Chapter II

Gorbachev's Dogma Of

Perestroika And Glasnost
The very concept of socialism came into existence as a concept of ideal society to get rid of the problems, which had their origin in the after-effects of industrial revolution. Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Utopia was advocated as a rightful solution to the problems caused by the Industrial Revolution. The objective of almost all Utopians was to seek immediate relief from the tyranny of large scale exploitation and unlimited working hours in the polluted atmosphere of the factory. And the capitalists were held responsible for these exploitation.

As a matter of fact, there are certain basics to a socialist system, viz., the supreme role of the Communist Party in the Society associated with a principle of democratic centralism; predominance of State ownership of the means of production, centralized

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Industrial revolution gave birth to revolution of rising expectations. Utopia as a state, condition or place of ideal perfection was the result of these expectations. Thus it means an impractical scheme, especially one for social improvement.
planning, principle of minimum wage differentials 'absolute welfareism' etc. This form of socialism prevailed for decades in the Soviet Union, had deformed it into an inefficient economy.

A principal characteristic of the Soviet system and others communist systems - was the primacy of politics over economics.  

Soviets leadership - An Overview

The devastating effects of the civil war on Russia's economy obliged Lenin to make concessions

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This primacy can be expressed in a set of four interlocking propositions -

a) First, economic growth is of crucial importance to the leadership and cannot be left administer the Soviet economy;

b) Secondly, economic priorities are set in accordance with the political priorities of the leadership and elite.

c) Thirdly, the administration of the economy and the implementation of economic plans is designed in a way that will not impinge on the political power of the leadership and the elite.

d) Finally, while economic growth and its attainment are a central preoccupation of the leadership and elite, economic factors and considerations in themselves do not determine the formation of these goals and the methods by which they are to be attained. For complete documentation see Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferics, "The Genesis of Gorbachev's World" Foreign Affairs Vol.64 No.3, 1985, p.610.
at home and to gain recognition by foreign powers in order to promote both security and economic recovery. The New Economic Policy formally proclaimed at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921, relaxed restrictions on private trade and permitted private management of small industries. Lenin tried to attract foreign investors to exploit natural resources of Soviet Union.

Later Stalin abruptly changed the nation's economic course - he called for high tempo industrialization and then embarked on a massive campaign to force agricultural collectivization. Until 1929 collectivization was voluntary, but during 1929-30 collectivization was imposed on well over half of the country's peasantry. But the collectivization programme launched by Stalin was resisted by the peasantry. Many slaughtered their cattle.

The onset of Stalin's dictatorship and its political structure known as the "command Administrative System", dramatically worsened the position of non-Russians. Though the whole Soviet rural population suffered severely under-collectivisation, the area worst hit was the, largely Russian, region north of the Caucasus together with the Ukraine and Kazakhstan.
Five million Ukrainian peasants died in the famine of 1932-33, between 1929 and 1930 the number of Kazakh households declined from 1.2 million to 5,65000.

Under Stalin's successors Nikhata S. Khrushchev and L. I. Brezhnev the reign of terror imposed by the Stalin was reduced considerably. The end of arbitrary mass-terror and the "thaw" brought greater freedom of expression, the rehabilitation of parts of national cultures. The highly centralised Stalinist economic system tempered by Khrushchev, was preserved almost untouched under Brezhnev.

The Brezhnev era has been termed as the "Years of stagnation". Soviet Union had become a vast pressure cooker that was about to explode as the internal systemic contradictions became more acute and as the subjugated people's frustrations became more pronounced. This crippled the Soviet economy in many ways.  

3 In 1930's classical capitalism a similar crash. Its collapse was cited as evidence of the end of the capitalist system. It was further followed in several European countries by the discarding of democracies and the establishment of dictatorship. But capitalism survived, changed and chastened, in a new form. It did so by resorting to Keynesian methods of dealing with unemployment and adopting a whole series of welfare measures as in Roosevelt's New Deal for mitigating the vigours of capitalism. The capitalistic market economies now prevalent in the western world are actually mixed economies containing a liberal dose of social democratic welfare measures.
The years between 1979 and 1984, the Soviet Union was facing a number of crises, domestic as well as external. In the domestic field the tempos of economic growth had sunk to zero, growth rates of national income fell very sharply. The most depressing picture was that presented by productivity trends. And also there were signs of disturbing trends in various economic indicators. The growth in public consumption had long been outstripping economic growth. And finally, the gap between the West and the East in terms of technology (development and transfer) was growing substantially.4

Increased purchases of western machinery and technology, made possible by higher export earnings, had little impact because the Soviet economy, because it was unable to create and assimilate the new technology, or at least to assimilate it quickly enough. The high cost of extracting natural resources had sky-rocketed; labour shortages had intensified, because

Soviet machine stock being outdated and obsolete. The system of centralized, direct planning lacked flexibility, necessary for innovation. The backward infrastructure of industry, construction and agriculture produced enormous waste.5

Brezhnev's decision to intervene in Afghanistan (1979), under the facade of extending international aid, combat the counter-revolutionary subversive activities and to save the communist regime from the brink of collapse proved suicidal. The decision to intervene in Afghanistan was a miscalculation of events - the prolonged war proved a bleeding wound for Soviet Union.

Externally, Eastern Europe had become a significant burden on the Soviet Union. Relations with the West worsened and in Eastern Europe, pacified for a full twelve years after the suppression of the Prague Uprising (1968), the situation suddenly destabilized. In Poland workers' movement 'Solidarity' led to the confrontation with the 'tremend'. If the

The political system has exhibited its grave shortcomings by being unable to provide dynamic leadership. High and low officials doted unparallel longevity in office rewarded incompetence, perpetuated corruption frustrated the ambitions of younger generation.

Unofficial left groups existed among the youth back in the 1950s, but under 'mature Brezhnevism', their number was insignificant, people who had suffered for such activity during the 1950s and 1960s had either given up the struggle or joined the dissidents,
losing their socialist ideology in the process.

In many respects the ideas of the left intersected the projects of official reformists exports, both attempting to formulate a realistic programme of changes on the basis of a socialist perspective. Both recognized the need to combine planning and market principles in the economy and the inevitability and necessity of democratization from above.

6. Three samizdat journals (illegal/underground publication) (a) Varianty ('Alternatives'), (b) Poiski ('Searches', and (c) Levyi Pororot ('Left Turn'). Radical groups had formed primarily in Moscow and Leningrad, but the demand for such publications also grew rapidly in other cities particularly among the youth. The reformist experts were mainly clustered around research institutes in Moscow, Novosibirsk and Leningrad. Their mouth-piece became the Novosibirsk Journal SHK. The apparatus of economic management proved to be divided almost equally between supporters and opponents of reform. Naturally different individuals and groups expected different things from the changes with different ideas.

1. Some merely hoped to force out the Brezhnev 'mafia' from leading position and to occupy the empty seats.

2. Second group wished to reinforce the military and political might of the country.

3. Third dreamed of a redistribution of power and rights among departments. Fourth group was sincerely concerned to make Soviet society more free, just and dynamic.


7. Ibid.
From the above mentioned groups it appears that all were in favour of change and all realized that it was difficult to live under the old and existing state of affairs.

The social, political and economic crisis became evident in the mid-sixties. The slow destruction of the network of old, Stalinist political structure known as the command administrative system. The period of stagnation, which gave birth to crisis led to the slow destruction of the old model. In the transition period the competition between the process of destruction and the creative process of inventing new political and economic structure. For some quite period old bureaucracies, for quite some time prevented the rebirth of a new model - social economic and political systems.

As a result, political vacuum developed.

The transition to a new economic system based on market economy, to ideological plurality, the

Market economy means an economy in which crucial economic decisions and choices have been made in a decentralized manner by numerous private individual and firms, operating through a free price and market mechanism. Equilibrium prices and quantities have been determined in a market through the laws of supply and demand, or an economic system where prices, wages and what is made and sold are determined by market forces of supply and demand with no state interference.
restoration of human rights, western style democratic institutions. It was during the late 1970's and the early 1980's the idea of a truly radical reformer was felt and that would emerge as Soviet General Secretary.9

Brezhnev's successor Andropov, in his very first declaration - the new leader gave notice of his intention to carry reforms through transformation not only economic but also in political sphere.

Andropov's declared intention led the experts to draft reform in different spheres. But Andropov's death resulted in a setback to Andropov's economic and political reform declarations. Chernenko's assumption of power further complicated the situation. The death of Chernenko, Chernobyl nuclear power plant crisis and the most noted dissident scientist's release of Andrei Sakharov, after seven years from internal exile in

Earlier attempts were made by the Soviet leaders to carry out reforms in the party, economics and political organisation. Firstly by Khrushchev, to obliterate personality cult and command-centred bureaucratic methods in the late 1950's; influenced by Liberalian and Khrushchev in 1960's.

The introduction of reforms before Gorbatchev were more or less limited attempts to improve the basic command economy mechanism, without making any fundamental departure.
Gorky in late 1986 and assumption of power by Mikhail Gorbachev in spring 1985, brought an end to the protracted interregnum.

Perestroika Before Gorbachev

Peter the Great carried out his reforms in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. He sought "to open the window into Europe" to make Russia a maritime power. Historian have often presented Peter as a man who wanted to Europeanise Russia, raising it to the level of Western civilization. Peter created certain significant social structure. The centre of these structures became the military-industrial complex, besides it covered navy, small arms factories, manufactures supplying personnel with all necessary commodities, construction works, road services etc. Moreover, the pressure on the toiling population greatly intensified. Peter transferred serfdom from rural to urban areas, to the sphere of industry. Violence and coercion became the major means of implementing the planned projects. Construction of Peterburs can serve as a vivid example of it. Duties were increased threefold, and the population decreased by one-fifth during Peters
reign - such was the price of Peter's modernisation campaign.

The result of Peter's reforms gave birth or created a structure, which can well be defined as a model of pre-bourgeois empire.

In the 1860's a series of reforms, primarily the abolition of serfdom, began to be implemented. That was the second Perestroika in Russia. This time transformations were much more extensive and profound as far as borrowing the experience of European institution is concerned. The transformation, not only liberated peasantry from the bondage of serfdom but local self-government was also obtained. Trial by Jury was introduced and press censorship became less strict.

Need for reformation and democratisation of Soviet Unions centralized Polity.

Most western sovietologists have readily borrowed and dwell upon two major factors advanced by the Soviet leadership to explain, legitimise and popularise Gorbachev's radical reforms within the conceptual framework of Perestroika (restructuring), glasnost (openness) and novoy myshelenye (new thinking). These
were the pressing need of —

(a) rejuvenating the stagnant Soviet economy; and

(b) security considerations in a rapidly changing international system which will be controlled and dominated by those nations, which will possess mastery over space weapons and new information technology.  

Modernizing the stagnant Soviet economy and meeting the new challenges arising out of the development of a new generation of technology including weapon system and information/computer technology, culture, demographic and nationalities issues and shrinking of the Soviet share in the international trade had directly influenced Gorbachev to launch radical transformation programme.  


11 Ibid.
Ever since 1989, the world has been experiencing an impressive political transformation. The goodwill shown by the two superpowers that the survival of the humanity simply depended on their will, which led the two world leaders to pronounce that, "no one can win in a nuclear war (meaning it would end in universal and ultimate death), and that, therefore, there must be no such war'. This led Gorbachev to declare "Now - says Gorbachev -" it has become clear to everyone, as clear as can be, that ideas about war as a means of achieving political objectives are over and done with. In a nuclear age, such outdated dogmas encourage a policy which would lead to a world-wide conflagration".

The era of Cold War is over. The former Soviet Union and its satellites were faced with stagnation, pollution, corruption, criminality, unemployment, alcoholism, illiteracy, and an increasingly over debt.

On the other hand, the former Soviet Union was confronted with economic difficulties, which gave rise to a state of paralysis and stagnation. The economy was becoming more and more financially exhausted. Declining economic growth and stagnation affected necessarily the rest of the aspects of life in the country Gorbachev, was heading.
When Gorbachev brought the situation to light, when he showed willingness to open up to democratic fora of popular participation in management, when he spoke in a way to which friends, enemies and indifferent elements from all over the world had not been accustomed, Gorbachev won the sympathies of many as most significant politician.

In his introductory report, V.Mitrenko said that Soviet society, such as it was in the thirties and existed until late seventies, was not a socialist society. It brought on stagnation, decay and crisis, it did not enable reformatory evolution, but rather laid the ground for social explosion... 12

Troika and Perestroika... the political meaning of two seemingly consonant words which were added to the international lexicon then and now - troika (three) and Perestroika. On his one months visit to New York

in autumn of 1960 Nikita Khrushchev, dissatisfied the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, when Khrushchev used troika-(three), demanded that the division of the world into socialist, capitalist and neutral (nonaligned) countries and each world headed by a Secretary-General. The idea behind Khrushchev's troika was to have a political union with the non-aligned countries which were expected to follow the socialist path and to doom the capitalist world. But the word did not "work out" and could not find a due place in the international vocabulary.

Addressing before the most representative international audience in U.N. General Assembly exactly after thirty years. Mikhail Gorbachev stressed that at present we are particularly interested in being understood correctly. Our Perestroika "has a tremendous potential for promoting peace and international cooperation".

The two visits were divided by a period of closely packed historical events and the striking evolution in Soviet political thinking.

The world has changed and continues to change
rapidly, say Mikhail Gorbachev. If we want the 21st century to be a new age, spelling an end to the deadly division that tormented the human race, fratridal shooting wars on a regional scale and the cold war on a global scale alike. The answer is the new thinking.

"Glasnost", the word meaning openness, reportedly has a glittering pedigree: Lenin loved it. He is reported to have said: "Glasnost is a sword which itself can heal the very wounds it may inflict" and it is good to use the artillery fire of party 'glasnost to vice and error. So, Gorbachev decided to use the sword of 'glasnost' to discipline the Soviet society and encourage it for creativity.

Gorbachev's contribution to world lexicon - the two Russian words - Perestroika and Glasnost which gained currency world-wide.


14 Glasnost translated as openness, is essentially a political reform. It is to enable the individual to speak out, make his contribution or object to something. In Gorbachev's words it is to set the minds of the people in motion. It expresses the need for democratisation. The term Perestroika translated as restructuring, meant particularly economic reforms, though it covers political, social and cultural spheres and entire set of intricate social relations. Thus Glasnost becomes an important ingredient of Perestroika.
for his radical transformation programme he needed support from members of the Politburo and 500 plus members of the Central Committee of the party. Of the existing Politburo members Gorbachev was youngest one, in above two organisation majority of the members often owed allegiance to older leaders. But in the Soviet political system, once a member becomes the leaders of the party, the opposition to him becomes latent unless he falls out of grace as did Nikita Khrushchev in 1964.15

Perestroika, on the one hand, recognised the failure of the past efforts for building a structure of socialist industrialisation, its failure to build up a political culture, on the other hand, eliminating the stagnation, redressal of the mistakes committed in the past, and lead the Soviets towards new destination. Perestroika and Glasnost is a multifaceted and comprehensive renovation programme ‘which covered all dimensions of economic, political, cultural life of the Soviet society and international relations.

Objectives of Perestroika

The reasons for initiating perestroika are too well known. According to Gorbachev they, "came from the

15 Ibid, p. 91.
actual state of affairs in the economy, in the social
sphere, and in the moral, political and cultural
fields; from the concern about the problems which burdened
the life of society and every individual”.16

In 1988 Mikhail Gorbachev wrote in his book
"Perestroika": we are all passengers aboard one ship,
the world; and we must not permit the ship to be wrecked,
for there will be no Noah's ark. Further he says: "we
must all live together and resolve problems in the
spirit of cooperation, not by hostilities..."

It was not Gorbachev who provoked a crisis in
Soviet Union and in the East Europe, by initiating
Perestroika & Glasnost but in fact it was the crisis
of socialism in Soviet Union as well as in other
socialist countries that in line with a dire historical
necessity brought Gorbachev to the helm of the Soviet
party and state.

16 Mikhail Gorbachev, The Success of
Perestroika is in the name of the People (Novosti
Gorbachev case to head the USSR not to "preside" over the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the so-called socialist community - as was once said of Winston Churchill in relation to the British colonial empire - but to arrest the decline of Soviet power and to revitalize Soviet Union's position and role on new foundations.

Secondly, Gorbachev did not mean to destroy the communist system but he avidly wanted to make it more effective for building up a modernized and dynamic Soviet Union.

Crippled Soviet economy.

The nature of Soviet economy deteriorated due to the centralized command method. Soviet economy suffered from stagnation, low productivity, shortages and poor quality of consumer goods, and food products, rampant.

Inadequate number of consumer-oriented industries, and its failure to meet the growing and urgent basic needs of the common people, had a profound effect on the society. This rise of consumerism greatly changed the mind of the common man who wanted the consumer goods to be better in quality and sufficient in quantity they were not satisfied with the public distribution system, for bread the people had to stand in queues for long hours. Even the goods produced were not qualitatively up to the expectations of the common man. A survey, conducted jointly by the Gallup and the Institute of Sociology of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, show that three of the eight products considered - shoes, clothing and food products - rated by most while being 'very poor' in quality. Monthly Commentary on Public Opinion, Vol. XXXIV, No. 5, 6, and 7, Feb.-March & April 1990, New Delhi, p. 37.
corruption and a flourishing back marketing. Gorbachev has dubbed the Brezhnev period (1964-82) the period of stagnation.

According to Gorbachev, "it is impossible to effect cardinal changes with the previous material and technical foundations. The way out lies through modernization of the national economy on the basis of the latest scientific and technological advances, breakthrough on the leading avenues of scientific and technical progress, restructuring of planning, management and investment tightening of the organisation and discipline."

Despite decades of planning Soviet agriculture has not flourished, it has remained backward. In other Soviet satellites agriculture has flourished Hungary, East Germany, where yield per hectare is very impressive. Despite the facts the soviets possess a very fertile landmass than any other, 25 countries outrank them in terms of land and labour productivity, two significant measures of agricultural performance. For the last 14-15 years Soviet Union has had to import grains to compensate

the shortfall in domestic production.

Partly (Gorbachev) started from stand that "the resolution of current and future socio-economic problems is inextricably linked to a "radical economic reforms" which will abolish the administrative command system in economy and corresponding monopolism.

Certain major changes were enumerated in the Report of the General Secretary to the CPSU Central Committee on the occasion of the Seventieth Anniversary of the October Revolution held on November 2, 1987. Ten significant specific reforms were suggested:—

(i) decentralisation and delegation of power down the line;

(ii) democratisation of approach and method;

(iii) election of managers at enterprise and offices;

(iv) multiple candidates for election to local government organisation and in districts etc.,

(v) self-financed factories and plants, and self-financed state and collective farms;
(vi) the lifting of restrictions on farmers producing food product for enterprises and for those run by themselves;
(vii) wider cooperative activities in all the branches of the economy;
(viii) encouragement of industrial enterprise in small-scale productions and trade;
(ix) closure of plants and factories operating at a loss, and of research institutions and higher educational establishments working inefficiently; and
(x) government equity venture with foreign firm. 20

Central Asian Economy

The Central Asian economy follows the pattern of a typical 'colonial economy, raw material is exported and processed outside the region. According to Makhkamov 'the then President of Tajikistan 20, 20 of the

cotton was being exported from Tajikistan and had stressed the need for creating infrastructure for processing the cotton in the region so that employment opportunities are created. Cotton monoculture has drained and poisoned the land. The Soviet emphasis on cotton production had been seen as a negative impact of the command system of economic management. The monoculture of cotton has also led to a high rate of unemployment among the men. The heavy transfer of funds to the region had a negative impact on the economy of the ethnic population, as a result the GNP in the rural area of Central Asia recorded four times lower than in rural areas of Russian federality. Average industrial production declined considerably in the region. Decline in industrial goods resulted in shortage of essential commodities. Malnutrition is widespread, and according to the native intelligentsia, the rural population is starving. This, together with corruption, abuse of office, favouritism in selection of personnel has vitiated the situation. Unofficial sources estimate that in Uzbekistan, for example, one man in three is unemployed. Women are intolerably burdened with the field work and concern for large families, sometimes to such an extent that it leads
to a frighteningly high incidence of suicides by self immolation through fire, local natives voiced some ecological and environmental pollution threat, because rivers are drying up, Aral sea is dying and the land surrounding it is a salt desert where the survival of the local population is threatened.

Central Asia has been the Soviet Union's Third World, backward and exploited, lagging behind the industrial centre in economic and social development.

The Aral sea has caused an intensive ecological damage. The two main rivers that feed this inland sea are primary source of irrigation for the large cotton plantations that dominate Central Asia's economy. Because of the intensive irrigation required to cultivate cotton in the region, the Aral has lost 65 percent of its volume in the last 30 years.

Corrupt Political System.

In the political sphere, one of the major decisions of the 27th Congress of the CPSU, followed by the 19th All Union CPSU Conference, was to undertake a comprehensive democratisation of all aspects of life. The advance towards developed socialist democracy and self-government of the main line and principal objective of Perestroika in the direction of political sphere, or political reforms or the reconstruction of the super structure.

Democratisation of the Soviet political system and the establishment of a legal state are considered as the conditions, instrumental, guarantee and objective of Perestroika. Gorbachev has described democratisation as the essence of and a pre-requisite for the success of restructuring of Soviet economy. The importance of the democratisation has been enunciated by the party in the following words:

"The CPSU believes that at the present stage the strategic line of development of political system of Soviet society consists in advancing Soviet democracy and increasingly promoting socialist
self-government by the people on the basis of active and effective participation of working people, their collectives and organisations in decision-making concerning the affairs of the state and society.\(^{22}\)

In other words the importance of the democracy, put forward by the party is similar as it is understood the world over - government of the people, by the people and for the people.

"We do not have an opposition", Gorbachev said,"how then can we monitor ourselves? Only through criticism and self-criticism. And most of all through glasnost".\(^{23}\) Under the new political system the Soviets should "truly become organs holding unlimited authority ... and holding in their hands the threads of the State government. The 19th Party Conference - which was convened after a gap of decades, according to Gorbachev was to find ways "how to further the revolutionary restructuring... and to make it irreversible". The conference envisaged the following tasks:

(i) Democratization of all spheres of Soviet society.

\(^{22}\) Shams-ud-Din (Fn.10), p.28.

\(^{23}\) Newsweek, 12th January, 1987, p.16.
(ii) To set a smoothly operating mechanism in motion for intent articulation, interest aggregation of all classes and social groups.

(iii) To ensure free development of every society nation and nationality on the basis of equitable cooperation.

(iv) To radically strengthen socialist legality and rule of law in order to protect the peoples' constitutional rights and freedoms.

(v) To clearly delineate the functions of party and government bodies in line with the Leninist concept of the communist party's role as the political vanguard of society.

(vi) To ensure periodical self-renewal of the political system in accordance with the evolving changes in domestic and international conditions.²⁴

The Communist Party of Soviet Union has no claim on monopoly, so that the establishment of several

²⁴ Quoted in Shams-ud-Din (Fn.10), p.26-27.
parties is not precluded as a possibility in the future development of the soviet society.

**Social System in USSR**

Soviet society also witnessed social indiscipline. Alcoholism, absenteeism, systematic theft of public property and lying as a norm of conduct assumed gigantic proportion. Standard of living was declining steadily.

Previously (before Perestroika) there existed no civil society, nor its most necessary attribute - a State based on law - - - in the USSR. State power was the monopoly of the party apparatus and the nomenclature, while the relations between the Centre and the periphery were based on "indirect rule". This central command system resulted in shaky modernized republics and degenerated into feudal-clan relationships or produced organized criminal mafia structure, neither of which tolerated any kind of opposition.

The multi dimensionally of the new paradigm was outlined by Gorbachev in a statement he made on November 7, 1990.

We have resolutely broken away with lies and
injustice, strove to see a radical turn towards government by the people, economic freedom, a state committed to the rule of law and civic society...

Freedom and democracy, the rights of the citizens, sovereignty and self-governance of the people, material well-being based on the results of one's own labour... all are the things that are embodied in the socialist idea as we now understand it.²⁵

Perestroika's social and moral dimension — emphasises respect for socio-cultural diversity and autonomy of nationalities and ethnic groups, promotion of creative and innovative spirit in educational, scientific and intellectual activities, recognition of the democratic right of trade unions and professional group, in order to sustain the foundations of a multi-nationality socialist federation as a moral entity of enlightened and free citizens.

Marc Kaeff, Bakhmeteff Professor Emeritus of Russian Studies, Columbia University, explains the

importance of 'glasnost'. By revealing many shortcomings and problems of Soviet Russia's past and present 'glasnost' has also put in question the ideological basis, the framework, and legitimacy of the soviet system. Perestrika thus became the logical consequences of glasnost, a sequence with which Gorbachev is trying to cope.  