
750 deputies chosen by authorized organizations.
Representation of the Communist Party was up from 71.4 percent in 1984 to 87 percent in 1989, while representation of the apparatus of the party was considerably down.73

The Congress of People's Deputies, which held its first session on 25 May, 1989, made a number of further innovations in Soviet Political and constitutional practice. Gorbachev, as expected, got elected to the newly established post of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet while two candidates also contested against him.

A smaller body, Supreme Soviet was set up by the Congress. The new-style Supreme soviet was expected to remain in session for most of the year. The new Supreme Soviet when it met for the first on 3rd June soon showed that it would be a very different institution from its predecessor. One sign of this was the elaborate committee system that was set up, including committee of the Supreme Soviet as a whole and commissions, attached to each of its two chambers. One of the Supreme Soviet's new committees dealt with defence & state security, another with Glasnost and the rights of citizens.74

Among the deputies an inter-regional group was formed in which Boris Yeltsin, Roy A. Medveder, Popov

73. Ibid.

etc. were the prominent members. Nearly 400 deputies attended its inaugural meetings at the end of July 1989 and around 260 joined at the time.\textsuperscript{75}

The selection of the USSR's Council of Ministers showed some extraordinary institutional vitality on the part of the Supreme Soviet. In contrast to the long standing pattern of blanket endorsement for the appointments made to ministerial and state committees posts by the authorities, the experience of legislative confirmation for these high governmental positions this time was altogether novel. The Supreme Soviet rejected ten of the 70-odd nominees placed before it by the Prime Minister N.F. Ryzhkov\textsuperscript{76} and forced the authorities to bargain with the legislators and to compromise with them on some important issues.

In the face of these rather stunning setbacks, Ryzhkov began to cultivate the political virtues of constitution and compromise with the legislature. Accordingly, he withdrew a number of the candidates that he had initially proposed for the relevant commissions and committees.\textsuperscript{77}

The issues raised most forcefully by the deputies during their deliberations on governmental appointments

\textsuperscript{75} Pravda, 31 July, 1989.

\textsuperscript{76} Boris Nikolsky, "We have Got a Government", Moscow News, no.30, July 6, August 1989, p.8.

\textsuperscript{77} Izvestia, 18 July, 1989.
were concerned with ecology and the civil and political right of the population. In the latter case important ground seemed to have been broken with respect to establishing and enforcing on the KGB a measure of responsibility before the people's representatives.

On the sphere of legislative function the Supreme Soviet either passed or initiated legislation on a broad range of topics: reforms in agriculture and industry that awarded important rights to firms and to the direct producers themselves, legislation on industrial disputes, military service, tax rates and assistance to the poorest sectors of the population; resolution on fighting crime and corruption, on ensuring the political and civil rights of the citizens, and more.

Soviet Power at the Republic Level:

Broad based, popular movements in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had radically transformed the political climate in the Baltics and spearheaded the effort to realize Soviet power at the republic level. The Supreme Soviets of Baltic republics nullified those features of

78. Ibid., 23 June, 1989.
79. Ibid., 2 June, 1989.
80. A hand list of the legislative action taken at the first session can be found in "Major Legislation by Supreme Soviet", Manchester Guardian Weekly, 13 August, 1989.
the new all-union legislation that they considered to be in violation of their sovereignty.

The formal resolutions on national sovereignty adopted by the Estonian and Lithuanian Supreme Soviets were followed by additional declarations that maintained that the annexation of these previously independent states by USSR in 1940 was illegitimate and lacks any legal force at present. The same position was formally espoused by the Latvian Supreme soviet.

The Russian Supreme soviet deleted from its draft legislation both the idea of electing deputies in public organizations and the institution of the pre-electoral district meetings. In the Ukraine also it tried to remove the anti-democratic features of Soviet constitution. Events in Belorussia followed a similar course when its Supreme Soviet rejected all the conventional provisions of electoral law. Even in the course of events almost all Supreme soviets of the 15 republics declared sovereignty against central rule of the USSR.

84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
Soviets at Local Level:

Soviets did not govern. Party Committees manipulated their activity and this manipulation occurred within the context of the powerful centralized ministries whose enterprises, distributed on the territory of one or another soviet did largely as they pleased. Indeed, for city soviet, there was no 'city' for this soviet to govern; rather the actual content of an urban complex consisted of collection of settlements, each of which was attached to a large factory which was itself directly subordinated to some All-Union ministry.

Some improvements in the work of local Soviets had been recorded during the early years of Perestroika, with deputies taking a more active part in the affairs of local government, and Soviets themselves rising to the defence of their respective populations to avert the harmful consequences of economic projects guided by the narrow self-interest of the centralized ministries. But the few bright spots in the overall, dismal picture had tended merely to sharpen the contrast between what had been accomplished in the exceptional case and what had remained the rule for the overwhelming majority of local Soviets. The need for

radical changes, introduced on a systematic basis, had become painfully obvious.87

In the early 1990s legislation was passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with a view to provide more autonomy to local Soviets. It included autonomous regions and areas taking powers for local Soviets, including the right to lay rent on industrial firms situated on their territories. Accordingly, local Soviets, for the first time, were in a position to form their own budgets and, therefore, to use their financial resources to address popular needs.

ESTABLISHMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM:
During 1988-1990 political uncertainty was running high. Measures of economic reforms were not producing desired results and political assertiveness of the republican governments by defying central directives and nullification of various central laws by themselves weakened the existing structure of central authority. The important reason behind the weakened central authority was the political pluralization, various party formations and the weakening of the monopolistic control of CPSU over social and political processes.

In March 1990, Anatoly Lukyanov presented a proposal for an executive presidency to the extraordinary congress of People's Deputies. He argued

that an institution of this kind would facilitate dialogue among the socio-political movements that had been brought into being by democratization and decentralization, and that in turn it would strengthen consensus and mutual understanding. The President could act quickly in the event of wars, disasters, social disorders or other circumstances and he could help to resolve the impasse that had developed between the Soviet government and the Congress of People's Deputies. Lukyanov assured the congress that there was any reason to fear that the new presidency would lead to a new form of authoritarian rule; there were several safeguards against this, including limits on age and tenure and the ability of congress — if a sufficiently large majority decided accordingly — to recall the President and overrule his decisions.

Perhaps, there were misgivings in some quarters that — whatever assurances were given — this was a step towards personal dictatorship. Some deputies showed concern that the system might create as Tsarist style socialism in the USSR while other deputies from union republics were concerned about possible exercise of Presidential power to suspend the operation of their own parliaments and large number of deputies wanted a

89. Ibid.
formal separation between the Presidency and the party leadership. Other speakers, however accepted the proposals as a means of ending what was described as a 'vacuum of power'. On 15 March, Gorbachev was duly elected to the new post after the establishment of the Presidency by the Congress of People's Deputy.91

Any citizen aged between 35 and 65 could be elected to the Presidency for a maximum of two five year terms. The President was normally to be elected by universal, equal and direct suffrage, although in difficult circumstances it was agreed that Gorbachev would be elected by the Congress itself.92 The President, under the terms of the legislation, was to report annually to the Congress of People's Deputies and would brief the Supreme soviet on the most important questions of the USSR's domestic and foreign policy. He would propose candidates for the primership and other leading state positions; he had a suspensory veto over legislation; and he could dissolve the government and suspend its directives. He could also declare a state of emergency and introduce direct presidential rule.93 The President headed a new Council

90. Stephen, n.33, p.66.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
of Federation, consisting of the Presidents of the fifteen union republics, with responsibility for inter-ethnic and inter-republican issue; he also headed a new Presidential Council, which was responsible for the main direction of the USSR's foreign and domestic policy.94

In September 1990, the powers of the President were extended by the Supreme Soviet, giving Gorbachev the right to institute emergency measures to 'stabilize the country's socio-economic and political life' for a period of 18 months.95 Several further changes were made by the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies in December 1990, completing the move to a fully presidential administration. The Council of Ministers was replaced by a more limited Cabinet, headed by a Prime Minister who would be nominated by the President and accountable to him (the former finance minister, Valentin Pavlov, was elected to this position in January 1991). The President became head of a new security council with overall responsibility for defence and public order. He also appointed a new Vice President (Gennady Yanayev on 27 December 1990), responsible for carrying out the functions that were entrusted to him.96 The Presidential Council, formed

94. Ibid.
95. Izvestia, 26 September, 1990.
during the previous March, disappeared entirely, and a reconstituted Council of the Federation headed by the President became in effect, the Supreme state decision-making body.97

There was some concern among Soviet liberals that these extensive powers, greater even than Stalin had commanded, could open the way to a new dictatorship. For the Inter-Regional Group, the new proposal represented an 'usurpation of power', leaving too much authority in the hands of a single person. Yeltsin went still further, complaining that the centre was 'seeking to constitutionalized an absolutist and authoritarian regime which could ultimately be used to provide a legal pretext for any high handed act'.98

There were, in fact, considerable limitations upon the powers of the new President. He could be impeached by a two-third vote of the Congress of People's Deputies; his ministerial nominations required the approval of the Supreme Soviet, which could force the resignation of the Cabinet as a whole if it voted accordingly; and he had himself to report annually to the Congress of People's Deputies upon the exercise of his responsibilities.99 Explaining his position to a gathering of miners in April 1991, Gorbachev pointed

out that he had voluntarily surrendered the extraordinary powers of the General Secretary of the CPSU, powers which at that time were greater than those of any other world leader. Would he have done so if he had been seeking unlimited personal authority? 100

Gorbachev's real power, in any case, was far less than his formal prerogatives might have suggested, indeed by the early 1990s he was politically the least powerful leader of the Soviet Union had yet experienced. He was, for instance, the first Soviet leader to face an open call for his resignation, not only as President (at the Congress of Peoples Deputies in December 1990) but also as General Secretary of the Central Committee in April 1991. 101 His Presidential decrees, moreover, were ignored or even rejected by the bodies that were responsible for implementing them. A decree banning illegal military formations was rejected by the Armenian government in August 1990; 102 Armenia also rejected a Presidential decree on economic sabotage, 103 and a Presidential decree establishing joint military and police structure for the maintenance of public order was repudiated by the Georgian and Moldavian as well as Armenian Parliaments. 104 Most

100. Izvestia, 6 April, 1991.
101. Stephen, n.6, p.68.
fundamentally of all, the authority of the central government, for so long unchallengeable, was undermined by the decision of all fifteen union republics to declare their laws sovereign over those of the USSR as a whole.

TOWARDS LAW GOVERNED STATE AND FORMATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

Mikhail Gorbachev tried his best to make Soviet Union as a law governed society. Lawlessness was all pervasive since Stalin's time. On the part of government's administrative apparatus neither procuratorical supervision, nor judiciary, nor for that matter prevented the widespread illegalities of Stalin's administration despite the extensive provision of legality in 1936 constitution. In fact Stalin devised a system, in which legal institutions and its bureaucracy functioned according to its own rule, most of time contrary to written legal provision, with anti-democratic roots, and in concert with the governments bureaucracy and quite frequently with underworld as well.

The weakening of the legal system caused by power play, corruption in subsequent years, all contributed to the nullifying public trust in law enforcement agency which only widened impression among people that investigators, public prosecutors and judges as bribe takers which further resulted in legal nihilism. Legal
and civil rights and protecting of Soviet citizen became difficult due to a serious limitation in the constitutional provision itself and due to arbitrary code of conduct by the government officials. Despite the fact that every successive constitution had given vast number of written civil and fundamental rights and freedom to the Soviet people. For instance, 1936 and 1977 constitution enumerated large number of rights and freedoms which were covered by article 124 to 128 and article 39 to 57 respectively. Separation of church and state and church and school were declared in the interest of ensuring 'freedom of conscience'. Related articles of both constitutions also recognised freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda. They also guaranteed to all citizens freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of association and meeting and freedom of street processions and demonstrations. In 1977 constitutional remedies were provided in case of encroachment of those rights by illegal actions. In these circumstances right to compensation incase of damage by state or official was provided.105 But in practice the guarantee of fundamental rights were useless because individuals were not allowed to question the government laws and acts neither the constitution itself nor Soviet legal

105. Leonard Shchapiro, n.58, (Bombay), 1979, p.91.
practice knew anything of the system of judicial review, or review by the courts of law in order to determine whether or nor it conflicts with the constitution. There was, therefore, no judicial means by which the citizen could demand enforcement of the rights conferred upon him by the constitution; nor any judicial means by which the judicial validity of any law could be challenged. The administrative supervision of legality by the procurators was open to an aggrieved citizens to appeal to the procurators. There were also other administrative avenues of appeal and complaints. These methods often provided redress in article 57 and article 58 in 1977 constitution, in cases where no question of policy were involved. They were however quite useless when the administration itself has decided upon a course of arbitrary conduct. The innumerable violations of legality—illegal arrests, torture, execution and exile—which went on for many years under Stalin and some time in Brezhnev, took place when both the constitutions were already in force at their respective time, when required, which seems to be quite often in practice, the administrative arm, through the machinery of the party, could effect the result it wishes inspite of any inconvenient provision in the constitution. But even if law was often violated it was none the less convenient to know what the law was. 106

106. Ibid, p.93.
Therefore, the process of political reform under Gorbachev had involved a reassertion of the rule of law in Soviet society, and more generally a greater place for political activity initiated firstly by individual citizens and then by regime itself.107 In the 27th Congress speech Gorbachev made a call for the elimination of short comings, abuses and all other unhealthy phenomena, including all departures from legal and moral standards.108 And for that matter he made it clear that "responsibility of the law enforcement and other bodies would be increased" and those bodies must "strictly observe the democratic principles of justice, the quality of citizens before the law and other guarantee".109

In his book Perestroika, Gorbachev criticized the "lawlessness and arbitrary rule "of Stalin era and held "Stalin and his close associates responsible for those method of governing the country".110 He even criticized the Brezhnev's stagnation period and linked it with weakening law enforcement and arbitrary conduct 'and violation of law.

108. 27th CPSU Congress, n.107, p.78.
109. Ibid, p.79.
110. Mikhail, n.2, p.106.
His above statement including the speech in 27th Congress is a self evidence that he was fully aware of the problems. Therefore he made a comprehensive programme for legal reform in the book Perestroika.

(i) The Decrees of Presidium of the USSR of the Supreme soviet would make suppression of criticism punishable by law and establish a procedure for compensation for damage caused to citizen by unlawful actions of government and public bodies and officials.

(ii) A law on the procedure to be followed when appealing in court against illegal actions by officials.

(iii) Legislation would be codified so that it would pave the way to self government by the people.

(iv) Greater independence with guarantee would be provided to judges and through which they would observe most strictly democratic principle in legal proceeding. In turn this would enhance the role of courts. The same condition would be provided to the procurator's office and state arbitration.111

Gorbachev's effort succeeded on 30 June, 1987, when Supreme Soviet adopted a law - on the procedure for legal appeal against unlawful acts by officials. Infringing upon Rights of Citizens.112 The law became


operational from 1 Jan. 1988. In this law there was a provision for judicial review of administrative action up to the jurisdiction of districts and city level administrative bodies and courts. The jurisdiction was general, subject to certain exception such as matters of defence of the country or state security.

However, the law had serious limitation in the sense that it did not extend to the action of the All-Union, Union Republic or Autonomous Republic Councils of Ministers nor over Supreme Soviet or their presidium of said levels. The handicapness of the law was the reflection that still higher and middle levels of party and state bureaucracy were in no position to give up their unrestricted power.

Another step in the direction of legal reform was the legislation on the office of Procuracy by the Supreme soviet on 30 June, 1987. Through this legislation, the operation of the procuracy improved in some respect. Firstly, procurators had the right under the decree to issue a written 'instruction' in a case of clear violation of law which required immediate obedience even if the agency or official proposed to appeal against it. Secondly the decree gave the procurators the right to issue a written warning in advance against an imminent violation of the law.

Till the end of 1987, Soviet scholars and jurists were demanding further measure of legal reform,\textsuperscript{114} such as ways to improve the functioning of courts, steps to strengthen the position of Attorneys against harassment by the police and officials, and other measures to protect citizen's rights against the encroachment by the state.\textsuperscript{115}

The demand for more reform in the legal system by the Soviet people on one hand and goal set by Gorbachev in his various speeches and in his book \textit{Perestroika} on the other, found fuller expression in the 19th party conference which held in June 1988.

The 19th Party Conference regarded enhancing the role of courts of law as one of the essential task of \textit{perestroika} because these courts had not held a fitting place. They were the organs of coercion and not the protection of citizen's rights.\textsuperscript{116} For a long time the courts showed an incapacitory tendency and the criminal laws was quite rigid. Local party and government bodies still exerted pressure on courts of law. The 19th conference noted that it is necessary to secure unconditional independence of judges and their

\textsuperscript{114} Pravda, 5 December, 1987.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.

subordination to the law alone. The 1988 Law says that the judges of district (town) peoples courts shall be elected by superior Soviets of peoples deputies and this rule strengthened the independence of these judges from the local leaders. The institution of longer terms of offices, from five years to ten years, could also contribute to their independence. In this regard, a law was adopted by the Supreme Soviet, with a strict observance of all constitutional procedure. It made provision that the law cannot be abrogated, altered or suspended either by departmental acts, including government decrees or by decision of party bodies, however, authoritative they may be. Whenever departmental instructions or party decisions diverge from a law the later must take precedence, that was declared by the Supreme Soviet and judiciary was given final authority to decide the aspects of legality. For that purpose independence of judges were ensured so that it could guarantee the observance of rights and legitimate interests of the citizen. Article I of 1987 law declares that ‘a citizen shall be entitled to lodge a complaint with a court of law against act by an official which he may consider to infringe upon his

118. SPPP, (Moscow), n.1, 1988, p.20.
rights. This extends the sphere of judicial control over administration.

These principles also found their expression during 1988 in an entirely new concept, the 'Socialist law governed state, and given more prominence in the 19th party conference and in turn became the centre piece of resolution adopted at the conference itself. This called a 'large scale legal reform over the coming years, including a review of existing codes of all, greater safeguards for the independence of judges, and an extensive programme of legal education for the population as a whole. The process of reform was carried further in the constitutional amendments that were adopted by the Supreme Soviet on 01 December 1988. In perhaps the most notable of these changes, a twenty three member committee of constitutional review was established, and elected by the congress with responsibility for ensuring the constitutionality of governmental decision and draft legislation. This committee of constitutional review never existed in the

119. "Law of the USSR" n.229, p.19; also see Kommunist, (Moscow), n.11, 1988, pp.44-45.

120. Report by Mikhail Gorbachev, n.138, pp.,61-62.


Soviet Union. By this the Soviet constitution adopted the organisational form employed by number of states that recognise the principle of separation of powers. The committee of the constitutional review must see it that the laws of the USSR adopted by the Supreme Soviet, the decisions taken by the USSR Council of Ministers conform to the constitution and laws of the USSR. The laws and other enactment that contradict the constitution and laws, if committee think so after reviewing such laws or enactment, would automatically suspended when the committee directs the concerned authority for corrections of such violation. This is certainly nearer to the principle of judicial review which exists in democratic countries where high and supreme courts are the sole authority in this regard.

Legal reform was carried further in a number of other changes, among them the adoption of a new criminal code, the first for thirty years. The code approved in 1991 intended to contribute to the 'humanization' as well as modernisation of the criminal laws. Legislation on the courts, introduced in 1989 and October 1990, established for the first time the principle of the presumption of innocence, of the

123. Ibid., pp.6-7.
124. Ibid.
Another important law enforcement agency, K.G.B., sought to bring its work in line with the requirements of glasnost, including the publication of regular bulletins on its work and a more prominent role for its leading personnel in the mass media. In general term democratizing and making it more open in its activities and giving more information to the public about its work.

The Soviet state also recognised the court's monopoly of administering justice, raised the independence of judges and secured their subordination only to the law. The constitution extended the use of the system of check and balance by upgradation of Congress of the People's Deputies, Supreme Soviet and judiciary; and by the creation of the constitutional Review Committee. All this was done to increase the prestige of laws and enhance the role of the highest representative body.

Challenges to Political Reforms:

Whatever political reforms were carried out by the early 1990s, faced strong resistance especially from party bureaucracy. Wherever they got the opportunity.


the party apparatchiki manipulated reforms as a measure in their own interest so that they could still remain as powerful and privileged as were earlier.

The experimental election to the local Soviet in June 1987 is an example for bureaucratic manipulation. This open election had flushed out Perestroika's opponents whose anti-democratic machinations were now visible to all. According to M. Urban, local officials manipulated nominations, intimidated candidates in an effort to secure their withdrawal from certain contests, illegally substituted their own candidates for those apparently preferred by the voters, and engaged in a substantial amount of ballot fraud to ensure the desired results.\textsuperscript{128} However, some local political bosses were defeated due to the will of the citizens. Apparatus role in the election of deputies to the 19th party conference became the source of hot debate. This reference, of course, was to the administrative apparatus of the Communist Party which in the old discourse, had occupied the position of faithful servant toiling on behalf of the people. In the effort of democratization however, the position of the apparatus was reserved. It now appeared as usurper of the people's right to self government,\textsuperscript{129} as a power

\textsuperscript{128} Michael, n.111, p.34.
\textsuperscript{129} Izvestia, 17 March, 1987.
clique pursuing its own narrow interests,\textsuperscript{130} as a bulwark of the old Stalinist discredited system.\textsuperscript{131} The period immediately preceding the 19th party conference represented an explosion of popular political activity unprecedented in the years of Communist Party rule. Mass demonstrations were in scores of cities throughout the country, condemning the repressive rule of the apparatus and in particular, its nefarious role in rigging delegate selection to the upcoming conference.\textsuperscript{132}

The party's failure to democratize was another distinctive challenges to political reform. It still remained a rigid command administrative structure with a central headquarters and a drive mechanism. Activists were leaving to join 'livelier, more flexible' grass-root organisations.\textsuperscript{133}

Perhaps central reason, however, was the party failure to establish its moral authority. The CPSU, many pointed out, had approved the bloody crimes of Stalin, Voluntaristic adventures' of Khrushchev, and then the military and literary 'talents' of Brezhnev.

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130. Michael, n.111, p.22.
\end{flushright}
How could its support of Perestroika now be taken seriously.134

The party crises of confidence reflected a deeper uncertainty about its function under conditions of Perestroika, and indeed about the direction in which society as a whole was meant to be moving. Monolithic unity became the matter of past and some party members were leading strikes, and others were opposing them. Party men in the Baltic Republics were joining the popular fronts, and even supplying their leadership, while others were joining their Russian-speaking counterparts. Party members were competing against each other at the polls and on the basis of different electoral programmes, the party as a whole suffered a serious blow in the defeats that were suffered by leading officials in the elections to Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, and in the local election of 1990, it lost control of several republic govt.

As far as local soviets were concerned, substantial power was not being transferred from the party apparatus to the Soviets. In 1989, Pravda complained that the absolute majority of the party committees had not changed the method of their work, and Soviets had no right whatsoever in reality and were not ready to take power to their hands.135

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