collapse that can hardly be judged the most propitious for the establishment of stable, effective and responsive institutions and procedures.

Several theoretical perspectives have been put forward to conceptualize the democratic transition that Russia is going through. For some, the most important requirement is at least some minimum agreement among the elites of that society about the rules of the political game. For others, the elite led democratisation must simply be shown to be successful, after which, mass support would automatically sustain the political institutions. The third perspective places central emphasis on long term patterns of social change and the relationship between class forces.

Although there is no dearth of bodies calling themselves political parties, the fact remains that in the present day Russia there are very few nationally organized political parties that could offer a choice of candidates and programmes at periodic elections simultaneously maintaining a stable pattern of interaction with the wider society. Theoretically, by December 1995 Russia had witnessed the fourth wave of party formation: the first accompanied the insurgency phase of the democratic revolution up to August 1991 which was marked by the predominance of movements, popular fronts and other loose forms of organizations; the second lasted from August 1991 to October 1993, during which numerous political groupings mutated and reformed with extraordinary rapidity; the third wave followed the October 1993 events as the country prepared for the elections and the fourth wave accompanied the 1995 Duma election. Very few of the first or second-wave parties have made it through to these elections. One can easily point to the existence of a competitive political process in simple quantitative terms, but in qualitative terms this competition seems to be very unstable and has hardly done much to enhance an arena of citizen participation based on a well defined, mutually shared set of interests. There is no natural intrinsic linkage between the existence of a plurality of parties and a genuine existence of democracy. Democracy in Russia requires good constitutional engineering as well as the peaceful organic development of liberal institutions.
The present study with its focus on the breakdown of the uni-party system aims at analysing the whole gamut of socio-political and subjective factors leading to the emergence of a new pluralistic polity. Confined to the period between 1985 and 1995, it is divided into five chapters including the concluding chapter.

The introductory chapter of the study presents the socio-political and historical background of the Communist Party. It traces the history of the party right from the pre-revolutionary days to the period of Khrushchev. The second chapter highlights the various political trends and developments in the Gorbachev era which marked the beginning of the future opposition to the Communist monopoly of power. The third chapter examines the first ever multi-candidate National elections of 1989 and focuses on the developments leading to the abrogation of ‘Article 6’ in early 1990. The fourth chapter attempts to give a detailed description of the evolution of the process of partisan politics in the former Soviet Union. The concluding chapter while summing up the major political developments in the territory of the erstwhile Soviet Union in the last decade examines the problems and prospects for the emergence of multi-party system in the Russian Federation.

The study is based on the texts of the various constitutions, decrees, reports and resolutions adopted by the Supreme Soviet, the Party Congresses, the Central Committee plenums as well as the proceedings of debates and discussions in these fora. It also draws upon the writings and speeches of prominent Soviet and Russian leaders and ideologues. The approach adopted in the study is multi-faceted and the methodology followed is historical analytical.

In preparing this thesis, I am grateful to many whose knowledge and experience I have had the good fortune to freely utilize.

This project would have been inconceivable without the substantial intellectual guidance, inspiration and cooperation throughout, until the last hour of completion from my Supervisor Prof. Davendra Kaushik to whom I am greatly indebted.

I would also like to thank Prof. R.R. Sharma and Dr. Tulsi Ram who although not directly associated with the present work, gave me an opportunity to learn from them.
I am also indebted to Prof. M.M. Sharma, Prof. A.N.S. Ahmed, Prof. G. Phukon and Dr. Adil-ul-Yasin of Dibrugarh University without whose encouragement it would not have been possible for me to make it this far in this academic venture.

This work would not have seen the light of day without the continuous moral support and understanding from my family. I owe them a debt of gratitude.

I wish to record my heartfelt gratitude to my friends Ashish, Swagata, Devendra, Ambica, Mala, Pradipta, Salam, Chithra, Krishna and Meena who, when the going got tougher, stood by me and inculcated the confidence I was very much in need of then. But for their encouragement and constructive criticism this thesis would have been wanting in many more respects.

I am also grateful to my friend Santosh Kumar for having patiently and uncomplainingly borne with me throughout my time here and especially so during the hectic last lap of this thesis.

I take this opportunity to thank all Faculty members of my Centre, the documentation officer Dr. L.C. Kumar, the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Nehru National Museum and Library, USIS and British Council Libraries of Delhi for their cooperation and assistance in making available the required material and documents for the study.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank Govind and Chandan for giving me eminently presentable type scripts and adjusting their time to my schedule.

As it stands, this thesis is a modest attempt to understand the political complexities of the erstwhile Soviet Union between 1985 and 1995. However, I alone stand responsible for all errors and laxities, if any in this project.

Date: 10.01.1997

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