Chapter 2
Chapter 2

Public Administration during the First Stage of Perestroika, 1985-1987

The very election of Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) to succeed Chernenko was a remarkable change from its tradition. The coming of Andropov to power in 1982 and of Chernenko in 1984 had been very recent. But there was a difference in the reporting in the official media of their election. In case of Gorbachev the focus was more on the new leader compared to that of his predecessors where it was on the old leader. Moreover, as against the numerous speeches, before a new General Secretary would be formally elected, there was this time just Gromyko’s nomination speech, and this perhaps signified that there was a lot of support for Gorbachev.¹ It was also reported that the amount of immediate publicity and support from the general masses could not be compared with what any previous leader had received. Such a welcome, right at the beginning, could be “linked more to his energetic, charismatic, competent and obviously intelligent personality and with the new role of television rather than the

substance of his statements or speeches."²

Gorbachev was much younger than his immediate predecessors. The short stints of Andropov and Chernenko appeared more like a period of transition to reform and change. However, it was obvious that Gorbachev's election as General Secretary heralded a new era in Soviet politics. Even in the established succession pattern there was a change. In terms of leadership it pointed to concrete efforts rather than maintaining status quo.

Gorbachev's rise to power had been steadily progressing ever since he became a member of the CPSU in 1952. In March 1962, he became a Party Organizer for the Stavropol Territorial Production Collective farm and State Farm Administration and in less than two decades, in October 1980, he was promoted to membership of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee. Gorbachev was elected a deputy several times to the Supreme Soviet and was also a delegate for Party Congresses from the 22nd to the 26th before his final elevation.³ His record was one of

² Ibid., p. 183.
efficiently carrying out Party directives in fulfilling his tasks. In his first address to the CPSU Central Committee after his election as General Secretary, he assured them that "he will apply all his strength to faithfully serve our Party, our people and the great Leninist cause, to steadily carry out the CPSU's programmatic directives, to ensure continuity in accomplishing the tasks of further strengthening of the USSR's economic and defensive might..." The beginning of Gorbachev's term as General Secretary appeared to mark a commitment to serve the country's cause within the ideological framework of the party as had been the precedent so far.

Soon such a commitment was translated into a programme of reform, that is to say, glasnost and perestroika. It was obvious that this programme had to move ahead in stages with considerable time for preparatory work. As Gorbachev later described the perestroika had moved in stages. "Roughly speaking the first stage of perestroika formally commenced with a process of convening of the 27th CPSU Congress in winter 1985-1986 and ended by summer 1987, a period of about less than two years." At a conference of

---

4 "Gorbachev is Elected Party Head", n. 3, p. 7.
the CPSU Central Committee on 2 November 1987 Gorbachev said that, in the first stage, "What complicated things was that all at that stage was, essentially, new ground — quest for ways of restructuring, the choice of directions, methods of work and numerous experiments." It was thus evident that the first stage of perestroika, as Gorbachev called it, was crucial for the administrative system of the country. Starting with the programme of acceleration of the economy to the implementation of the 12th five year plan, the emphasis of perestroika in the first stage was on economic issues and management of enterprises. Economic reform was thus the main hallmark of the first stage of perestroika, and this really meant that the system of management of administration of the economy of the country needed complete overhauling.

For our purpose, the first stage of perestroika becomes crucial in understanding the tasks and problems ahead of Soviet Public Administration. We shall now proceed to investigate the impact of the first stage of perestroika on Soviet Public Administration.

---

6 Quoted in Ibid., p. 6.
Roots of the Reforms

Gorbachev was fully aware of the state of the Soviet Union and he began an earnest search for the course of action that was required of him to remedy the situation. Gorbachev's election came through without much difficulty, but he was not without opponents. It was for him to proceed with caution on the path of reform for his elevation was more for "his vigour and competence rather than for his reformism." So, for Gorbachev even to stay in power and find support for his policies and reforms, he needed to do a bit of reshuffling in the personnel. Thus in his first year in office the personnel changes in the ministries, regional party administrations and in the republics were major. In particular were the officials from Brezhnev's time being replaced by supporters of Gorbachev's reforms.  

The party had always occupied the premier position in Soviet society. It was evident from the very fact that it was the General Secretary of the Communist Party that headed the Soviet state. The Constitution also had spelt out its importance in Article 6. Though

---


from one leader to the other, there had been variations in their approach to the intensity of control over public opinion, the system of rule by the Communist Party through the State Administrative institutions had not changed. The introduction of reforms in the Soviet Union, however, redefined a number of established features and characteristics, and as such it was bound to have its effect on the party also. Yet, the first few years of reform did not bring about radical changes in the party as such. In fact, everything was carried out well within the framework of Communist principles, methods and traditions. Right from the beginning, Gorbachev's speeches revealed that the party's ideology would continue to be the guiding light and he expected the party to play an active role in the implementation of the reforms. The different party forums remained the hub of all the consultations and were crucial in the decision-making process for the reforms.

At a regular session of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, held in March 1985, the leaders discussed the tasks involved in bringing a turn-about in economy with

---

combined efforts of the party, state agencies, public organizations and all those associated with economic activities. They emphasized that in the present context it was mandatory to “strengthen labour, state and party discipline and to wage a determined struggle against any manifestations of ostentation, irresponsibility or any behaviour contrary to socialist norms of life.” As a follow-up to this proposition was the calling together of the leaders of the CPSU Central Committee, executives of industrial enterprises, managers of collective farms and state farms, leaders of production brigades, specialists and scientists on 8 April 1985 to consider ways and means for economic resurgence. The discussion hinged on ways to tackle the immediate problems in economy to provide scope for initiative and creativity, labour discipline and to put available resources to optimum use. This meeting was significant for the fact that it was a new beginning. Those directly involved in economic aspects were consulted and their inputs noted as crucial. It was to be the basis on which further decisions were to be made. It was a crucial shift from the organizing principles of Soviet

society, which was an administered model with central authorities determining everything, to a situation where interests could be articulated by groups and individuals through discussions.\footnote{David Lane, \textit{Soviet Society under Perestroika} (Boston, 1990), p. 13.}

The first important landmark in Gorbachev's career as General Secretary was the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPSU which was held on 23 April 1985. This Plenary Session was the source of all the reforms and changes that were to follow in the Soviet Union. The main focus was on convening the 27\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress on 25 February 1986 and on preparations that needed to be done for the same.\footnote{“Party Plenum Looks to 27th Congress”, \textit{Pravda}, 24 April 1985, in \textit{Current Digest of the Soviet Press}, vol. XXXVII, no. 17, 22 May 1985, pp. 1-9.} Gorbachev, while delivering a report to the session, covered a wide range of concerns. It was pointed out that unfavourable tendencies had intensified in the economy in the past few years and required the invigoration of the entire system of political and public institutions, the deepening of socialist democracy and self-government by the people. The management of economic mechanisms needed some serious improvement. The Communist Party needed to continue its role as vanguard of the people setting an example and to lead the
acceleration of the country's social and economic development. Among the agenda proposed for the 27th Congress was a new version of the CPSU Programme and changes in the CPSU statutes besides others. Gorbachev gave directions that the main slogans for all preparations for the 27th Party Congress were to be "creative labour, unity of word and deed, initiative and responsibility and exactingness toward oneself and one's comrades."¹⁴ All these were approved by the Plenary Session. A beginning was thus made to tackle the real problems of the country. It was historic in that it marked the beginning of all the structural changes that were to follow in the Soviet Union. This Plenary Session, though held barely a month after Gorbachev came to power, revealed the determined side of Gorbachev as a reformer.

The period after the 1985 April Plenary Session upto the 27th Party Congress in February 1986 was primarily a time of preparation for the Congress. There were various consultations and meetings which analyzed the situation at hand. The party and state leaders met discussing the economy and the conclusion of which

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.
was to be the basis for the report to the Congress. Some important measures were also effected during this period. In May 1985 an anti-alcohol campaign was introduced after a politburo discussion on 4 April 1985. Drinking had become a national calamity in the Soviet Union as it was in Tsarist Russia. According to Gorbachev, though this campaign was bound to affect the economy in terms of revenue, yet, in comparison to the adverse effects of alcoholism such as poor productivity, absenteeism and other social crimes which negatively impinged on the national economy, the drive only stood to gain. Some of the measures included, raise of minimum age to buy alcohol; not to sell alcohol in ordinary food stores and; wine shops not to sell alcohol before 2 pm. Fines and punishments for being drunk in public places were among the other measures.  

This effort, besides eliminating the social evil, can be looked upon as a measure to ensure labour discipline, quality output and better administration of the country. The introduction of the anti-alcohol campaign before the main reforms was thus of significance.

The first major change which had a direct impact on Public Administration in this period was the reorganization of the

---

15 Medvedev, n. 1, pp. 185-87.
agricultural management. Even before Gorbachev became General Secretary it was an accepted fact that the administrative structure had grown into a large empire and was the cause of many evils in the society. Most ministries had to deal with different sectors of economy and this had caused an increase in the administrative personnel. Hence, the measure adopted was the reduction of the number of ministries to simplify matters. The first of these was the formation of the Union-Republican State-Agro-Industrial Committee or the Gosagroprom by a resolution passed by the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers in November 1985. It merged five ministries which were related to agriculture and a state committee to form a super-ministry. The creation of this super-agency for agriculture was intended to improve the management of the agro-industrial complex. Agriculture held a prime position in the Soviet Union and therefore its management had been crucial. Most leaders, prior to Gorbachev, had tried to improvise different aspects of agriculture. They had adopted new methods and technology and even reorganized farm alignments. However, the outcome had not been successful always. Gorbachev's opinion was

The political report, presented by Gorbachev to the Congress in his capacity as the General Secretary of the CPSU on 25 February 1986, contained measures that would initiate significant changes in the Soviet Union. Though there had been reforms before Gorbachev, the period from 1985 however marked a break with everything prior to that. The idea was not to break away from the socialist system but to bring reforms within the system. “The resolutions of the 27th Congress will determine both the character and the rate of our movement towards a qualitatively new state of Soviet socialist society for years and decades to come.”18 The directions in the political report were therefore ways and means to qualitatively improve the Soviet socialist society.

Even when Gorbachev took charge in March 1985, the Soviet Union was in a state of total degradation. There were problems in every sphere and not much was done to bring changes as of the 27th Party Congress. Gorbachev while analyzing the prevailing situation in the country suggested that, “...acceleration of the country's socio-economic development is the key to all our problems: immediate and long-term, economic and social, political

---

and ideological, domestic and foreign. That is the only way a new qualitative condition of Soviet society can and must be achieved. 19

The report outlined different problem areas and also measures for improvement. The focus was primarily to build and strengthen the economic mechanism, the requirement, according to the party, was:

heightening the efficiency of centralized guidance of the economy and strengthening the role of the centre in implementing the main goals of the party's economic strategy and in determining the rates and proportions of national economic growth, its balanced development. Simultaneously, the practice of interference by the centre in the daily activities of the lower economic links must be overcome. 20

The administrative apparatus was a formidable force to reckon with, with regard to reforms in society. The lack of control over and accountability from the administration had made it strong and resistant to any moves that would hamper its authority and sphere of influence. Though constitutionally the administrative apparatus was to be subject to the elected bodies, in practice this was not so and in fact stifled the free working of the elected bodies. Referring to this problem Gorbachev suggested a real

19 Ibid., pp. 27-28.
20 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
reversal of roles. According to him:

elective bodies themselves should be more exacting and strict toward their own apparatus... Apparently it is time to work out a procedure which would enable Soviets, as well as all public bodies, to evaluate and certify the work of the responsible executives of their apparatus after each election, making desirable personnel changes. Our time demands ever more active involvement on the part of public organisation in governing the country.21

The Communist Party had always been in the forefront of all reforms and changes that the Soviet Union had been through. At the 27th Party Congress the call to the party was for it to once again take up undauntedly the new role and considering the enormity of the reforms, to be open to criticism and supervision. The report said:

The present stage, a stage of society's qualitative transformation, requires of the party, of all its organisations new efforts, a principled stand in assessing their work, a businesslike attitude and dedication.... There must be a significant growth of the influence of party organisation of ministries and departments on the work of the administrative apparatus and whole branches of the economy.22

These were attempts of making it more conducive for the party to

---

21 Ibid., p. 74.
22 Ibid., pp. 150-151.
be fully involved in the reform process of the Soviet society.

Thus in the political report of the 27th Party Congress, these were some of the points of change focused on as far as the administrative structure was concerned. There were no definite measures announced but the statements were a kind of alert to the administrative trend in various forms at different levels. The requirement now was to make concrete plans out of the ideas put forward at the Congress. One of the steps Gorbachev took was that, he gradually placed his supporters in important offices. Though this had been the trend with every leadership in the Soviet Union prior to Gorbachev, it was of more significance to Gorbachev in the face of the crucial transformations that were to ensue. Thus it can be noted that even from the April 1985 Central Committee Plenum to the 27th Party Congress, one of Gorbachev’s priorities was the consolidation of political power, besides many other changes being introduced and discussed about. He removed the top neo-Stalinists from the Politburo resulting in the highest rate of turnover in the Central Committee in the preceding twenty five years.23 The Central Committee elected at the

27th Party Congress had the distinction of having 40 percent of its members being new to the job while the average age composition of the Central Committee had declined. It was thought at this point that reformers evidently had their hold in the various party units and the surety of the reforms being seen through, though it turned out otherwise later.

In comparison to the many years that Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev took after being leaders before they introduced changes, the 27th Party Congress for Gorbachev was almost just the beginning of his career. In fact, each of these leaders had taken meticulous care to consolidate their position investing years in this effort. In such a context, it was really premature to foresay anything about Gorbachev's future or of success of the reforms he was to introduce. Moreover, since Gorbachev was adopting a different path as against the established Soviet trend, success depended not just on reform minded supporters but also on several other factors which will be discussed later.

**Prestroika and Glasnost**

Perestroika and Glasnost were two words highly popularized

---

the world over during Gorbachev’s period. Perestroika, the Russian equivalent denoting the changes being brought about, came and stayed on for universal usage for what was going on in the Soviet Union. As part of the restructuring of the society was glasnost which meant openness. The initial introduction of the concept of glasnost was not with the view that it will produce the effects that it soon achieved. It was only to bring more visibility about what the government and the party were doing. The public information available from the beginning of the Soviet period had been only to the extent that the government chose to reveal. Investigative journalism and reporting had not been in vogue. However, glasnost was not an allowance for Western-style liberalism but as a means of strengthening party rule in new conditions. Openness was to be within the stipulated limits as much as the government allowed, being of the opinion that such criticism can be an effective instrument of perestroika. But glasnost quickly assumed larger proportions. Gorbachev intended that glasnost would be an effective instrument of assistance in the reform of the Soviet society. As part of perestroika, the expansion of glasnost was also

expected to “expose the economic inefficiency, bureaucratic incompetence, corruption and social ills.”

Glasnost also enabled people to ventilate their opinions unlike before. In the process the special privileges enjoyed by the party officials were criticized. Though some of the members verbally agreed with party decisions in Party forums, in practical aspects they slowed the reforms. Glasnost also enabled the press to infiltrate into every sphere of Soviet life. The classification of some areas as being inviolable was dismantled and heralded the formation of a responsible society. From here probably one could trace the beginning of the public accountability that Public Administration had to take on itself about the evils that it was plagued with, with the fourth estate starting on uninhibited criticism. Glasnost also meant, for the general public, the confidence to take up issues of injustice, delay and arbitrary dealings of the administrative staff and publicize them for speedy redressal.

26 Gorvin, n. 8, p. 37.

Economic Reforms

At the core of the Soviet Union and all its activities lay the economic affairs. Correspondingly, about 80 percent of all the ministries and state committees of the Council of Ministers had economic activities as its primary concern.28 Public Administration under these ministries was preoccupied mostly with economic activity in the country. Thus, an indelible stamp of the administrative bureaucratic system was now evident on the "political system, the organizational structure of management, economical, personnel and the psychology of managers, workers and specialists."29 Administrative-bureaucratic system implied that everything was centrally controlled and the system also negated any scope for freedom in decision-making despite the varying nature of the choices to be made at different levels. Authority was vested with the higher-ups and many years of such practice had only made centralism a characteristic feature of the Soviet system. Perestroika now sought to reform these things beginning with the area of economy. Moreover, Public Administration through the

years had been oversized because every time revamping the economy each time meant creating new organizational structures which resulted only in the enlargement of the apparatus rather than any real change. The essence of what Gorbachev planned to do was to “replace predominately administrative methods by predominantly economic methods.” Economic reforms basically amounted to eliminating the administrative-bureaucratic system from managing the economy.

The new five-year plan for the period 1986-1990 was reviewed at a Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPSU on 16 June 1986. At this session Gorbachev called upon the administrative agencies to relax their hold over the enterprises in directing them. In his words the situation implied that, “not even the best qualified administrative apparatus of a ministry or a department is capable of taking on the successful resolution of all questions, and no such group can replace the creative thought of labour collectives.” To begin with, this limited decentralization of authority itself had its strong impact on Public Administration

---


despite the fact that there was no internal reorganization of the administrative agencies. Having to share power was alien to the established practice of the Soviet Public Administration. This was a reversal from the centralized or command economy which had little provision for initiative from below. Public Administration now had to share the power it had solely exercised so far and the area of its control was also limited. The initial period also saw a lot of reorganization of the various ministries as a measure of economic reform. For example, the Construction Ministry was reorganized to be a permanent agency of the USSR Council of Ministers.32 In doing so, they hoped to improve its management and the economic mechanisms involved in it so far. Besides redefining planning and financing in construction sector and strengthening the economic accountability, the aim was also to significantly reduce the administrative personnel. This was adopted in the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee.33 Through the years, this kind of reorganizing of the ministries, reducing its size or reshuffling the staff continued to be a feature of Gorbachev’s


33 Ibid.
method of governance. Though initiated to improve the administrative efficiency it was also one of the measures used by Gorbachev to tackle opposition to the reforms by the administrative personnel.34 As the months went by, the dimensions of the economic reforms and their impact assumed wider proportions.

At a CPSU Central Committee Conference held on 15 November 1986, Gorbachev discussed about the State Product Acceptance System in the associations and enterprises of Industrial Ministries to be introduced from 1 January 1987. This system, as a kind of control, demanded greater accountability from the executives for the quality of their products. Though acceleration was greatly stressed in the reform process, there was to be no compromise on the quality.35 The introduction of this reform deprived the administrators of the right to be their own masters. Now they had to be accountable for their actions and a minimum standard for the products manufactured had to be achieved. New demands were thus made on the Public Administration. However,


its initial introduction at about 1500 enterprises brought many complaints because the stringent requirements resulted in reduced wages and elimination of bonuses. 36 This only reflected the callous nature with which the administrators had carried out their responsibilities with regard to both quality and quantity of work. State Product Acceptance System came strongly on the administrators of the industrial units. Pressure on them for results eventually ended in the loss of income for the workers. These things revealed that the authority exercised by the Public Administration through the years had not been used for the actual welfare of the society.

Even as these measures were being taken, there was also opposition to the process of change. The administrative personnel lost their power with the changed roles and some also lost their jobs. In the interests of personnel, the leadership decided to retain the old methods of administrative management and retarded the restructuring process of the economy. 37 But even as the administration was holding out against the reforms, it could also be

noticed that there was not much difference in the functioning within the system of Public Administration from the pre-Gorbachev days despite various reforms. There were reports of discrepancies in the personnel system which were inconsistent with the new economic mechanism. This included arbitrary hiring and firing, lacking in accountability and obstructing initiative.\textsuperscript{38} The result was that in a number of branches of the economy, there was violation of rules. Many enterprises and organizations failed to meet their contractual commitments. In this context, the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers decided to reconstitute the State Arbitration Court under the USSR Council of Ministers as the USSR State Arbitration Court. With additional powers to monitor the ministries, departments, enterprises and institutions on various matters it attempted to improve discipline in the economy coupled with legality.\textsuperscript{39}

The seventh session of the eleventh Supreme Soviet began its work on 29 June 1987. As per its agenda it adopted a number of laws. The Law on the State Enterprise was crucially important in

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

forming the foundation for restructuring of the national economy.\textsuperscript{40} The law, to be effective from 1 January 1988, sought to bring a total difference in terms of accountability of management, lesser interference, self-financing of enterprises, increasing their roles as against the old system of administration. Involvement in the day to day functioning of the enterprises had caused the administrative system to grow to alarming proportion due to constant fragmentation. Speaking at the Supreme Soviet Ryzhkov the Chairman of the Council of Ministers said, “the main guideline and core of all transformation is for the role of the ministries, their purpose and place, to be organically linked with the expanded rights and responsibilities of the enterprises. In relations with them, ministries should now rely entirely on instruments of economic influence....”\textsuperscript{41} The law on state enterprises, though to be effective from January 1988, lay at the core of all economic reforms introduced from 1985 to 1987. It redefined the Soviet method of economic administration. This reform strongly addressed what the earlier reforms had failed to stress adequately. The focus was now


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 9.
on decentralization and using economic methods.

Thus with regard to the economy, a number of reforms were introduced because it was the primary focus of perestroika during the years from 1985 to 1987. Almost all the reforms aimed at replacing the operating system of command administration in the economy with economic methods of administration. The reorganization of ministries, reduction of the administrative personnel, decentralization and sharing of power etc., were some of the measures initiated to reduce the administrative control of the economy.

In the course of the reform process, different lacunae of the Soviet system emerged from time to time. Various party forums addressed these issues. Policies which hampered the process of reforms within the party structure were also reviewed. During the Plenary Session of the CPSU Central Committee on the 27th and 28th of January 1987, the focus of Gorbachev's address was on restructuring and the party's Personnel Policy.\footnote{"Gorbachev Addresses Party on Change-III", Izvestia, 28 January 1987, in Current Digest of the Soviet Press, vol. XXXIX, no. 6, 11 March 1987, pp. 8-14.} Gorbachev traced that for some of the present problems in the system, the party also shared responsibility because of its mistakes in the personnel work.
and distortions in the personnel policy. Gorbachev's report at this plenary session said that:

mistakes in personnel work and the distortions in personnel policy... led to major shortcomings in the activity of several elements of the Party, state and economic administrative apparatus and to negative phenomena in society... it could have avoided if Party agencies had always and consistently conducted a principled and effective personnel policy.43

Such a report being presented at the plenary session only showed that the party accepted its flaws and was ready for change. It was therefore decided that the party had to recruit new leadership and thus save itself from further stagnation and deterioration. Moreover, every member was to be given opportunity for greater participation and for rationality in all the party decisions. A change of attitude among the Party members about restructuring was also necessary for the success of the reforms and for the party to be consistent in being actively involved in the whole process. The following Plenary Session on 25 June 1987 also saw Gorbachev reiterating the party's initiative in restructuring and acclaiming its role and commitment to carry the reforms ahead. He also said that the party had to fully keep pace with the changes which would be

43 Ibid., p. 8.
detrimental in further restructuring. While Gorbachev focused on reform and changes in the Communist party to enable it to lead the country at this stage, he was also aware that the party still lagged behind in comparison to other spheres of the Soviet society where changes had been quite rapid.

However, throughout this stage, the party's position seemed central to the restructuring process. But, towards the end of this stage, there was a shift with the party not aligning itself fully with the reform process. Within the party there seemed to be some changes. Of these, the Plenary Session held on 21 October 1987 on the eve of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution was significant. This session first approved Gorbachev's speech after that Yeltsin, on obtaining permission to speak, said that the party obstructed the reforms and some of the leaders also had a role in the same. This was contrary to the norms of party behaviour which was always ordered and disciplined. It seemed to be the beginning of open rebellion and dissension in party forums. Yeltsin blamed the party for insufficient 'revolutionary pressure' for achieving the goals. Yeltsin was later reprimanded and he lost his position. This

---

event was an alarm that the process of reform, instead of gradually
taking its course, could be throttled by those wanting immediate
results. Other changes brought in the party could also be inferred
from the remarks Gorbachev made on the Soviet history at the
celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Revolution. This was
again a deviation from the routine where the Soviet past was always
praised. This stage showed that the Communist Party, while
continuing to occupy the centre stage, simultaneously felt the
effects of restructuring from within and without.

Public Administration at the End of This Stage

The bureaucracy had become very powerful during the
Communist years capable of implementing or thwarting reforms
depending on how they suited it. During the years from 1985 to
1987, none of the reforms introduced as part of perestroika were
of direct consequence to the Soviet Public Administration. But
reforms beginning with glasnost to the Law on State Enterprises
definitely had their impact on Public Administration. The changes,

45 Seweryn Bialer, “The Yeltsin Affairs: The Dilemma of the Left in Gorbachev’s
Revolution”, in Seweryn Bialer, ed., Politics, Society and Nationality Inside
Gorbachev’s Russia (London, 1989), pp. 91-118.

46 “Gorbachev on Soviet History, Restructuring”, Pravda, 3 November 1987, in
however, were minimal in comparison with the requirements of restructuring. They could be termed more as cosmetic changes whereas what was actually required was internal overhauling of the administrative structure to suit the new demands of perestroika. Other than having exposed the system publicly as the major cause of stagnation and decay in the society, it only made minor changes. In fact, according to John Keep, “the first two years of Gorbachev’s rule were a wordy era. There was no end to the devising of future-oriented statements and resolutions. They included a new party statute and programme along with national plans covering the next five and fifteen years.” Some of the reforms could not produce the desired effect and in fact they had a negative impact.

Gorbachev’s leadership aimed at bringing discipline among the workforce. Gorbachev was of the opinion that by bringing in discipline and efficiency at work, he could restructure the Soviet Union. But, he realized that the solutions had to be far more effective than these. However, the task of enforcing discipline was something which Public Administration should have constantly

---

74

47 Keep, n. 25, pp. 337-38.
undertaken. Now the demand on working hours and work quality became stringent. The demand for efficiency and discipline was also applicable to the administrators. The effect of this reform on Public Administration was that it was required to take on tasks which it had so far neglected. It now had to be responsible and accountable.

Glasnost also had very strong impact on the Public Administration. In any society, free press is an important factor in reforming administration whether it is by criticizing its policies, exposing the administrative lacuna or through supporting public cause. Of particular importance was reporting on corruption and other offenses among administrative officials. In fact, during the year 1986 alone as many as 13,000 officials were removed from their posts for abusing their positions, from among the 20,000 who were charged with cases of indiscipline and investigated. In an administrative system steeped in centralization, corruption and totalitarianism, glasnost provided the scope to correct the system. According to Alexander Vlasov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, as an outcome of glasnost, “extensive work is being done by the

---

48 “Developments in Campaign Against Inefficiency and Corruption” Kasching's Record of World Events (New Jersey), vol. XXXIII, no. 9, September 1987, p.35402.
Ministry on purging the ranks of staff who have compromised themselves by infringing the law.”49

Yet another problem that the reforms sought to tackle in Public Administration was its large size. The reorganization of some ministries and disbanding certain other ministries were measures not only to improve the efficiency of the ministries but also to reduce the number of personnel. Particularly, in the formation of the agro-industrial complex, six governmental bodies were dissolved and their work force was reduced by 47 percent.50 Though this was a positive development, the reorganization also had negative impact on Public Administration.

The superministry for agriculture was a large and cumbersome organization. Pravda reported that Gosagroprom had not done much but had just filled the farms with directions and rules which had to be broken up later.51 On a similar vein was the role of the State Acceptance Committee (Gospriemka) which overdid its role causing the workers many problems.52 According to

49 Ibid., p. 35403.
51 Keep, n. 25, p. 338.
52 Ibid.
Gorbachev, the introduction of the certification process for the products was a kind of administrative or organizational remedy while what was actually required was the restructuring of the economic mechanism.\(^{53}\) Thus sometimes the reforms, being superficial, failed to affect the root of the problem causing more inconvenience than what was encountered in the beginning. Besides inviting criticisms, they also negatively affected the process of change.

In Gorbachev's opinion, "the many decades of centralization and the use of administrative-command methods predominated in the management of the economy, this led to a great burgeoning of the administrative apparatus...."\(^{54}\) The many efforts to reduce administrative personnel, cut down ministries, reduce the authority and power of bureaucrats, shift administrative management of economy, found all those affected by these measures grouped together to defend their interests. This period also witnessed a great deal of bureaucratic arbitrariness. As many as sixty or more administrative measures had to be repealed in 1986 because of

\(^{53}\) Gorbachev, n. 36, p. 288.

complaints from the aggrieved on irregularities and violations of laws and rules in general. To deal with these cases, a ‘court of administrative recourse’ was established in January 1987.\textsuperscript{55} Glasnost also put the administrative system for public scrutiny as seen earlier. The combined effect of perestroika and glasnost together slowly eliminated the special privileges and immunity Public Administration had enjoyed all these years.

Though much had been done to recourse the economy from the administrative system to the market system by the reorganization of the administration, the end of this stage showed that much had not been effected. However, since the very base for administrative control was the centrally managed economy, bringing about change in the economy was tantamount to shaking the foundations of the administrative system. And, according to the noted economist Abel Aganbegyan, the state, in this stage, was one of transition between the old and the new systems of administration, a period in which the two methods coexisted.\textsuperscript{56}

The pursuance primarily of only economic reforms even as


of 1987 was detrimental to the general process of restructuring of the Soviet society. A conducive atmosphere had not been created in which the introduction of economic reforms would effect desired results. As part of the conducive atmosphere administrative reform could have been vital. Though Public Administration was the primary instrument in restructuring the society, there were no reforms in this stage that directly focused at the renewal of the administrative structure. However, the effect of the economic reforms in Public Administration as in restructuring the ministries or reducing the administrative personal seemed to be an effort just on the surface. In fact, the situation required such deeper and radical reforms of the administrative structure prior to tackling all other areas.

The leadership had realized that the administrative structure played a major role in obstructing the reforms. Though this concern was voiced repeatedly at various party forums, Supreme Soviet sessions and other general meetings, no concrete action had yet been taken. Not just in the area of administration but in most other areas too there was no paucity of suggestions for corrective measures. In fact, these years "were thrown away in endless
debates on the past and how to move ahead.”

This stage also made it evident that progress in restructuring was impossible with only economic reforms. The immediate requirement was for political reforms, particularly because of the unique setting of the Soviet system. The very fact that administration, though just an instrument of governance, could hold out against reform, was mainly due to reason that Public Administration lay intricately enmeshed within the political system. So political reform was crucial not just for the progress of perestroika but for the very revival of Public Administration to assist this progress. Towards the end of this stage, the aim was to bring political reforms to the forefront of restructuring and thus consolidate the reform movement. The process of political reform and its effect on the administrative structure is dealt with in the following chapter.

---