CHAPTER TWO

Glasnost And Emergence Of Pluralism Of Opinion
THE BACKGROUND

The concept of 'glasnost' became known in Russia during the last decade of Tsar Nicholas I's reign (1825-55), when debates were held on the projected emancipation of the serfs which later took the shape of the Great Reforms. Introduced by "enlightened bureaucrats" within the central government, 'glasnost' at the time meant an exchange of opinions within the bureaucracy about the country's much needed social and economic transformation (preobrazovaniye).¹

Nineteenth-century champions of 'glasnost' viewed debates within the government as an effective tool for correcting failures of bureaucratic institutions and thwarting corrupt practices among officials. The debates were strictly confined to domestic issues: the abolition of serfdom, the judicial process, the administration of the Naval Ministry.² Proponents among government officials of public openness emphasized that more extensive statistical reporting in the press would aid the central government in its decision making.

During the reign of Aleksandr II (1855-81), several liberal-minded officials attempted to extend glasnost to a genuinely open political debate in order to co-opt groups of radical intelligentsia and to check the growth of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Despite their efforts, the notion of glasnost which came to prevail remained a limited one because it stressed that public opinion had invariably to express public support for the state and its policies.

A concept of 'glasnost' also existed during the early Soviet period. The term is first mentioned in Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's works on the economic and political

¹ W. Bruce Lincoln, In the Vanguard of Reform (Decalb, IL; North Illinois University Press, 1983), pp.102-204.

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organization of the Socialist state during 1918-19. Lenin advocated the open and public criticism of economic inefficiency and of the cumbersome state bureaucracy:

Every thing that takes place in a socialist enterprise should be made public (predavat 'glasnosti'). The shortcomings in the economic activity of each and every commune should be disclosed to the public. We need public criticism which will expose the evils of our economy, strike a responsive chord with the public and help us cure social problems.\(^3\)

Like the 'enlightened bureaucrats' of the 19th century, Lenin conceived of glasnost as leadership-initiated and leadership-regulated criticism designed in his view to reverse undesirable socio-economic trends, accelerate economic development and boost labour productivity. In the political realm, he saw the function of glasnost as a means to castigate bureaucratic malpractice and stimulate public participation in political life, that is to say, to strengthen the regime's legitimacy.\(^4\) In Lenin's view, "the state is strong when the masses know everything, render their opinion on every issue, and consciously respond to every policy".\(^5\) It should be noted that Lenin's view of glasnost differed fundamentally from the Western concept of the free flow of information. Glasnost was intended to promote the best interests of the regime which set the parameters within which divergent opinions could be voiced. Open public debates in the press were largely restricted to sanctioned policy issues. Predictably Lenin believed that the media should not inform the general public about sensitive foreign policy issues such as foreign credits and Western technology transfer to Russia.\(^6\)

In arguments similar in structure and style to those of Lenin, Stalin, too, expressed support for the principle of glasnost:


\(^4\) ibid., Vol.45, pp.389-406.

\(^5\) ibid., Vol.35, p.21.

\(^6\) Lenin, n.4, p.195.
In order to move forward and improve relations between the people and the leaders we should keep the valve of self-criticism open. We should give the Soviet people an opportunity to criticize their leaders for their mistakes so that the leaders do not put on airs and the masses do not distance themselves from their leaders.\footnote{Josheph Stalin, \textit{Sochineniya} (Works), (Moscow: Progress Publishing House, 1952) pp.31-32.}

It is worth noting that in his writings on the media Stalin expressed disapproval of Western-style investigative reporting, and that he specifically opposed any press criticisms of mid-level enterprise managers and party \textit{apparatchiks} - who constituted the core of Stalin's support during the years of his struggle for absolute power.

Clearly, like the leadership of imperial Russia, the leaders of the early Soviet State viewed \textit{glasnost} as a tool of policy. \textit{Glasnost} served not only as a vehicle for reforming the bureaucracy, but as a pretext for eliminating political opponents and consolidating powers.

The concept of \textit{glasnost} changed in the post-Stalin period, but more in terms of emphasis than essence. During the Khrushchev era, the media was directed to criticize Stalinism and its political supporters. The publication of unorthodox literary writings and discussion of sensitive political issues brought allies for Nikita Khrushchev, especially from among the intelligentsia against the Stalinist rank and file in the party bureaucracy. However, this relatively liberal information policy, did not allow the printing of explicit criticism of the Soviet political system or of Khrushchev's policies. Nor did this policy preclude an anti-Western propaganda campaign which became very intense during the political crisis in Hungary (1956), West Berlin (1961), and Cuba (1962).

In the early 1970's, Leonid Brezhnev explained his approach to public criticism in the following terms: "Communists should not be apprehensive of serious and business-like criticism and self-criticism on the grounds that it might be used by our enemies".\footnote{Leonid Brezhnev, \textit{On The Lenin's Course (Leninskim Kursom)} (Moscow: Politizdat, 1972). p.45 (in Russian).} By that time, Brezhnev had curtailed public criticism of Stalinism and had restricted
artistic freedoms, although he also had expanded policy debates among experts and elites on selected issues.

By the mid-1970's, new arguments for *glasnost* was presented by Professor Zasurskiy, the Dean of the *Moscow University School of Journalism* and an influential representative of the Soviet mass media. Zasurskiy argued that *glasnost* was imperative for the country's technological development, especially in the areas of electronic media and computer and information sciences. He furthermore maintained that a freer exchange of information would help overcome the trends towards inertia and stagnation in Soviet society. "*Glasnost* is an effective method of intensifying ideological and political processes". On the other side of the Soviet divide, *glasnost* was one of the main demands put forward during those years by dissidents like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Andrei Sakharov. In the Soviet Political Dictionary (1987), *glasnost* is defined as follows:

One of the most important democratic principles guaranteeing the openness of the work of the organs of government; access, so that society can inform itself about their activities. *Glasnost* is the most developed form of control by the masses of the population over the organs of government, especially the local ones, of the struggle against bureaucratism. The most important channels of *glasnost* are the means of mass information, oral propaganda, and visual aids such as displays. Information which contains state and military secrets, industrial production, crime investigation and medicine is not subject to *glasnost*.

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*Glasnost* in specifically a Russian phenomenon. It is not exactly freedom of speech, or the kind of cultural or political freedom known in the West. It is an attempt to combine a non-democratic or anti-democratic mode of government with a certain degree of cultural freedom, accountability and transparency. Although *glasnost* can be and has been interpreted as a step towards democracy, in itself it is not the same thing as democracy. If there were democratic freedoms there would be no need for *glasnost*.

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as a discrete element of the political system. Glasnost does not refer to the substance of politics but to approach and style.

Gorbachev needed glasnost to accelerate the country's technological development, which laged behind the technologically advanced West. In Gorbachev's political parlance, glasnost would trigger perestroika (restructuring), a synonym for Lenin's "Socialist construction" (stroitel'stvo) or 19th century "transformation" (preobrazovaniye). It was this technological approach to glasnost which led Gorbachev to encourage criticism of the management and personnel at industrial enterprises for failure to meet production norms and to develop new technologies. He argued that by stimulating competition between enterprises and creating the incentives for employees to change their attitudes towards work, glasnost improved sluggish labour productivity. The General Secretary also called for holding discussions at party, Komsomol, trade union, and enterprise meetings in order to stimulate mass participation in decision-making on local issues.11 Citizen participation in low-level policy making, Gorbachev believed would restore the public's eroded trust in the Communist leadership and its ideology. He pointed out in the January 1987 CPSU Central Committee Plenum:

It is necessary that accountability go hand in hand with a lively and principled discussion, criticism and self-criticism, business-like suggestions... Then we will satisfy Lenin's requirement that the work of elected officials and organizations be open to everyone.... Then there would be no reasons for complaints and appeals to high-level authorities.12

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

As the Soviet Union developed under Stalin, three main constraints operated to determine the content of the mass media. First, ideologically the message had to reflect socialist values. Second, controls were exerted through key committees and censors (known as glavlit) to gauge the ideological and political correctness of newspapers. radio,


12 ibid.
books, journals and television. Third, the originators of messages having mass currency were restricted to organs having the approval of the dominant political power. Socialist realism was the doctrine coined under Stalin to promote Socialist and Soviet values. It sought to present societies in the spirit of revolutionary development, to educate and influence the people in the spirit of Socialism. Party Spirit Partynost was to penetrate all communication and its nature was determined by the party authorities. This policy involved diminishing the role of individual in art and creative writing.

In the mass media, Socialist realism involved staunch support to the current political line, the suppression of conflicting opinions, and the portrayal of the worst aspects of life under Capitalism. The class struggle was given a prominent place in the content of the media. Differences over policy in the USSR, inadequacies and shortages of Soviet life, let alone oppression and illegality were taboo topics. The media sought to portray a homogeneous society based on social harmony. A black and white world was depicted: all things soviet and communist were good and all things Capitalist, Imperialist, and American were bad.

A major watershed may be detected under Khrushchev, when a reappraisal of the Stalin years took place. Work critical of the Stalin period, mainly in the field of literature, was published and had a wide circulation. Dudintsev's novel Not By Bread Alone was published in 1956, and prison camp life was portrayed by Solzhenitsyn in One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. In the late 1950's social scientists too were able to take a slightly more detached view of Soviet reality. Critical opinions were raised in intellectual and other circles; important debates on a wide range of social and political themes - elections, the role of markets, incentives at work - took place between elites.

Academics made acquaintance with intellectual developments in the West. The works of J.K. Galbraith, Walt Rostow, and Talcott Parsons were selectively translated. Excerpts from Western fiction were also made available in Russian in specialist Soviet journals such as Foreign Literature. Classical works of non-socialist character were
published - the works of Tolstoy and novels of Bulgakov for instance. Western films, such as *Emmanuelle* and James Bond thrillers were shown to restricted audiences.

All these sources were restricted and limited in scope. Either they were made available to closed circles of specialists, for example in the cinema industry or the Academy of Sciences, or they were printed in very small numbers and made accessible to specialist audiences. The mass media still presented a solid undifferentiated face of official opinion. The Department of Propaganda (since 1988, the Commission on Ideology) of the Central Committee, headed by a Secretary, usually a member of the Politburo, decided the Party line. The content of all books sold through public networks, radio, magazines and films were censored.

Ideological control was maintained under Brezhnev too but with important developments. News coverage was selective. Only those items which were thought to develop 'socialist consciousness' were reported. Hence Soviet disasters, interpersonal conflict, crime, and violence were not covered in the press or on television. Those events that portrayed the desired image of the future were given prominence: economic achievements, fulfillment of the economic plan, discussion of ways of improving productivity and quality of work. Many aspects of internal Soviet life were regarded as state secrets. No comprehensive information was published on crime, suicide, accidents, structural inadequacies in government services or public catastrophes. No criticism of the policies or personal deficiencies of the political leadership were allowed.

*Glasnost* led to major changes in the forms of initiation, content, and effects of mass communications. In essence the system of media control moved from being one of administrative regulation to a more market-like system in which both the initiators of message and the recipients have had much greater influence over the content of programmes. Inspite of this development, the fundamental principle of party control over the mass media remained. Emphasizing the fact, that the role of the press was to assist in Gorbachev's "restructuring" policy, Victor Afanasev, the editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, in a speech to a Press Day meeting on 5 May 1987 pointed:
It is the duty of all Soviet journalists to translate the policy of restructuring into reality. For us journalists there is no nobler mission, nothing we treasure more, than to impart Leninist principals to the masses and to be in the front ranks of the fighters for Communism.\textsuperscript{13}

He further pointed out:

Openness (Glasnost) is the open portrayal for readers, viewers and radio listeners of what is happening in our country and abroad. It is the fairness and accuracy of what they are told. The aim of openness is to make Soviet people better informed, more erudite, more convinced and more confident of the rightness of our cause.\textsuperscript{14}

This view was very much the traditional view of the Soviet media as the tool of the party leadership. But inspite of it, the new policy of glasnost at least partially unveiled the cloak of secrecy that shrouded political and social events in the Soviet Union. Glasnost opened one of the most fascinating chapters in Russian cultural history and, to a lesser extent in Soviet society. Under glasnost complaints about many aspects of Soviet life was voiced in a way that was unthinkable in Soviet society. Cultural controls and restrictions were either lifted or loosened; books were published, plays and movies performed, paintings and sculptures exhibited that had been banned for many years. Informal societies sprung up outside the party and its satellite organizations and in them topics once taboo were freely discussed.

The General Secretary encouraged public criticism of the party apparatus, the state bureaucracy, and individual officials up through the Republic level. In practice this meant the major institutional actors i.e. the Party, the Komsomol, the ministries, the military, the KGB, and the judiciary, which were immune to criticism during the Brezhnev period.

Other manifestations of glasnost included more complete reportage on accidents and disasters, as well as a more realistic coverage of the country's social problems. Soviet press also reported nationality conflicts, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, the


\textsuperscript{14} ibid.
poor quality of medical care, problems of poverty and vagrancy, draft-dodging demonstrations and strikes and other controversial issues - that is, problems associated with social justice that as a rule had been previously mentioned in the Soviet press only with reference to Western capitalist societies. Now, however such explanations were set aside in favour of a larger possibility that these evils were rooted not in the past but in the present. Conceivably, even a partial release of selective statistical data served to provide lower-level planning agencies with the information necessary for decision making. As one Soviet military writer observed, "we need information not for the sake of information, but as a basis for decision making".15

Since the June 1987 CPSU Central Committee Plenum, the Soviet press had been gradually expanding its coverage on politically sensitive issues. Soviet writers scrutinized Stalin's policy of Collectivization, condemned the purges, and criticized Stalin's legacy in the contemporary Soviet political life. Their discussions supported the idea of a legitimate intra-party opposition existing in a one-party socialist state and espousing an alternative strategy of social development i.e. a less centralized economy and more relaxed political and social controls. The Gorbachev leadership appeared to have assumed the role of a mediator in such discussions, balancing the conflicting views and interests of major elites and social groups. This middle-of-the-road line was strikingly evident in Gorbachev's speech commemorating the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution.16 Although the General Secretary criticized the mass terror during the purges and recognized Bukharin's role in the USSR's economic development, he praised Stalin's contribution to Soviet World War II victories and approved of his policy of forced collectivization. Such a policy line was likely to disappoint groups on both sides of the political spectrum: for some the General-Secretary was going too far, while for


others he was not going far enough in transforming the Soviet Union into a more open society.

In some respects, glasnost met the demands of the intellectual elites for the right to learn the truth about their own society from official sources of information instead of dissident literature (Samizdat) and foreign radio broadcasts. This more liberal cultural policy was designed to co-opt the more creative elements of the intelligentsia - who enjoyed high prestige and moral authority in Soviet society - to support the new leader and to promote his reforms. Apparently, it was also intended to check the growth of the dissident movement and prevent the further emigration of the country's intelligentsia to the West. In this respect Gorbachev seemed to have learnt from the Russian historical experience of co-opting the intellectual elite to serve the regime's political, economic and military priorities.

The Limits of Glasnost

Compared to the Stalin and Brezhnev era, glasnost certainly brought in a great deal of freedom. But if pre-revolutionary Russia is taken as the yardstick, the balance-sheet was far less impressive. Russia had a relatively free press after 1905, and a parliament with more than one political party. The Bolsheviks were represented in the Duma and dozens of Bolshevik publications appeared in 1906 and the years after. Even in the 19th century the writings of Marx had been passed by the Tsarist censor. There was an independent legal system in Russia after the 1860's and the number of death sentences pronounced by civilian courts was probably smaller than in most European countries.\(^\text{17}\)

All in all, the Soviet media discussed the state of the nation far more freely than before. It was proved that, a comparatively large degree of cultural freedom could coexist with an autocratic political system. Despite this, apprehensions were voiced at

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various quarters about the success of this policy of glasnost. As long as there was no legal guarantees, glasnost was not irreversible. Glasnost was based on hope. But if the revelations and the debates did not lead to an improvement in the situation, if the promised changes did not materialize, the hopes were bound to fade. The obstacles were too great, the economic and social problems too deeply structured and the political shortcomings too firmly rooted in the past. Nothing short of a cultural revolution was needed to effect real change.

A major constraint on Gorbachev's policy of glasnost was the party's control over the Soviet media. It severely reduced the media's ability to apply an open information policy and reduced glasnost to a party tool designed to reflect and implement the party leaderships political goals. As Gorbachev himself stated before a domestic audience:

The main task of the press is to help the nation understand and assimilate the ideas of restructuring, to mobilize the masses to struggle for successful implementation of party plans.... We need...glasnost', criticism and self-criticism in order to implement major changes in all spheres of social life... but criticism should reflect the interests of the party.\(^{18}\)

Gorbachev clearly defined the limits of permissible criticism. During a meeting with mass media representatives in February and July 1987, Gorbachev reaffirmed that a major revision of the Soviet Union's historical experience and revolutionary ideology would not be permitted. Warning against excessive criticism of the local level party committees and against personal attacks on party officials, he called on the media to portray the country's current problems in a generally positive light:

Glasnost and democracy do not mean that everything is permitted. Glasnost is called upon to strengthen socialism and the spirit of our people, to strengthen morality.... Glasnost also means criticism of shortcomings but it does not mean the undermining of socialism and our socialist values.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) "Conviction - A Bulwark of Perestroika", Kasnaya Zvezda (Moscow), 14 February 1987 cited in Natalie Gross's, n.2.

Opposition to glasnost also existed among high-level bureaucrats for whom public criticism of their actions was a threat to their status, career advancement and privileges. The new press centres created at the ministerial level and specifically designed to promote glasnost also represented obstacles to Gorbachev's policy. According to Soviet reports, the press centres not only blocked the release of unfavourable information but also commissioned laudatory articles about themselves in the central press.20

Soviet political culture itself, with its deeply ingrained intolerance for differences of opinion, constituted another constrain on glasnost. In the absence of appropriate legislation, policy statements, or even specific guidelines on freedom of information, Soviet citizens confused about the limits of permitted criticism were reluctant to support Gorbachev's policy. Mindful of Stalin's purges, the Soviet public recognized the uncertainties associated with glasnost. The fragmentary evidence available in the official Soviet press supported the argument that many Soviet citizens were skeptical about the success of Gorbachev's policy. Some citizens labeled it "banned".21 Other citizens expressed doubt that their letters to newspaper editors would be published. At least one editor of Political Science literature noted that the glasnost policy had not changed the content and quality of works submitted for publication.22 Peter Chernetsky, a Collective Farm Chairman who had suffered reprisal for criticizing the organization of fishing industries in the Far East, readily identified popular sentiment about Gorbachev's policy in the following terms: "One should not criticize. You pay a high price for this afterwards.... Democratisation, glasnost, are for the time being, words, but reality is different".23

In the absence of a consensus on glasnost among either the major bureaucracies or the population at large, it was feared that this policy would destabilize the Soviet society and thus result in political and ideological losses rather than the expected gains for the Gorbachev leadership. It was argued that with the coming out of suppressed national and social tensions, there was bound to be disorder, which would play into the hands of those who had argued all along that the Soviet people were not ready for political freedom. But to Gorbachev's way of thinking, the long terms benefits of glasnost - a modernized economy, a revitalized society, and restored international prestige - out weighted the risks of internal instability and social turmoil.

SOCIALIST PLURALISM.

The essence of a civil society is the right to free association of individuals. The acid test of the vitality of civil society is the tolerance of dissent. In the Soviet Union, there had been a weak or nonexistent boundaries between state and society. The state claimed authority in areas of life that were private in Western states and were a part of civil society. Russian and Soviet ideals glorified the collective. Both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Communist Party stressed for different reasons, the primacy of the collective. Individualism has not had the same salience as a value either in prerevolutionary Russia or during the period of Socialist revolution. Individualism was a creed bound up with the rise of Protestantism, the Renaissance, and the rise of Capitalism. All these movements had little impact on Russia.

The attitude of the Soviet authorities to the suppression of interests in civil society had been derived from the creed of collectivism. The traditional line of argument as it developed since the time of Stalin was as follows: The Party articulates the will of the people; the Revolution, Lenin, and the Soviet state were sacred. Opposition to the Party and to its policies was disloyalty as it was harmful to the general interests of the working class and to the triumph of World Communism. Collectivism in the USSR led to the politicization of a wide range of behaviour and institutions. It also led to the state defining
an extensive range of behaviour as political dissent the major components of which were as follows: First, dissenters espoused values that were in disagreement with the regime. Second, dissent was a demand that was expressed outside the formal political arrangements of the state. Third, the political authorities considered dissent to be a threat to the legitimacy and process of the Socialist regime.24

These three defining characteristics gave rise not only to widespread suppression but also to arbitrary suppression of dissenting views. Since the death of Stalin there was a gradual redefinition of what constituted dissent and what could legitimately be the concern of private citizens in civil society.

The "dissident movement" as it became known, had two major objectives: the institutionalization of law, and the autonomy of individuals and groups in a civil society not subject to state interference.25 There was a Human Rights Movement and a Democratic Movement whose major activity was the publication of illegal literature — Samizdat. Nationalists and religious groups advocating their particular rights were also formed. These were the antecedents of the unofficial independent groups that flourished under Gorbachev.

Sakharov in his book Reflections on Progress, Co-existence and Intellectual Freedom (1968) advocated that Socialism and Capitalism were capable of long term development by borrowing positive elements from each other and by actually coming closer to each other in a number of essential aspects. Sakharov called for economic, political, and social pluralism: autonomy for factories freed from state tutelage, partial denationalization of state property, partial decollectivization, the freedom for workers to strike, legal guarantees for individual rights, the rights of Republics to secede from the

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25 ibid., p.92.
USSR, a multiparty system, the convertibility of the rouble, and the abolition of the foreign trade monopoly by the government.26

*Perestroika* sought to change the orientations of the people. The political leadership attempted to move from a collectivist and unitary set of motivating principles to individualistic and pluralistic ones. The notion of "socialist pluralism," which involved rights being devolved to individuals and groups rather than remaining enshrined in collectivities, replaced or at least modified the principle of *kollektivnost*. Gorbachev first employed the term "socialist pluralism" in his address to media executives shortly after the June 1987 Central Committee Plenum, where major economic reforms were adopted. Urging the editors not to allow newspapers and magazines to be creatures of narrow group interests, he demanded that the media present the voice of the whole society, so that "the whole, so to speak, socialist pluralism is present in every publication."27

In September 1987, Gorbachev referred to 'socialist pluralism' again in a response to a question posed by a member of a group of French public figures, but did not elaborate on the idea. He did not confine it to the sphere of opinion, distinguishing only "socialist pluralism" from its counterpart under Capitalism.28 These comments might have seemed casual and off-handed had Gorbachev not returned to the concept of pluralism repeatedly in early 1988, now qualifying it with the "of opinions" phrase. In his address to the February 1988 Plenum, devoted to basic ideological theory, he observed that: "For the first time in many decades we are really experiencing a socialist pluralism of opinions".

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26 For details see Andrei Sakharov, *Reflections On Progress, Co-existence and Intellectual Freedom* (Moscow; Samizdat, 1968).


Again in May 1988, meeting with media executives, Gorbachev referred to pluralism and insisted that, notwithstanding the icy blast of Stalinism released by the Andreyeva letter in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*²⁹, the party was not retreating from its commitment to democratizing Socialism. Criticism had to be in the interests of socialism and against conservatism. A truly Leninist socialism made room for "pluralism of opinions, interests and needs".³⁰ In 1988, Party Secretary and Politburo member V.A Medvedev defined the fundamental principle of socialism as:

full power by the working people and their practical participation in all state and local affairs at both central and local level .... This means that socialism must create a political system which would take into account the real structure of society and the multitude of interests and aspirations of all social groups and communities of people.³¹

Medvedev then went on to define what he meant by ‘socialist pluralism’:

First the shaping and improvement of a ramified network, a system of organizations, associations and institutions which would appropriately and flexibly express their multitude of social interests. Second, consistent modification of the party’s functions and methods of activity along the avenue of its profound democratisation. And third, implementation of the idea of a socialist law-governed state, consolidation of the legal foundations of all social life and assertion of lofty legal, political and general culture.³²

There were, however limitations on the pluralistic nature of contemporary Soviet society. Gorbachev at a meeting of the Central Committee on 8 January 1988, discussed the limits on socialist democracy as follows:

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³² ibid.
we are for openness without reservations, without limitations. But for openness in the interests of socialism... if openness, criticism and democracy are in the interests of socialism, in the interests of the people, then they have no limits. 33

Medvedev elaborated somewhat when he pointed out: "what is meant are healthy, economically and morally substantiated interests which do not run counter to our system." 34

The Communist Party from this viewpoint would have to maintain a monopoly on political organization in the state apparatus. Medvedev further pointed out:

In its relations with public organizations, the Party respects their right to have their own opinion, to uphold their own position and to protect their own interests. In these conditions, there is absolutely no sense at all in artificially creating other parties as opponents of CPSU. 35

This new approach to society had transformed the position of dissent and dissenters in the Soviet Union. The underlying change had been the recognition of interests with autonomy in civil society. The position on dissent had changed qualitatively. Political prisoners were pardoned and released. Sakharov, the leading civil rights campaigner was not only allowed back in Moscow but was publicly welcomed by Gorbachev. Many previous dissidents were given compensation and restored to their jobs. Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev, and Nikolai Bukharin were rehabilitated in 1988. There was a greater emigration of dissatisfied citizens - Jews and Germans in particular were allowed to leave the country.

The churches were given greater freedom and autonomy in keeping with the division of state and church and the freedom of conscience proclaimed in the Soviet Constitution. The thousandth anniversary of the adoption of Christianity in Russia was

33 Lane, n.33, p.24.
34 ibid.
35 ibid.
publicly acclaimed in 1988. Many buildings had been returned to the Orthodox Church including the Holy Danilov monastery in Moscow.

There was a complete reversal on the position of Stalin and Stalinism. Rather than being a legitimate and positive form of leadership as it had been in the past, Stalinism was decried and rejected by the political leadership. People who suffered under the arbitrary power and lawlessness of Stalin and other Soviet leaders were restored their rightful positions in society. A weeks commemoration of Stalin's victims were held in Moscow in November 1988.

To prevent a recurrence of the lawlessness that had occurred in the past, Gorbachev emphasized the role of law and legality. Many previously dissident activities were normalized. Illegal hospitalization was outlawed by the political leadership. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (responsible for the ordinary police, the MVD) and the Committee for State Security (the security police, KGB) had been subjected to investigative journalism as well as Procuracy investigation (the body responsible for legal enforcement). In 1988 the head of the KGB, Viktor Chebrikov, pledged that his organization worked within law and distanced himself from the excesses of the Stalin period.36

Like all modern societies, the dominant groups within the Soviet society too, attempted to place limitations on the articulation of demands and on the ability of those opposed to the system. One of the more enlightening episodes that illustrated the limits of the development of civil society is to be found in the discussion surrounding a letter that appeared in the leading Soviet Newspaper, Sovetskaya Rossiya (13 March 1988). The Andreyeva affair illustrated that under perestroika those groups that supported the processes of the Stalinist period were considered to be engaging in dissent.

The author of the article, Nina Andreyeva, a Lecturer at the Leningrad Lensovet Technological Institute, while ostensibly supporting perestroika and Gorbachev, criticized as nonsocialist and anti-Soviet many of the liberal developments that were taking place

36 ibid., p.98.
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under the guise of glasnost. She reprimanded the press for a one-sided and critical treatment of events in Soviet history and called for the more traditional party position "to uphold the honour and dignity of the trailblazers of socialism" in defence of socialism.\textsuperscript{37} She denounced the rise of many informal organizations and associations, the politicization of which was "on the basis of a by no means socialist pluralism".\textsuperscript{38} She emphasized the leading role of the Party and the working class in the building of socialism and restructuring and called for a reassertion of socialist ideology, guided by Marxist-Leninist principles, in the face of non socialist pluralist tendencies.

Andreyeva nowhere rejected explicitly the ideas of perestroika. In several places, she even referred to Gorbachev in support of her position. What appeared at first sight to be a mild reassessment of glasnost and perestroika led to much opposition and condemnation in the Soviet media. Following Andreyeva's article, the official Party and Government Central Press (the leading papers, Pravda and Izvestiya) were silent until 5 April 1988. The line taken in an editorial in Pravda (5 April 1988), which may be considered the official position was that the article by Andreyeva was anti-perestroika.

The editorial in Pravda argued that before Gorbachev came to power, the country was in a "pre-crisis situation". The old methods and style of leadership had failed dismally. "Authoritarian methods, unthinking execution of orders, bureaucratism, the absence of control, corruption, extortion and petite bourgeois degeneration flourished."\textsuperscript{39} The article went on to say that the essence of socialism had nothing to do with old authoritarian methods, with dogmatism and deviations from the principles of socialism. It accused Andreyeva's position of showing a false patriotism and "whitewashing the past".\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} n.29.
\item \textsuperscript{38} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{39} "Editorial", Pravda, 5 April 1988.
\item \textsuperscript{40} ibid.
\end{itemize}
Pravda criticized the Andreyeva article for using "bourgeois sources" to justify its case against the current position taken by the party. Pravda reiterated that Stalin was guilty of mass repression and lawlessness and emphasized the need for openness. It reaffirmed the unity of the intelligentsia and proletariat that the article sought to fragment. While stating that there are no forbidden subjects, Pravda criticized Sovetskaya Rossiya for publishing the article - by implication, the editor lacked a sense of responsibility, as the piece departed from the principle of perestroika. This meant the establishment of a boundary of glasnost - the defence of Stalinist ways, of previously established dogmatics could not be defended in the public media. The media were to reflect current Party policy and its definition of perestroika.

THE 19TH ALL-UNION PARTY CONFERENCE

Frustrated by the slow pace of implementation of his reforms and unable either to effectively combat the opposition within the Party, especially in the Central Committee and the party apparatus, Gorbachev, at the beginning of 1987, decided to revive a long-forgotten party forum - the All-union Party Conference. Traceable to Lenin, the Party Conference used to be an extraordinary party forum convened in the intervals between regular Party Congresses in order to deal with pressing economic and political issues that could not be put off until the next regular Congress. The CPSU statute provided no precise definition of the functions of the conference. The only sentence in the CPSU statute that mentioned the All-Union Party Conference read as follows:

Between Party Congresses the Central Committee of the CPSU may, if necessary, convene a countrywide Party Conference to discuss pressing matters of party policy. The procedure for holding the Party Conference is determined by the CPSU Central Committee.41

With the strengthening of Stalin's dictatorship, the practice of convening All-Union Party Conferences was discontinued, evidently because Stalin found it unnecessary. The last such forum - the 18th All-Union Party Conference - was held in February 1941.

41 "Rules of the CPSU", Chapter 4, Article 40, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p.27.
Although the original idea of the All-Union Party Conference, as incorporated in the CPSU Statute, was that it should serve as a party instrument to promote the implementation of party policy, Gorbachev’s original intention was apparently to use it as an instrument for boosting his reforms - specifically by overcoming the deeply entrenched opposition within the party. The very proposal to convene the Conference constituted an admission that the party itself had become a formidable obstacle to change in the USSR.

The idea to hold a Conference was raised by Gorbachev quite unexpectedly in his speech at the CPSU Central Committee January 1987 Plenum. After speaking about the importance of democracy, stressing that perestroika was possible “only through democracy and due to democracy”, and defining the further democratisation of Soviet society as an “urgent party task”, he said:

I would like in this connection to take counsel on such a fundamental issue: possibly, it is advisable to convene an All-Union Party Conference next year on the eve of the report-and-election campaign within the party, and extensively to review the course of implementation of the decisions of the 27th Congress of the CPSU and to sum up the first half of the five-year plan period. It would be also right for the Conference to discuss questions of further democratising the life of the party and society as a whole... The very fact of convening an All-Union Party Conference in accordance with the CPSU’s rules would become a serious step in democratising in practice our party life and developing Communist activity.

The procedure for electing the delegates to the Conference was precisely defined:

One delegate from 3,780 party members, having in mind that delegates to the conference will be elected by secret ballot at plenary meetings of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics, Territorial and Regional Party Committees.

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44 ibid.

The election of the delegates to the Conference began on 13 May 1988. On 7 May, a few days before the election started, Gorbachev met in Moscow with leaders of the mass media, ideological institutions, and creative unions to discuss the preparations for the Party Conference. In his speech Gorbachev made a clear statement as to whom he was expecting to see as delegates at the Conference:

Our position is that it is committed stalwarts of perestroika, active Communists, who should be elected delegates. There must be no more quotas, as was the case in the past, specifying how many factory workers and farmers and how many women are to be elected, among others. The principal political direction is to elect active supporters of perestroika to go to the Conference... The CPSU Central Committee will keep the entire process of electing the body of delegates to the Party Conference in its focus of attention at all times.\(^{46}\)

Inspite of his desire to facilitate the election of perestroika supporters as Conference delegates, at the June 1987 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, when the actual election process started, it immediately became clear that the local party bosses were firmly in control of the elections, and that the "committed stalwarts of perestroika" were facing great difficulties in getting elected.

On 28th June, Gorbachev opened the 19th All-Union Party Conference. He reported that 4,991 out of 5,000 delegates were attending the Conference, and he presided over the election of the 112-member Conference Presidium.\(^{47}\) The main theme of Gorbachev's speech was the transfer of political power. The driving force behind this theme was Gorbachev's disappointment with the Soviet economy. The transfer of power was to be based on giving more independence and responsibilities to the local Soviets of People's Deputies, clearly at the expense of the party apparatus and the bureaucracy. In stark language, Gorbachev blamed the personality cult of Stalin and the stagnation under Brezhnev for the creation of a political system that formulated economic, foreign, legal,

\(^{46}\) Gorbachev quoted in Hazan, n.42, p.174.

and cultural policy without regard for the will of the people. He also plainly put forth the proposition that substantial changes in the political system were an essential precondition for the success of perestroika: "Today we must have the courage to admit that if the political system remains immobile and unchanged, we will not cope with the task of perestroika".48

The following were the main components of Gorbachev's proposal for political reform:

1. **More Power to the Soviets:**

   The Political system was to be changed by a partial shift of power from the Party to the Soviets of People's Deputies. This delegation of power to the Soviets was clearly intended to weaken the Central Party Apparatus, whose opposition to Gorbachev's reforms had continued unabated in the months preceding the Conference. The General Secretary pointed out that the party's monopoly of power, forged under Stalin, was a distortion of Communist principles and an impediment to economic and social progress. According to his proposal, the Soviets were to enjoy not only more power but also expanded economic rights, such as the right to collect revenue from taxes on local industry.

2. **New Legislative Organs:**

   The second major proposal concerned the creation of a new super 2,250-member national legislature, the Congress of the People's Deputies. It was to be composed of 1,500 delegates elected from regional and national districts (i.e., from the existing Supreme Soviet) and 750 additional members elected by party Congresses or Plenary sessions of party, trade union, and other central organizations. *The Congress of the People's Deputies* would meet only once a year to discuss key constitutional, political, economic and social issues. It would have two further principle functions as well. The first was to elect a State President, who would have all the powers over domestic.

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48 ibid.
foreign, and defence policy previously exercised by the party leader. The second function would be to elect 400-450 of its members to a two chamber parliament, which, unlike the existing Supreme Soviet, would meet full time thus providing a forum for real debates and legislative activity, much like a Western-style parliament. The President, as in France, would nominate the Prime Minister.

3. Reorganizing the Party Apparatus:

In his main address at the Conference, Gorbachev reserved his strongest criticism for the party apparatus. Explicitly stressing that the party was no longer a "truly democratic organization," he proposed a radical remedy - namely, limiting the prerogatives of the party organs throughout the pyramid of the party structure, reducing their size and the scope of their functions, and radically restricting their opportunities for meddling in the activities of the elected central and local organs. At the same time, Gorbachev offered to expand the functions of the Central Committee by establishing a closer working relationship with the Politburo. This was to be accomplished through the introduction of regular reports of the Politburo to the Central Committee; the creation of permanent Central Committee Commissions, which were empowered to act between Central Committee Plenums.

These proposals formed the ground for the main battle between Gorbachev and the party bureaucracy at the Conference, for despite the general expansion of Central Committee functions, the main underlying purpose behind the proposal was to curb the overwhelming size of the party machine and stop it from obstructing the progress of perestroika. 49

4. Electoral Reform

The electoral reform proposed by Gorbachev was intended to be another means of establishing firm control over the activity of party officials and asserting democracy

49 Hazan, n.42, p.175.
in USSR's political procedures. Secret ballots and competitive elections (nominating several candidates for every vacant post) were to become the norm in electing party and state officials, and the terms of office of party and state officials were to be strictly limited.

5. **Legal Reform**

The legal reform proposed by Gorbachev at the Conference was aimed at creating safeguards against the abuse of official power and as such must be regarded as another aspect of his comprehensive political reform. With the apparent aim of freeing the system from political interference and local control, the final resolution, "On Legal Reform", called for the term of office of the judges to be increased to ten years (from five) and for the establishment of a Committee for Constitutional Supervision, to be elected directly by the Congress of People's Deputies, with the responsibility of ensuring that government laws and resolutions strictly corresponded to the requirements of the USSR Constitution. Gorbachev clearly intended to use the USSR legal system to reinforce his political reforms, by curbing the extensive powers of the local bosses and offering real legal protection to the citizens. The provisions for enhanced independence of the courts and the proposed civil rights safeguards - such as inviolability of citizens homes, secrecy of correspondence and telephone calls, and, above all, protection of the human dignity of the Soviet citizen - were clearly aimed at restricting the activities of agencies like the KGB, which traditionally had been above law.

Regarding the existence of any organized opposition to Gorbachev at the Conference, it is difficult to pinpoint at any organized group. No delegate openly declared his opposition to perestroika or Gorbachev's policies. It is only after careful examination of some of the speeches that one finds indirect indications of disagreement with certain aspects of Gorbachev's reforms, such as the retirement rules, attacks against the bureaucracy, combining the posts of Party Secretary and local and regional Soviet Chairman, and, most of all glasnost. The conference reached its most dramatic stage in
the verbal duel between Boris Yeltsin and Central Committee Secretary Ligachev, then still the number-two man in the Kremlin. The antipathy between the two was no secret. It openly erupted at the CPSU Central Committee October 1987 Plenum, in which Yeltsin sharply criticized the slow pace of restructuring and accused Ligachev and other party leaders of deliberately obstructing the progress of Gorbachev’s reforms. Following this speech, Yeltsin was sharply rebuked at the 11 November Plenum of the Moscow CPSU Gorkom, where Ligachev led the attack against him that resulted in his ouster from the First Secretariatship of the Moscow Gorkom.50 Three months later, in February 1988, he also lost his seat in the Politburo.51 Nevertheless, Yeltsin continued his attacks against Ligachev. By the time of the Conference, the rivalry between him and Ligachev had become a symbol of the struggle between ‘reformers’ and ‘conservatives’. This rivalry epitomized the fundamental division within the party leadership. Yeltsin’s speech and Ligachev’s reply represented the first public clash between the men who personified the struggle for perestroika, as well as the first public demonstration of hostility between party leaders in more than sixty years.52

The All-Union Party Conference adopted seven resolutions:

1. "On the Democratisation of Soviet Society and the Reform of the Political System".53 Gorbachev chaired this Commission, and the delegates voted separately on two proposals: direct election of the General Secretary by the Congress, and making a second term of office dependent on "previous service in

50 ibid.


52 Hazan, n.42.

the post". "The resolution, taking into account the amendments and proposals, was adopted by the Conference with two abstentions".54

2. "On the Struggle Against the Bureaucracy".55 The Drafting Commission for this resolution was chaired by Yegor Ligachev. Twentyseven delegates spoke and submitted 100 proposals, and the resolution was unanimously adopted, "taking into account the proposals that have been voiced".56

3. "On Inter-Ethnic Relations". This Commission was chaired by Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov. 37 delegates submitted amendments and remarks, and the resolution was adopted unanimously.57

4. "On Legal Reform".58 The Commission Chairman was President Andrei Gromyko. "A number of amendments and proposals" were made, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.59

5. "On Glasnost".60 This Drafting Commission was chaired by Central Committee Secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev, "practically all members of the commission spoke", and the resolution was unanimously adopted.61

54 ibid.


56 ibid.


59 ibid.


61 ibid.
6. "On the Progress of the Implementation of the 27th CPSU Congress: Decisions and Tasks in Deepening Restructuring".62 This Commission was chaired by Gorbachev himself. After much lively discussion, the delegates unanimously adopted the resolution and its amendments and additions.63

7. "On Certain Urgent Measures for the Practical Implementation of the Reform of the Country's Political System". The draft resolution was submitted by Gorbachev at the last session of the conference. It was unanimously adopted.64

In his concluding speech, Gorbachev outlined the following tentative timetable for implementing the political reform that got reflected in the relevant resolution: Changes are to be made in the apparatus structure "in the fall". He declared that the whole range of questions relating to the reorganization of the Soviets would be "examined at the fall session of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Elections of the USSR People's Deputies could be held in April 1989 and elections to Union and Autonomous Republics' Supreme Soviets could be held in the fall of next year".65

The resolutions generally endorsed Gorbachev's proposals for political restructuring. However, this endorsement was given only after a hard battle in the Commissions and at the Conference podium, and only after many additional proposals and amendments had been incorporated into the final versions of the resolutions. The most important points concerned the establishment of a new type of presidency, a partial

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63 ibid.


transfer of power and authority from the party organs to local Soviets, competitive elections for party offices, a ten-year maximum term for elected party and government officials, and the creation of a new legislature. Taken together, these resolutions curbed the role of the CPSU as the ubiquitous and ultimate arbiter of every aspect of Soviet life. In the final analysis, although Gorbachev received the mandate he sought to continue his reforms, the Conference failed to provide any guarantee for its success.

The 19th All-Union Party Conference provided a public stage for sharp, outspoken party debate, unknown since the early years following the October Revolution. The clash of ideas and interests proved more dramatic than might have been expected, even in the new era of glasnost. The attack on President Gromyko and other party leaders, the accusation by Ogonek editor Korotich that four delegates had bribed their way to the Conference, the acrimonious Yeltsin-Ligachev exchange, the denunciation and defence of the invasion of Afghanistan, the unprecedented hissing and jeering directed towards unpopular speakers, and the massive confidence of Gorbachev himself, who never lost control of the impetuous proceedings - all this had a tremendous and lasting impact on Soviet public opinion.

Informal Organizations Emerging as Future Opposition to Communist Monopoly of Power

In launching perestroika, the Soviet leadership acknowledged the need to stimulate independent activities among Soviet citizens. Pointing at the close connection between economic problems and the suppression of public initiative, Politiburo member Aleksandr Yakovlev, who was also one of the architects of Gorbachev's reforms summed up the pre-perestroika situation, saying that, "the administrative command system created under
Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s allowed the State to swallow up civil society. The result led to economic stagnation".66

The authorities, however, hoped to stimulate activities only in the social sphere while suppressing those in the political sphere. Clearly, the architects of perestroika had in mind only a limited relaxation of the state's power vis-a-vis the society at large. Describing what he called "a civil socialist society", political commentator Fedor Burlatsky defined the division of responsibility between the state and society in the following way:

The State can provide for domestic order and national security. It can protect those below the poverty line and the small nationalities. It can ensure basic human rights, save society from excessive differentiation in income, and provide for a basic standard of living. But the state cannot directly control the economy, the development of culture, or public and private morality. These are the responsibility of a civil society.67

According to the reports of the Soviet media, informal groups first appeared in the early 1960s.68 In fact, throughout the history of USSR, groups of like-minded peers have gathered without official permission to discuss issues of common interest. They also had predecessors in pre-revolutionary voluntary associations, that emerged as a result of the reforms of the 1860s. The Manifesto of 17 October 1905, and the subsequently adopted Constitution of 23 April 1906 had legalized the establishment in Russia of those political parties that did not seek to initiate a revolutionary coup. The elections to the first and second Dumas (in March 1906 and in January 1907) were marked by the victory of democratic and leftist candidates. Most of the voluntary societies were abolished during the period of 'War Communism', although some non-political voluntary associations remained and new ones continued to appear throughout the 1920s.


68 Pravda, 30 March 1987.
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Until the end of the 1920s, a number of unofficial groups existed whose members were engaged in studying historical, cultural, and scientific questions without much interference from the authorities in their activities. The so-called regional studies (kraevedenie) movement, which existed until the end of the 1920s, was relatively informal. In 1927, according to the journal of the Section of the Scientific Workers, Nauchnyi rabotnik, as many as 2,000 organizations for regional studies existed without official registrations. Even in the worst period of Stalin's rule, groups were organized to discuss issues of common interest, although these gatherings often ended in the arrest of the groups' participants. It was from the 1960s, which the Soviet press considers the birth date of the first informal groups, it became easier and less dangerous to conduct activities outside government control than it had been under Stalin.

Between the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s, behind the seemingly immutable, Soviet society, a dynamic and a more modern society was slowly emerging. By the mid-1980s, a limited civil society was born that was described by Moshe Levin as:

The aggregate of network of institutions that either exist and act independently of the state or are official organization capable of developing their own, spontaneous views on national or local issues and then imposing these views on their members, on small groups and finally, on the authorities. These social complexes do not necessarily oppose the state, but exist in contrast to outright state organisms and enjoys a certain degree of autonomy.

Gorbachev's announcement in June 1986, that the Soviet society was ready for change, merely acknowledged a fait accompli.

The liberalized political climate under Gorbachev in the years 1986 and 1987, encouraged the members of informal groups to emerge from the underground into the open and actively participate in the public life of USSR. A survey of young people conducted in Moscow in March 1987 showed that 52 per cent of young engineering-technical workers, 65.1 per cent of young workers, 71.4 per cent of students, 71.7 per cent of tenth graders, and 89.4 per cent of students at vocational-technical schools considered themselves to be members of informal groups. As glasnost developed, it became evident that virtually all age groups of adult Soviet population were involved in the activities of unofficial organizations. It was admitted by the Soviet press, that the establishment of informal groups reflected a desire on the part of people to isolate themselves from the activities of official organizations. The decreasing prestige of the CPSU was cited as an additional reason for the birth of new socio-political movements. Programmes of some of the unofficial organizations set up at that time, openly stated distrust towards the party as one of the reasons for their creation. The Moscow Popular Front, in its programme elaborated at the end of 1988 and beginning of 1989, stated:

The Moscow Popular Front does not want to become a dependent, obedient and hopeless "supporter" of the Party apparatus in all its actions and mistakes. We are trying to avoid the plight of official Soviet public organizations -- submission to the authorities' control, bureaucratization of work and dependence on Party and state organs.

Development of Unofficial Movements

The chronology of unofficial movements in the post-1985 era can be traced to the groups for the preservation of historical monuments and ecological groups which came into existence in 1987. These groups emerged as the first socio-political organizations to participate openly in the country's public life. Continuing liberalization further enhanced

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74 The draft programme of the Moscow Popular Front, Chapter 1, "The Main Principles of the Front's Activities", pointed in ibid.
the role played by such informal groups. By 1989, according to the official press, the number of such groups had reached 60,000.75

The most common kind of informal group at the time consisted of young people who were interested in music - 'mostly rock and pop' - and who formed amateur music ensembles. Sports enthusiasts constituted another very common type of informal group in the USSR. They attended all the games of their favourite team and often got into fights with the supporters of rival teams.76

There were groups of the punks and hippies in the USSR. In addition there were groups such as the Lyubery (the name derived from the Moscow suburb of Lyubertsy), whose principal recreational activity seemed to be assaulting the punks and the hippies.77 In October 1986 Komsomol'skaya pravda reported on self-styled vigilant groups in Pskov and Novosibirsk that fought against corruption and other forms of injustice.78 Similar vigilante groups were established by veterans of the war in Afghanistan, who had found it difficult to adjust to the corruption in Soviet life after returning from military service.79

The various groups broadly included instrumentalist self-interest promotional groups, leisure and consumer associations, and those with ideal or value orientations. The self-interest groups included associations like the Initiative Group to Defend the Rights of the Disabled; an unofficial trade union called Public Initiative for Perestroika formed by transport workers, in Lipetsk in 1988, after rejecting their own official union; circles of veteran from Afganistan; spontaneous assemblies of workers and employees who had

75 "Demokratiya ne terpit demagogii", Pravda, 10 February, 1989.
76 Pravda, 30 March 1987.
79 ibid., 8 January 1986, in ibid.
carried out collective action against their employers. All these associations shared the common characteristic of coming together to further their self-interest.\textsuperscript{80}

The next type of associations were the independent or grass-roots (\textit{samodeyateln}ye) initiative groups. They formed local clubs for children with problems, support museums etc. They organized sports and leisure activities such as theatre groups, poetry readings and discussions. Environment groups were important in this category. Among these were a number of associations that were officially backed, but were organized and increasingly financed independently. These included \textit{Lenin Children's Fund} and the \textit{Soviet Cultural Fund}.

The third type of association developed out of the previously mentioned circles. In their attempts to acquire independent action such groups came into conflict with the authorities and become more politicized. This was the case with the environmental and ecological associations that sometimes developed into self-styled "\textit{Greens}" as in the Baltic republics. Such groups linked industrial pollution to economic exploitation and considered nuclear power as political phenomena requiring political change. Air and water pollution were regarded as serious health risks that could only be eliminated by local public action, which made entering into a political struggle with the authorities inevitable. Another example of the politicization that took place in initiative groups was the case of the Memorial Society. The group's plans to build a memorial to the victims of Stalin's crimes brought them into confrontation with the Ministry of Culture.

'People's Front' or 'Popular Fronts' were the most important development of the value oriented social movements. The idea of the front was first made public by Boris Kurashvili, a leading jurist of the \textit{Institute of Science and Law}, in the \textit{Sovetskaya molodezh}. Kurashvili stressed that the Front should not be regarded as a second party in the Soviet Union but that it should fulfill some of the functions characteristic to opposition parties - namely to monitor and criticize the government and party apparatus and to ensure that they efficiently execute their duties. The common political platform

\textsuperscript{80} Lane, n.24, p.96.
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of the People's Fronts had been greater sovereignty for the national republics, more control over locally generated resources, enhancement of the vernacular language to the status of official language, restrictions on immigration, any censure on the Stalinist past.

The most successful responses to the idea of a Popular Front was witnessed in the Baltic republics. Besides attracting wide membership as early as 1988, these Fronts also received the support of the republic's party authorities. The inaugural Congresses of the Estonian and Latvian popular fronts, as well as of the Lithuanian Restructuring movement, Sajudis were attended and addressed by top party and government officials. The programmes of the Baltic popular fronts served as a model for the programmes of almost all of the country's major socio-political organizations. The programmes demanded a guarantee of state sovereignty and the equality of rights of the republics in accordance with Leninist principles of federation, as well as a guarantee of the real right of nations to self-determination. In the economic sphere, the programmes stipulated introducing republican economic accountability and an orientation towards various forms of ownership - cooperative, shared, state and private.

By 1989, popular fronts had been established in all the Union Republics. In spring and summer of 1989 popular fronts emerged in Georgia, Belorussia, Azerbaijan and Moldavia; in the fall of 1989 the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh and the RSFSR Popular Front were created. In 1989, the Armenian All-Nation Movement as well as the Uzbek Popular Front had also emerged. Commenting on the achievements of popular fronts, in February 1990, Mikhail Potorarinin, a People's Deputy and Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Commission for the Affairs of Ethnic Turks, pointed out that at


least in the Baltics and in Trans-Caucasia, popular fronts had become much more powerful forces than party and government bodies. 83

There were other groups too, that aspired for systemic changes, particularly the rise of a multi-party system. In 1987 the Inter-National Committee in Defence of Political Prisoners were formed by Ukrainian and Armenian ex-political prisoners. In 1988, this group was enlarged to form a "Coordinating Committee of Patriotic Movements of the Peoples of the USSR", composed of representatives of nationalist groups from the Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia and Armenia. It advocated greater rights for the non-Russian republics and had an objective of forming a joint platform against Soviet rule. 84

The Democratic Union was founded in May 1988 from more than a hundred representatives of various informal groups. Before its inception, some of its spokesperson envisaged a democratic union of informal groups composed of individual members and groups that would be an association of mainly non-Communist members who embraced a wide spectrum of thought. Its aims included the establishment of a parliamentary system with competing political parties and civil rights. The leading role of the Communist Party was to be abolished. The KGB and the military service would also have to go. A Western type of system with private property, trade union, and a free press would be established. It aspired to become an opposition party and claimed a membership in forty eight cities.

Towards the other end of the Soviet political spectrum in the Russian republic was the Pamyat, formed in 1980 as a literary and historical society attached to the USSR Ministry of the Aviation Industry. At the time of its creation, the group advocated the preservation of historical monuments and improvement of the environment in Russia as its main goal. Soon it developed into a Russian nationalist organization with right wing

83 APN. 14 February 1990, cited in, ibid., p.22.
84 n.24, p.97.
tendencies and eventually adopted the name *Pamyat National Patriotic Front*. By the autumn of 1988, the organization had branches in thirty towns. It had anti-Semitic tendencies and was opposed to the other nationalities of USSR. Many people considered *Pamyat* a rallying point for the counter reform movement. This view was forcibly put by the Russian emigre writer Aleksandr Yanov in his article "Russian Nationalism as the Ideology of Counter - Reform" in *Russian Nationalism Today* (1988:43-52). The introduction to an official declaration of *Pamyat* vividly illustrated the group's position:

> The true situation in our country can be revealed with one phrase: "we have played around enough with democracy (podemokrati)" and its time to quit". Reasonable and healthy forces of our society, not having had a chance to arise, are yet gain stamped into the ground. This nonsense with perestroika must come to an end... It is becoming clearer every day that enemies have imbedded themselves in every link of the Party chain, the governing force of the USSR. Dark elements in the Party, exploiting Party slogans and phraseology, are practically waging a war against the endemic population of the country and are destroying the national image of the people. They are resurrecting Trotskyism, in order to discredit socialism, in order to sow chaos in the government, in order to open the floodgates to Western Capitalism and ideology.  

Even more extreme right-wing organizations developed. Neo-Nazi circles sprung up in many Soviet cities like Leningrad, Moscow, Murmansk, as well as in the Baltic republics and the Ukraine. These groups advocated a type of Russian fascism. Many Soviet youth were attracted to the strong leadership and the opposition to communism and capitalism that Hitler is said to have espoused. Groups like the *Black Hundreds* who committed organized massacres against the Jews in pre-revolutionary Russia surfaced under perestroika. In Estonia a *National Fascist Party* was reported.

There were also many groups which attracted attention precisely for trying to disassociate themselves from *Pamyat* and other such organization. Some of these informal liberal groups were *Spasenie* (Salvation) *Mir* (Peace) and *Soviet ekologii kult'ury* (Council

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85 ibid., p.98.
of Cultural Ecology). The activities of these groups received positive coverage in liberal Soviet newspapers like Izvestiya and Literaturnaya gazeta.\textsuperscript{87}

The first officially sponsored Conference of unofficial groups was held in Moscow from 20 to 23 August, 1987 by representatives of 47 unofficial groups. The Conference marked a significant step in the process of promoting public activity outside the framework of official organizations. The fact that the Soviet authorities gave permission for a Conference of ‘unofficial groups’ including former dissidents as participants represented a significant breakthrough. The main subject discussed at the Conference was the role of public initiative in the period of perestroika and the issue discussed were of ecological, cultural, economic and sociological concerns.

The unofficial groups played a historic role in Soviet politics. By getting involved in the social and political life of the country and by providing a channel to the citizens to express their views, these groups helped to democratise Soviet society. Using their samizdat periodicals, unofficial groups undermined official control of the mass media. Some of the reformist proposals initially advanced by unofficial organizations were later adopted as official policies by the Soviet leadership.