In the light of what has been said, we must admit that the social mechanism of economic development as it functions at present in the USSR does not ensure satisfactory results. The social type of worker formed by it fails to correspond not only to the strategic aims of a developed socialist society, but also to the technological requirements of contemporary production. The widespread characteristics of many workers, whose personal formation occurred during past five-year plans, are low labour- and production-discipline, an indifferent attitude to the work performed and its low quality, social passivity, a low value attached to labour as a means of self-realization, an intense consumer orientation, and a rather low level of moral discipline . . .

It is our conviction that both the expansion of these negative phenomena and the lowering of the rate of growth of production come about as a result of the degeneration of the social mechanism of economic development. At present, this mechanism is 'tuned' not to stimulate, but to thwart the population's useful economic activity. Similarly, it 'punishes' or simply cuts short initiatives by the chiefs of enterprises, in the sphere of production organization, aiming at the improvement of economic links. Nowadays, higher public value is placed not on the activities of the more talented, brave and energetic leaders, but on the performances of the more 'obedient' chiefs, even if they cannot boast production successes.

Source: Tatyana Zaslavskaya, 'The Novosibirsk Report', Survey, *vol. 28, no. 1, Spring 1984, pp. 88, 91, 99, 106.*

It was left to Gorbachev to resolve the issues raised by Zaslavskaya, beginning with the adoption of Andropov's modest opening and then dramatically extending the scope for debate and change.

10 Crisis and fall of the Soviet system, 1985–1991

By the early 1980s crisis symptoms were everywhere apparent. The country faced new economic challenges provoked by advanced modernisation, and political challenges stimulated by the effective extended political exclusion of the mass of the people. Life within the party itself had become formalised and dull, while the soviets were bureaucratised and lifeless. Responses to the crisis were at first partial, stressing notions like 'acceleration' (*uskorenie*), 'openness' (*glasnost*) and 'restructuring' (*perestroika*), before more global approaches began to emerge examining the problems facing the Soviet Union in terms of 'systemic crisis' and problems of civilisational integration. Towering over this last period is the personality of the USSR's last leader, Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, who was elected General Secretary of the party in March 1985.

Early Experiments

Zaslavskaya had condemned the way that the economy systematically undermined initiative and promoted alienation, arguing that middle-level functionaries were the most resistant to reform out of fear for their privileges. It was now time for Gorbachev to discover the route and possibilities of reform.

Document 10.1 Gorbachev's First Views

Although Gorbachev had already indicated dissatisfaction with the system, in particular in a speech of December 1984 when he had first raised the themes of *perestroika*, his early speeches as leader gave little indication of what would come later. The biggest change at first appeared to be one of style, with an active and obviously intelligent leader at the helm of the Soviet Union after so many years of rule by gerontocrats, rather than one of content. Elected General Secretary of the party at the Central Committee plenum of 11 March 1985, he had this to say.

The strategic line, developed at the Twenty-sixth Congress and later Central Committee plenums with the active involvement of Yu. V. Andropov and K. U. Chernenko, was and remains unchangeable. This line is for the acceleration of the socio-economic development of the country, for the improvement of all aspects of the life of society. We are speaking about the

transformation of the material-technical bases of production. We are talking about improving the system of social relations, above all economic. We are speaking about the development of people themselves, of the qualitative improvement of the material conditions of their life and work, their spiritual well-being.

We have to achieve a decisive turn in transferring the economy on to the rails of intensive development. We must and are obliged in a very short time to achieve the most advanced scientific-technological positions, to the highest world levels of the productivity of social labour.

Source: Kommunist, *no. 5, 1985, pp. 8–9.*

Nowhere did Gorbachev state how this could realistically be achieved. While calling for the 'strengthening of socialist property' and for the 'undeviating fulfilment of the planned development of the economy', Gorbachev simultaneously called for 'increasing the independence and responsibility of enterprises'. These contradictory prescriptions were to become the hallmark of Gorbachev's policies. At his first full plenum (23 April 1985) as leader Gorbachev returned to the theme of 'acceleration' and outlined the general themes of *perestroika*. In setting ambitious but unrealistic targets Gorbachev actually disrupted the existing economy.

Document 10.2 The Anti-alcohol Campaign

The lack of foresight was nowhere more apparent than in the ill-conceived anti-alcohol campaign, launched by a Central Committee resolution on 7 May 1985. While alcohol abuse was a major drain on the Soviet economy and society, the authoritarian approach only increased the production of bootleg liquor and drove people to drink dangerous substitutes for vodka. Above all, an already unbalanced budget was deprived of one of its main sources of revenue. The decree was used to continue the crusade against private trade, described as 'speculation'.

Decree of the Supreme Soviet Presidium of 16 May 1985

2 The drinking of spirits during production (in the place of work, in buildings and on the premises of enterprises, institutions and organisations) or being drunk at work is liable to an administrative penalty in the form of a fine to the sum of 30 to 50 roubles . . .

7 The purchase and resale for the sake of gain of small amounts of vodka and other liquors, as well as mass consumption goods and agricultural products, till and sale receipts and bills, entertainment and other tickets, books, music notes, records, audio and video cassettes and other valuables, if the scale of profit does not exceed 30 roubles, is liable to an administrative penalty in the form of a fine of 50–100 roubles with the confiscation of the items being speculated.

Source: Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, *issue 26 (Moscow, Politizdat, 1986), pp. 617–23.*

Document 10.3 Gorbachev and the Need for *Perestroika*

Gorbachev's most considered analysis of *perestroika* in the early period of his rule came in his book of the same name. The work is imbued with an optimism over the reformability of the Soviet system. After the long blockage of substantive change in the Brezhnev years it appeared that it would take little more than a change of attitude on the part of the Soviet leadership to achieve a solution to the country's problems.

Perestroika is an urgent necessity arising from the profound processes of development in our socialist society . . . At some stage – this became particularly clear in the latter half of the seventies – something happened that was at first inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum. Economic failures became more frequent. Difficulties began to accumulate and deteriorate, and unresolved problems began to multiply. Elements of what we call stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism began to appear in the life of society. A kind of 'braking mechanism' affecting social and economic development formed . . . Declining rates of growth and economic stagnation were bound to affect other aspects of the life of Soviet society. Negative trends seriously affected the social sphere. This led to the appearance of the so-called 'residual principle' in accordance with which social and cultural programs received what remained in the budget after allocations to production . . . This, unfortunately, is not all. A gradual erosion of the ideological and moral values of our people began . . . Propaganda of success – real or imagined – was gaining the upper hand. Eulogizing and servility were encouraged; the needs and opinions of ordinary working people, of the public at large, were ignored. In the social sciences scholastic theorization was encouraged and developed, but creative thinking was driven out from the social sciences, and superfluous and voluntarist assessments and judgements were declared indisputable truths . . . The presentation of a 'problem-free' reality backfired: a breach had formed in word and deed, which bred public passivity and disbelief in the slogans being proclaimed . . . Decay began in public morals; the great feeling of solidarity with each other that was forged during the heroic times of the Revolution, the first five-year plans, the Great Patriotic War and postwar rehabilitation was weakening . . . Party guidance was relaxed and initiative lost in some of the vital social processes . . . On the whole, society was becoming increasingly unmanageable . . . The need for change was brewing not only in the material sphere of life but also in public consciousness.

Source: Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for our Country and the World *(London, Collins/Harvill, 1987), pp. 17, 18–19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.*

Some Fruits of *Glasnost*

The economic plans outlined in the 1961 Party Programme were a typical piece of Khrushchevite bombast. In practice, the impressive growth rates achieved in the 1950s gradually declined. If national income grew 7.2 per cent in 1966–70, in 1971–5 it fell to 5.1 per cent, 3.8 per cent in 1976–80 and down to 3.1 (if not lower) per cent in 1981–5. In the same period, the increase in labour productivity fell from 6.8 per cent per annum to 3.1 per cent (L. I. Abalkin, *Kursom uskorenie* (Moscow, Ekonomika, 1986), pp. 26–7; G. Khanin, 'Ekonomicheskii rost: al'ternativnaya otsenka', *Kommunist*, no. 17, 1988, p. 85).

Document 10.4 Soviet Economic Achievements: Alternative Views

There had long been doubts over the accuracy of Soviet statistics, and these came to a head over alternative evaluations of Soviet economic performance. In 1987 the economists G. Khanin and V. Selyunin were catapulted to fame when they argued that by 1985 Soviet income had not multiplied by 84.4 times the level of 1928, as claimed by the official statistics, but by only 6.6 times ('Lukavaya tsifra', *Novy mir*, no. 2, 1987). The scale of Soviet achievements had been radically inflated by the manipulation and falsification of data by officials. In the table below official Goskomstat (Central Statistical Agency) figures for the later period are compared with Khanin's (average annual rates in per cent). Note the dramatic deterioration in Soviet economic performance in 1990.

Average annual indices	*Source*	*1971–1975*	*1976–1980*	*1981–1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Growth in national income	Goskomstat	5.7	4.2	3.5	2.3	1.6	4.4	2.5	–4.0
	Khanin	3.2	1.0	0.6	1.3	0.7	0.3	–4.25	–9.0
Growth in labour productivity	Goskomstat	4.6	3.4	3.0	2.1	1.6	4.8	2.2	–3.0
	Khanin	1.9	0.2	0.0	1.2	0.8	1.3	–3.95	–8.0

Source: G. I. Khanin, Dinamika ekonomicheskogo razvitiya SSSR *(Novosibirsk, Nauka, 1991).*

Document 10.5 The USSR Compared to the Seven Most Developed Countries (1991, per cent)

Not only was the Soviet performance in comparison with its own past declining (however accurate the figures for the earlier years might be), its position relative to other leading countries was increasingly less impressive.

Country	*Volume*			*Per capita*		
	GNP	*Industry*	*Agriculture*	*GNP*	*Industry*	*Agriculture*
USA	100	100	100	100	100	100
Japan	42	72	42	84	144	82
Germany (united)	25	41	24	80	133	63
France	19	22	32	84	96	115
UK	16	1	13	68	81	45
Italy	14	15	15	59	67	78
Canada	10	9	12	98	81	100
USSR	38	48	64	30	42	38

Source: Argumenty i fakty, *no. 26, 1991, p. 4.*

Document 10.6 Consumption of Goods and Services, and Productivity of Labour in 1991

Although there is no agreement on the figures, the data at least indicate the scale of Soviet economic backwardness. In terms of consumption and productivity, the USSR had fallen far behind the more developed societies. Indeed, the argument was often made in the last years of the Soviet Union (not least by Yeltsin himself) that in relative terms the USSR was further behind in the late 1980s than Russia had been in 1914.

Country	*Consumption per capita*	*Annual production per employed person*	
		Industry	*Agriculture*
USA	100	100	100
Japan	65	90	22
Germany (united)	70	85	45
France	80	85	56
UK	70	60	56
Italy	60	60	42
Canada	95	90	85
USSR	20	25	9

Source: Argumenty i fakty, *no. 26, 1991, p. 4.*

Reform of the Political System

The much-delayed January 1987 CC plenum outlined some proposals for democratisation; while modest in themselves, they represented a major break with the past. The year 1988 was the decisive one for reforms. The extracts below show the resistance to *perestroika*, and at the same time the radicalisation of reforms by Gorbachev and his entourage. It was in this year that the reform consensus

'O perestroike i kadrovoi politike partii', in M. S. Gorbachev, Izbrannye rechi i stat'i, *vol. 4 (Moscow, Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), pp. 299–354.*

Document 10.8 Gorbachev Celebrates the Seventieth Anniversary of the October Revolution

The speech on 2 November 1987 on the seventieth anniversary marked an important point in the Soviet evaluation of the past. The speech is quoted at length here because it represents the most consistent attempt to come to terms with the USSR's past and its place in the world. Given the nature of the occasion there were limits to how far Gorbachev could go in his critique of the past, and although he made some trenchant criticisms, it is clear that by and large the speech reflected Gorbachev's own beliefs: it reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of his analysis of the situation in which the Soviet Union found itself. Above all, the speech provided the theoretical basis for the New Political Thinking (NPT) in foreign policy.

Dear Comrades, esteemed foreign guests,
It is 70 years since the unforgettable days of October 1917, those legendary days that started the new epoch of social progress, of the real history of humankind. The October Revolution is truly the shining hour of humanity, its radiant dawn. The October Revolution is a revolution of the people and for the people, for every individual, for his emancipation and development. Seventy years is not a long time in world civilisation's ascent over the centuries, but history has known no other period like it for the scale of the achievements that our country has accomplished since the victory of the October Revolution. There is no greater honour than to be pioneers, devoting one's strength, energy, knowledge, and ability to the triumph of the October Revolution's ideals and goals.

The jubilee is a moment of pride. Pride is what has been achieved. Arduous trials fell to our lot. And we withstood them honourably. We did not simply withstand them, we wrested the country out of its state of dislocation and backwardness and made it a mighty power, transforming life and changing man's inner world beyond recognition. In the cruellest battles of the 20th Century we safeguarded the right to our own way of life, and defended our future . . .

I The October Road: Road of Pioneers

Comrades, our pioneering road has been long and difficult. No brief analysis can encompass it. There was the burden of the material and moral heritage left over by the old world. The First World War, the Civil War, and intervention. There was the novelty of change and the related hopes of people, the rate and scale of the invasion of the new and unusual, leaving us no time to look back and think. There were subjective factors, which play a special part in revolutionary storms. There were notions of the future, often simplistic and straightforward, and shot through with the maximalism of revolutionary times. And there were the pure, ardent strivings of the fighters for a new life to accomplish things as quickly, as well and as fairly as possible. The past – its heroism and drama – cannot fail to thrill our contemporaries. Our history is one, and it is irreversible. Whatever emotions it may evoke, it is our history, and we cherish it . . .

The year 1917 showed that the choice between socialism and capitalism is the main social alternative of our epoch, that in the 20th Century there can be no progress without advance to socialism, a higher form of social organisation. This fundamental conclusion is no less relevant today than when it was first drawn by Lenin. Such is the logic of society's progressive development. The Revolution in Russia has become, as it were, the summit of liberative aspirations, the living embodiment of the dreams of the world's finest minds – from the great humanists of the past to the proletarian revolutionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries. The year 1917 absorbed the energy of the people's struggle for self-sustained development and independence, of progressive national movements, and the peasant risings and wars against serfdom which abounded in our history. It embodied the spirited search of the 18th-Century enlighteners, the heroes and martyrs of the Decembrist movement, the splendid champions of revolutionary democracy, and the moral dedication of the eminent men of our culture . . .

Trotsky and Trotskyites negated the possibility of building socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement. In foreign policy they gave priority to the export of revolution, and in home policy to tightening the screws on the peasants, to the cities' exploiting of the countryside, and to administrative and military decree in running society. Trotskyism was a political current whose ideologists took cover behind leftist pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric, and in effect assumed a defeatist posture. It was essentially an attack on Leninism all down the line. The matter was of practical concern for the future of socialism in our country, the fate of the Revolution. In the circumstances, it was essential to disprove Trotskyism before the whole people, and to lay bare its anti-socialist essence. The situation was complicated by the fact that the Trotskyites were acting in common with the new opposition headed by Grigori Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. Aware that they constituted a minority, the opposition leaders had again and again saddled the party with discussions, counting on a split in its ranks. But in the final analysis, the party spoke out for the line of the central committee and against the opposition, which was soon ideologically and organisationally crushed. In short, the party's leading nucleus, headed by Joseph Stalin, had safeguarded Leninism in an ideological struggle . . .

It is sometimes said that Stalin did not know of many instances of lawlessness. Documents at our disposal show that this is not so. The guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage before the party and the people for

the wholesale repressive measures and acts of lawlessness is enormous and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations. Contrary to the assertions of our ideological opponents, the Stalin personality cult was certainly not inevitable. It was alien to the nature of socialism, represented a departure from its fundamental principles and therefore has no justification. At its 20th and 22nd congresses the party severely condemned the cult itself and its consequences . . .

It is said that the decision taken by the Soviet Union in concluding a non-aggression pact with Germany was not the best one. This may be so, if one is guided not by harsh reality, but by abstract conjectures torn out of their time frame. In these circumstances, too, the issue was roughly the same as it had been at the time of the Brest peace: was our country to be or not to be independent, was socialism on Earth to be or not to be. The USSR made great efforts to build up a system of collective security and to avert a global slaughter. But the Soviet initiatives met no response from the Western political leaders and politicians, who were coolly scheming how best to involve socialism in the flames of war and bring about its head-on collision with fascism. Outcasts already by virtue of our socialist birth, we could under no circumstances be right from the imperialist point of view. As I said, the Western ruling circles, in an attempt to blot out their own sins, are trying to convince people that the Nazi attack on Poland, and thereby the start of the Second World War, was triggered by the Soviet–German non-aggression pact of 23 August 1939. As if there had been no Munich Agreement with Hitler signed by Britain and France back in 1938, with the active connivance of the USA, no Anschluss of Austria, no crucifixion of the Spanish Republic, no Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and Klaipeda, and no conclusion of non-aggression pacts with Germany by London and Paris in 1938. Such a pact was concluded by pre-war Poland too. All this, as you see, fitted neatly into the structure of imperialist policy and was – is – considered to be in the nature of things.

It is known from documents that the date of Germany's attack on Poland ('not later than 1 September') was fixed as early as 3 April 1939 – long before the Soviet–German pact. In London, Paris and Washington it was known in minute detail how the preparations for the Polish campaign were really proceeding, just as it was known that the only barrier capable of stopping the Hitlerites could be the conclusion of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet military alliance not later than August 1939. These plans were also known to the leadership of our country, and that was why it sought to convince Britain and France of the need for collective measures. It also urged the Polish government of the time to co-operate in curbing aggression. But the Western powers had different designs: to hold out the promise of an alliance to the USSR and thereby prevent the conclusion of the non-aggression pact we had been offered, thus depriving us of the chance to make better preparations for the inevitable attack by Hitler['s] Germany on the USSR.

Nor can we forget that in August 1939 the Soviet Union faced a very real threat of war on two fronts: in the west with Germany and in the east with Japan, which had started a costly conflict on the Khalkhin-Gol. But life and death, scorning myths, went into their real orbits. A new chapter was beginning in contemporary history, a most grim and complex one. At that stage, however, we managed to stave off the collision with the enemy – an enemy who had left himself and his opponent but one choice: to triumph or perish.

The aggression to which we were subjected was a merciless test of the viability of the socialist system, of the strength of the multinational Soviet state, of the patriotic spirit of Soviet men and women. We withstood this test by fire and sword, comrades! We withstood it because for our people this war became a Great Patriotic War: for in a struggle with such an enemy as German fascism the issue was one of life or death, of being free or enslaved . . .

II Socialism in Development and Perestroika

Comrades, we had been led to the conclusion on the necessity for perestroika by pressing needs that brooked no delay. But the more deeply we examined our problems and probed their meaning, the clearer it became that perestroika also has a broader socio-political and historical context. Perestroika implies not only eliminating the stagnation and conservatism of the preceding period and correcting the mistakes committed, but also overcoming historically limited, outdated features of social organisation and work methods. It implies imparting to socialism the most contemporary forms, corresponding to the conditions and needs of the scientific and technological revolution and to the intellectual progress of Soviet society. This is a relatively lengthy process of the revolutionary renewal of society, a process that has its logic and stages . . .

Two key problems of the development of society determine the fate of perestroika. These are the democratisation of all social life and a radical economic reform . . . The purpose of the radical economic reform begun in the country is to assure, over the next two or three years, a transition from an overly centralised command system of management to a democratic system based mainly on economic methods and on an optimal combination of centralism and self-management . . .

III The October Revolution and Today's World

. . . The new thinking with its regard for universal human values and emphasis on common sense and openness is forging ahead on the international scene, destroying the stereotypes of anti-Sovietism and dispelling distrust of our initiatives and actions . . .

The new way of thinking has helped us to generally prove that a comprehensive system of international security in the context of disarmament

is needed and is possible. Now we must prove that the attainment of this goal is necessary and feasible. We must identify the laws governing the interaction of the forces which, through rivalry, contradictions and conflicting interests, can produce the desired effect. In this connection we should begin by posing some tough questions – of course, tackling them from Leninist positions and using Leninist methodology.

The first question relates to the nature of imperialism. We know that it is the major source of the war threat. It goes without saying that external factors cannot change the nature of a social system. But, given the current stage of the world's development and the new level of its interdependence and integration, is it possible to influence that nature and block its more dangerous manifestations? In other words, can one count on the laws operating in the integral world, in which universal human values have top priority, to restrict the scope of the destructive effects produced by the operation of the egocentric laws which benefit only the ruling classes and which are basic to the capitalist system?

The second question is connected with the first one: can capitalism get rid of militarism and function and develop in the economic sphere without it? Is it not a delusion on our part to invite the West to draw up and compare conversion programmes for switching the economy to civilian production?

The third question: can the capitalist system do without neo-colonialism, currently one of the factors essential to its survival? In other words, can this system function without the practice of inequitable trade with the Third World which is fraught with unforeseeable consequences? Another related question: how realistic is our hope that the awareness of the terrible threat the world is facing – and we know that this awareness is making its way even into the higher echelons of the Western ruling elite – will be translated into practical policies? After all, however forceful the arguments of common sense, however well-developed the sense of responsibility, however powerful the instinct of self-preservation, there are still things which must not be underrated and which are determined by an economic and, consequently, a class-based self-interest.

In other words, the question is whether capitalism can adapt itself to the conditions of a nuclear-free world without weapons, to the conditions of a new and equitable economic order, to the conditions in which the intellectual and moral values of the two world systems will be compared honestly. These are far from idle questions. The course history will take in the coming decades will depend on the way they are answered. But even posing these questions is enough to grasp the gravity of the task that lies ahead. We will see them answered in due time. Meanwhile, the viability of the programme for a nuclear-free and safe world will not only depend on its flawless scientific substantiation but will also be tested by the course of events – something that is influenced by a wide variety of factors, many of them new. It is, in fact, already being tested. Here, too, we are loyal to the Leninist

tradition, to the very essence of Leninism – an organic blend of theory and practice, an approach to theory as a tool of practice and to practice as a mechanism verifying the viability of theory. That is how we are acting, projecting the new way of thinking into our foreign policy activities, adjusting it by political experience. To sum up, what do we count on in our awareness that a safe world will have to be built jointly with capitalist countries? . . .

The next point. Can a capitalist economy develop without militarisation? This brings to mind the 'economic miracle' in Japan, West Germany and Italy – although it is true that when the 'miracle' was over, they switched to militarism again. But here one should examine the degree to which this switch was rooted in the substantive laws governing the operation of contemporary monopoly capital and the role played by extraneous factors – the 'contagious example' of the US military-industrial complex, the cold war and its spirit, considerations of prestige, the desire to have one's own 'mailed fist' to be able to talk to one's competitors in a commonly understood language, and the intention to back one's economic invasion of the Third World with power politics. Whatever the actual reasons, there was a period when the modern capitalist economy developed rapidly in several countries whose arms spending was minimal. The relevant historical experience is available . . .

The time of the Communist International, the information bureau, even the time of binding international conferences is over. But the world communist movement lives on. All parties are completely and irreversibly independent. We declared that as early as the 20th Congress. True, the old habits were not discarded at once. But today this has become an unalterable reality. In this sense, too, the 27th Congress of the CPSU was a final and irrevocable turning-point. I think this has been actually proved by our relations with fraternal parties in the course of perestroika . . .

The accumulated experience has ensured a better possibility of building relations between socialist countries on the following universally recognised principles:

- Unconditional and full equality;
- The ruling party's responsibility for the state of affairs in the country; its patriotic service to the people;
- Concern for the common cause of socialism;
- Respect for one another; a serious attitude to what has been achieved and tested by one's friends; voluntary and diverse co-operation;
- A strict observance of the principles of peaceful coexistence by all. This is what the practice of socialist internationalism rests on.

Today the socialist world appears before us in all its national and social variety. This is good and useful. We have satisfied ourselves that unity does not mean identity and uniformity. We have also become convinced of there being no 'model' of socialism to be emulated by everyone . . .

We can see today that humanity is not really doomed to always live the way it did before 1917. Socialism has evolved into a powerful, growing and developing reality. It is the October Revolution and socialism that show humankind the road to the future and identify the new values of truly human relations:

- Collectivism instead of egoism;
- Freedom from exploitation and oppression;
- The true power of the people instead of the tyranny of the few;
- The growing role of reason and humanism instead of the spontaneous and cruel play of social forces;
- Humankind's unity and peace instead of discord, strife and war . . .

In October 1917 we parted with the old world, rejecting it once and for all. We are moving towards a new world, the world of communism. We shall never turn off that road.

Sources: Mikhail Gorbachev, 'October and Perestroika: The Revolution Continues', 2 November 1987, Soviet News, *no. 6399, 4 November 1987, pp. 393–7, 399, 403, 405; 'Oktyabr' i perestroika: revolyutsiya prodolzhaetsya', in Gorbachev,* Izbrannye rechi i stat'i, *vol. 5 (Moscow, Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1988), pp. 386–436.*

Document 10.9 Gorbachev – 'Revolutionary Perestroika and the Ideology of Renewal'

This speech, delivered to the Central Committee plenum on 18 February 1988, presented an extended analysis of Gorbachev's aims. This was perestroika's golden year, when political and economic reform moved forward and everything still seemed possible. In foreign relations the USSR committed itself to retreat from Afghanistan (the last Soviet forces left in February 1989) and relations with the West blossomed. Gorbachev enjoyed unprecedented personal popularity at home and abroad, the economy appeared to be growing, democratisation was taking root, and relations between state and society were moving towards a position of mutual trust. Gorbachev's vision of a renewed socialism returned to the themes of the *Praxis* group and the proponents of 'socialism with a human face' exactly twenty years earlier in Czechoslovakia, a socialism concerned with overcoming human alienation and placing humanistic concerns above class war, one where the ideology overcame the dogmatism of the past and where the party was subordinate to the movement: in short, a socialism that differed in almost every respect from the one in existence in the Soviet Union.

Comrades,
Our plenum is taking place at an important period of perestroika, or restructuring. The democratisation of social life and radical economic reform demand from the party a clear perspective of things to be done . . .

It is precisely the party, equipped with scientific knowledge of the past and present and of the tendencies that have real prospects of development, that is obliged to assume the lead in the processes of shaping socialist consciousness in society. It is precisely the party that can and must theoretically elucidate the new stage of socialist construction, taking into account the novelty brought to it by perestroika . . .

The awareness has been established now that perestroika is an objectively necessary stage of development of Soviet society whose essence is a transition to its new qualitative state. We must ensure radical changes in the productive forces and relations of production, revolutionary renewal of the social and political structures, and the growth of the spiritual and intellectual potential of society. We are striving in the present conditions to revive the Leninist look of the new system to rid it of the accumulations and deformations, of everything that shackled society and prevented it from realising the potential of socialism in full measure. And, which is the main thing, we are striving to impart new quality to socialist society, taking into account all the realities of the world today.

The essence of socialism lies in asserting the power of the working people, the priority of the benefit of man, the working class and the entire people. In the final account, the task of socialism is to put an end to the social alienation of man, characteristic of the exploiter society, alienation from power, from the means of production, from the results of one's work and from spiritual values.

The October Revolution opened the way to resolving this historic task. The establishment of the power of the working people, abolition of private ownership of the means of production and elimination of the exploitation of man by man have been steps of pivotal importance. These are the fundamental gains of socialism. Over 70 years our party and people have been inspired by the ideas of socialism and have been building it. But because of external and internal causes we have been unable fully to realise the Leninist principles of the new social system. This was seriously hampered by the cult of personality; the system of management by command and administration that formed in the '30s; bureaucratic, dogmatic and voluntarist aberration and arbitrariness; and the late '70s early '80s lack of initiative, and hindrances, that have led to stagnation.

These phenomena, and what has remained of them and come down to the present, should become things of the past. In this lies the answer to those who express their doubt, that we are retreating from socialism, from its foundations laid down by generations of Soviet people. No, we do not retreat even a step from socialism, from Marxism-Leninism, from everything that has been gained and created by the people. But we decisively reject a dogmatic bureaucratic and voluntarist legacy, as it has nothing in common either with Marxism-Leninism or with genuine socialism. Creative Marxism-Leninism is always an objective, profound scientific analysis of developing reality. It is

critical analysis which does not look away from anything, which does not conceal anything, which does not fear any truth. Only such analysis is conducive to socialism. There are no, nor can there be any, limits to truly scientific quest. Questions of theory cannot and must not be decided by decrees . . .

I will recall that we started perestroika under the pressure of urgent, vital problems. On more than one occasion I had to return to the appraisal of the situation which had emerged in our country by the early '80s. I would like to add to that some considerations. As is known, the economic development rates were declining in our country, to reach a critical point. But even those rates, as has become clear now, were achieved in considerable measure on an unhealthy basis, due to temporary factors. I am referring to trade in oil in the world market at the high prices which had formed then, and the totally unjustified intensification of the sale of alcoholic beverages. If we look at the economic indicators of growth separately from these factors, we will see that during four five-year plan periods we had no increase in the absolute growth of the national income; it even started to decline in the early '80s. This is the real picture, comrades.

Only now is economic growth on a healthy basis beginning. We continue to experience, very much, the consequences of the situation shaped in the past. Now that the situation in the world market has changed and the prices of fuel and energy resources have declined, now that we are forced to reduce the production and sale of wines and vodka in the name of preserving the population's social health, the country's economy is confronted with a most serious financial problem. Over the past three years public revenues declined by more than 37,000 million roubles, as a result of the reduced sale of alcoholic beverages.

Sources: 'Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech at the CPSU Central Committee Plenum', 18 February 1988, Soviet News, *no. 6413, 24 February 1988, pp. 61, 62–3, 64, 65, 67; 'Revolyutsionnoi perestroika ideologiyu obnovleniya', in Gorbachev,* Izbrannye rechi i stat'i, *vol. 6 (Moscow, Politizdat, 1989), pp. 58–92.*

Document 10.10 Nina Andreeva, 'I Cannot Forgo Principles'

Nina Andreeva was a chemistry teacher in Leningrad when her letter denouncing some of the main principles of *perestroika* became a *cause célèbre*. She condemned the period's obsession with Stalin's crimes, the weakening of the class approach, the role played by 'neoliberals', and defended the heroic version of Russia's past. The letter represented a stark repudiation of *perestroika* and its version of history. There is some evidence to suggest that Ligachev had a hand in encouraging its preparation and publication.

I Cannot Forgo Principles

I decided to write this letter after a great deal of thought. I am a chemist, and I teach at the Leningrad Soviet Technological Institute in Leningrad. Like many others, I am an adviser for a group of students. In our days, after a period of social apathy and intellectual dependence, students are gradually beginning to be charged with the energy of revolutionary changes. Naturally, debates arise – about the paths of restructuring and its economic and ideological aspects. Openness, candour and the disappearance of zones closed to criticism, as well as emotional fervour in the mass consciousness, especially among young people, are frequently manifested in the posing of problems that, to one extent or another, have been 'prompted' by Western radio voices or by those of our compatriots who are not firm in their notions about the essence of socialism. What a wide range of topics is being discussed! A multiparty system, freedom of religious propaganda, leaving the country to live abroad, the right to a broad discussion of sexual problems in the press, the need for the decentralisation of the management of culture, the abolition of compulsory military service – among students, a particularly large number of arguments are about the country's past . . .

So much has been written and said about the Great Patriotic War and the heroism of those who took part in it. But recently a meeting took place in one of our Technological Institute's student dormitories with Hero of the Soviet Union V. F. Molozev, a retired colonel. One of the things he was asked about was political repression in the Army. The veteran replied that he had not encountered any repression, and that many of those who had started off the war with him and seen it through to the end had become major military commanders. Some of the students were disappointed with his answer. The now commonplace subject of repression has become excessively magnified in the perception of some young people, pushing an objective comprehension of the past into the background. Examples of this sort are not rare . . .

In talking with students and pondering crucial problems with them, I automatically come to the conclusion that a good many distortions and one-sided views have piled up in our country, notions that obviously need to be corrected. I want to devote special attention to some of these things.

Take the question of the place of J. V. Stalin in our country's history. It is with his name that the entire obsession with critical attacks is associated, an obsession that, in my opinion, has to do not so much with the historical personality itself as with the whole extremely complex transitional era – an era linked with the unparalleled exploits of an entire generation of Soviet people who today are gradually retiring from active labour, political and public activity. Industrialisation, collectivisation and the cultural revolution, which brought our country into the ranks of the great world powers, are being forcibly squeezed into the 'personality cult' formula. All these things are being questioned. Things have reached a point at which insistent demands

for 'repentance' are being made on 'Stalinists' (and one can assign to their number whomever one wishes). Praise is being lavished on novels and films that lynch the era of tempestuous changes, which is presented as a 'tragedy of peoples'.

Let me note at the outset that neither I nor the members of my family have any relationship to Stalin or his entourage, retainers or extollers. My father was a worker in the Leningrad port, and my mother was a mechanic at the Kirov Plant. My older brother worked there, too. He, my father and my sister were killed in battles against the Hitlerites. One of my relatives was repressed and was rehabilitated after the 20th Party Congress. Together with all Soviet people, I share the anger and indignation over the large-scale repressions that took place in the 1930s and 1940s through the fault of the Party and state leadership of that time. But common sense resolutely protests the monochromatic colouring of contradictory events that has now begun to prevail in certain press organs.

I support the Party's call to uphold the honour and dignity of the trailblazers of socialism. I think that it is from these Party and class positions that we should assess the historical role of all Party and state leaders, including Stalin. In this case, one must not reduce the matter to the 'court' aspect or to abstract moralising by people far removed from that stormy time and from the people who lived and worked then. Indeed, they worked in such a way that what they did is an inspirational example for us even today.

For me and for many other people, the decisive role in assessing Stalin is played by the firsthand testimony of contemporaries who came into direct contact with him, on both our side of the barricades and the other side. Those in the latter group are not without interest. For example, take Churchill, who in 1919 was proud of his personal contribution to organising the military intervention of 14 foreign states against the young Soviet Republic but who, exactly 40 years later, was forced to use the following words to characterise Stalin – one of his most formidable political opponents:

> He was a man of outstanding personality who left an impression on our harsh times, the period in which his life ran its course. Stalin was a man of extraordinary energy, erudition and inflexible will, blunt, tough and merciless in both action and conversation, whom even I, reared in the British Parliament, was at a loss to counter. His works resounded with gigantic strength. This strength was so great in Stalin that he seemed unique among leaders of all times and peoples . . . This was a man who used his enemies' hands to destroy his enemy, who made us, whom he openly called imperialists, do battle against imperialists. He found Russia with a wooden plough, but he left it equipped with atomic weapons.

This assessment and admission on the part of a faithful guardian of the British Empire cannot be attributed to dissimulation or political expediency . . .

From long and frank discussions with young people, we draw the conclusion that the attacks on the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and on the leaders of our country at that time have not only political, ideological and moral causes but also their own social substratum. There are quite a few people who have a stake in broadening the staging area of these attacks, and not just on the other side of our borders. Along with the professional anticommunists in the West, who long ago chose the supposedly democratic slogan of 'anti-Stalinism', there live and thrive the descendants of the classes overthrown by the October Revolution, by no means all of whom have been able to forget the material and social losses of their forebears. One must include here the spiritual heirs of Dan, Martov and others in the category of Russian Social Democratism, the spiritual followers or Trotsky or Yagoda, and the descendants of the NEPmen, the Basmachi [those who resisted Bolshevik rule in Central Asia in the early years of Soviet power] and the kulaks, who bear a grudge against socialism . . .

I think that, no matter how contradictory and complex a given figure in Soviet history may be, his true role in the construction and defence of socialism will, sooner or later, receive an objective and unambiguous assessment. Needless to say, it will be unambiguous not in the sense of being one-sided, of whitewashing or eclectically summing up contradictory phenomena, of an assessment that makes it possible, with qualifications, to create any kind of subjectivism, to 'forgive or not forgive', to 'discard or keep' elements of history. An unambiguous assessment means above all a historically concrete, nonopportunistic assessment that manifests – in terms of historical result! – the dialectics of the conformity of a given individual's activity to the basic laws of the development of society. In our country, these laws were also connected with the resolution of the question 'Who will win?' in its domestic and international aspects. If we are to follow the Marxist-Leninist methodology of historical research, then we must first of all, in M. S. Gorbachev's words, vividly show how millions of people lived, how they worked and what they believed in, and how victories and setbacks, discoveries and mistakes, the radiant and the tragic, the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses and violations of socialist legality, and sometimes even crimes, were combined . . .

Recently, one of my students startled me with the revelation that the class struggle is supposedly an obsolete concept, as is the leading role of the proletariat. It would be all right if she were the only one maintaining such a thing. But, for example, a furious argument broke out recently over a respected academician's assertion that the present relations between states of the two different social and economic systems are devoid of class content. I admit that the academician did not deem it necessary to explain why for several decades he had written the exact opposite – that peaceful coexistence is nothing other than a form of class struggle in the international arena. It turns out that the philosopher has now repudiated that notion. Well, views

do change. However, it seems to me that the duty of a leading philosopher does enjoin him to explain, at least to those who have learned and are learning from his books: Why does the international working class today, in the form of its state and political organs, really no longer act as a countervailing force to world capital?

It seems to me that the same question – which class or stratum of society is the guiding and mobilising force of restructuring? – is at the centre of many current debates . . . The first, and deepest, ideological current that has already revealed itself in the course of restructuring claims to be a model of some kind of left-liberal dilettantish socialism, to be the exponent of a humanism that is very true and 'clean' from class incrustations . . . It is the champions of 'left-liberal socialism' who are shaping the tendency to falsify the history of socialism. They suggest to us that in the country's past only the mistakes and crimes are real, in doing so keeping quiet about the supreme achievements of the past and the present. Laying claim to complete historical truth, they substitute scholastic ethical categories for social and political criteria of the development of society. I would very much like to understand: Who needs, and why, to have every prominent leader of the Party Central Committee and the Soviet government compromised after he leaves office and discredited in connection with his actual or supposed mistakes and miscalculations, made while solving some very complex problems on roads uncharted by history? Where did we get this passion for squandering the prestige and dignity of the leaders of the world's first socialist country?

Another special feature of the views of the 'left-liberals' is an obvious or camouflaged cosmopolitan tendency, a sort of nationality-less 'internationalism'. I have read somewhere that when, after the Revolution, a delegation of merchants and factory owners came to the Petrograd Soviet to see Trotsky 'as a Jew', complaining of oppression by Red Guards, he declared that he was 'not a Jew but an internationalist', which thoroughly bewildered the supplicants.

For Trotsky, the concept of the 'national' meant a kind of inferiority and narrowness in comparison to the 'international'. That's why he emphasised the 'national tradition' of October, wrote about 'the national element in Lenin', maintained that the Russian people 'had received no cultural legacy', etc. For some reason, we are ashamed to say that it was the Russian proletariat, which the Trotskyists slighted as 'backward and uncultured', that carried out, in Lenin's words, 'the three Russian Revolutions', or that the Slavic peoples were in the vanguard of mankind's battle against fascism . . .

Whereas the 'neoliberals' are oriented toward the West, the other [current], . . . the 'guardians and traditionalists', seek to 'overcome socialism by moving backward' – in other words, to return to the social forms of presocialist Russia. The spokesmen for this unique 'peasant socialism' are fascinated with this image. In their opinion, a loss of the moral values that the peasant community had accumulated through the dim haze of centuries took

place 100 years ago. The 'traditionalists' have rendered undoubted services in exposing corruption, in fairly solving ecological problems, in combating alcoholism, in protecting historical monuments and in countering the dominance of mass culture, which they rightly assess as a psychosis of consumerism.

At the same time, the views of the ideologists of 'peasant socialism' contain a misunderstanding of the historical significance of October for the fatherland's fate, a one-sided appraisal of collectivisation as 'frightful arbitrary treatment of the peasantry', uncritical views on religious-mystical Russian philosophy, old tsarist concepts in scholarship relating to our country's history, and an unwillingness to see the postrevolutionary stratification of the peasantry and the revolutionary role of the working class.

In the class struggle in the countryside, for example, there is frequently an overemphasis on 'village' commissars who 'shot middle peasants in the back'. There were, of course, all kinds of commissars in our enormous country, which had been stirred to new life by the Revolution. But the basic tenor of our life was determined by those commissars who were themselves shot. It was they who had stars cut into their backs or were burned alive. The 'attacking class' had to pay not only with the lives of commissars, Chekists, village Bolsheviks, members of poor peasants' committees and 'twenty-thousanders', but also those of the first tractor drivers, rural correspondents, girl-teachers and rural Young Communists, with the lives of tens of thousands of other unknown fighters for socialism.

The difficulties in the upbringing of young people are deepened still more by the fact that unofficial [*neformalny*] organisations and associations are being created on the pattern of the ideas of the 'neoliberals' and 'neo-Slavophiles'. In some cases, extremist elements capable of provocations are gaining the upper hand in the leadership of these groups. Recently, the politicisation of these grass-roots [*samodeyatelny*] organisations on the basis of a pluralism that is far from socialist has been noted. Frequently the leaders of these organisations talk about 'power-sharing' on the basis of a 'parliamentary regime', 'free trade unions', 'autonomous publishing houses', etc. In my opinion, all this makes it possible to draw the conclusion that the main and cardinal question in the debates now under way in the country is the question of recognising or not recognising the leading role of the Party and the working class in socialist construction, and hence in restructuring – needless to say, with all the theoretical and practical conclusions for politics, the economy and ideology of the role and place of socialist ideology has taken on a very acute form. Under the aegis of a moral and spiritual 'cleaning', the authors of opportunistic constructs are eroding the boundaries and criteria of scientific ideology, manipulating openness and propagating an extrasocialist pluralism, which objectively impedes restructuring in social consciousness. This is having an especially detrimental effect on young people, something that, I repeat, we higher-school instructors, schoolteachers and all those

who deal with young people's problems are distinctly aware of. As M. S. Gorbachev said at the February [1988] plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee: 'In the spiritual sphere as well, and perhaps in this sphere first of all, we must be guided by our Marxist-Leninist principles. Comrades, we must not forgo these principles under any pretexts.'

We stand on this, and we will continue to do so. We have not received these principles as a gift: We have gained them through suffering at decisive turning points in the history of the fatherland.

Sources: Nina Andreeva, 'I Cannot Forgo Principles', Letter to the Editors from an Instructor at a Leningrad Higher School, Sovetskaya Rossiya, *23 March 1988, p. 3;* Current Digest of the Soviet Press, *vol. XL, no. 13 (27 April 1988), pp. 1, 3–6.*

Document 10.11 The Official Response to Nina Andreeva

The response was slow in coming, and for three weeks the intelligentsia remained silent, fearing that a change of official course had taken place. The response, published in *Pravda*, was drafted by Alexander Yakovlev, who by this time had become the main ideologue of *perestroika*.

The fight for *perestroika* is being carried out both in the production and in the cultural fields. Albeit that fight does not assume the form of class antagonisms, it is an acute one . . . [Nina Andreeva's letter] is an ideological platform, a manifesto of the anti-perestroika forces . . . not all forces realise fully that the administrative-command methods have exhausted themselves. All who pin their hopes on those methods or their modifications would do well to wake up to the fact that we have had that and more than once, but that it did not bring about the desired results . . .

The personality of Stalin is extremely contradictory. From this arise bitter debates. Standing on the position of historical truth, we must take into account Stalin's undoubted contribution to the struggle for socialism, the defence of the achievements, as well as crude political mistakes and arbitrariness made by him and his circle, for which our people paid an enormous price and which had terrible consequences for the life of our society. Yet voices are still raised that Stalin did not know about the acts of lawlessness. Not only did he know, he organised them, conducted them. Today this is already a proven fact. And Stalin's guilt, like the guilt of his closest circle, for having allowed mass repression and illegality before the party and people is enormous and unforgivable.

Indeed, any historical figure is formed by concrete socio-economic and ideological-political conditions. But the cult was not inevitable. It is alien to the essence of socialism and is possible only because of a retreat from its basic principles.

We firmly and undeviatingly will follow the revolutionary principles of *perestroika*: more *glasnost*, more democracy, more socialism. The past is essential for the present, for resolving the tasks of *perestroika*. The objective demand of life is 'more socialism', and forces us to sort out what we did yesterday and how we did it. What we have to reject, and what we have to take with us. What principles and values should we consider genuinely socialist? And if today we look at our past with a critical gaze, then it is only because we want better and more fully to understand the path to the future.

To ignore the painful questions of our history means to scorn the truth, to treat with disrespect the memory of those who were innocent victims of illegality and arbitrary rule. There is only one truth. Full clarity, accuracy and consistency and a moral orientation to the future are required.

Source: 'Printsipy perestroiki: revolyutsionnoe myshelenie i deistviya' ('The Principles of Perestroika: Revolutionary Thinking and Actions'), Pravda, *5 April 1988.*

Document 10.12 The Nineteenth Party Conference

The Nineteenth Party Conference (28 June–1 July 1988) marked the decisive turning point in *perestroika*. On the one hand, a radical programme for the renewal of society was outlined. On the other, the end point remained unclear and vital questions remained unanswered: would the Communist Party retain its leading role; to what extent would a genuinely democratic legislature emerge; would an impartial judicial system be created; and much more. Gorbachev's report took the whole of the first day and was a remarkable *tour d'horizon* of where the Soviet Union was and where it should go.

Comrades, delegates,
The basic question facing us, delegates to the 19th All-Union Party Conference, is how to further the revolutionary restructuring launched in our country on the initiative and under the leadership of the party, and to make it irreversible.

I.1 Assess Achievements Self-critically

Comrades, revolutionary renewal is reaching ever deeper into the economy, that decisive sphere of life . . . How serious the situation is may be judged, among other things, by the country's financial situation. For many years, state budget expenditures grew more rapidly than revenue. The budget deficit is pressing down upon the market, undermining the stability of the rouble and of monetary circulation as a whole, and giving rise to inflationary processes . . . Let me begin with the food problem, which is probably the most painful and the most acute problem in the life of our society . . .

I.4 Democratising International Relations

Comrades, perestroika in the USSR has become a matter of global significance. The cardinal changes in our own home have called for new approaches to international affairs as well . . . As we analyse the contemporary world, we realise more clearly that international relations, without losing their class character, are increasingly coming to be precisely relations between nations. We note the enhanced role in world affairs of peoples, nations and emerging new national entities. And this implies that there is no ignoring the diversity of interests in international affairs. Consideration for these interests is an important element of the new political thinking . . .

World socialism is going through a crucial period. The fact that the socialist countries have advanced to new frontiers, that their potentials have been revealed nationally and internationally, enhances the prestige and role of socialism in world developments. A key factor in the new thinking is the concept of freedom of choice. We are convinced that this is a universal principle for international relations at a time when the very survival of civilisation has become the principal problem of the world, its common denominator . . .

In this situation the imposition of a social system, way of life, or policies from outside by any means, let alone military, are dangerous trappings of past epochs. Sovereignty and independence, equal rights and non-interference are becoming universally recognised rules of international relations, which is in itself a major achievement of the 20th Century. To oppose freedom of choice is to come out against the objective tide of history itself. That is why power politics in all their forms and manifestations are historically obsolescent . . .

II.1 Why a Reform of the Political System is Necessary

. . . The existing political system proved incapable of protecting us from the growth of stagnation phenomena in economic and social life in the latter decades, and doomed the reforms undertaken at the time to failure. While functions of economic management became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the party-political leadership, the role of the executive apparatus at the same time increased out of all proportion. The number of people elected to various governmental and non-governmental bodies reached one third of the country's adult population, but at the same time the mass of them were removed from real participation in handling state and civic affairs.

In the period of stagnation the machinery of management, which had grown to almost 100 national ministries and government agencies, and 800 in the republics, began practically to dictate its will in both the economic and the political field. It was these agencies and other administrative structures that handled the execution of the decisions taken, and that by their action or inaction determined what would be and what would not be. The soviets – and, in many respects, the party bodies as well – proved unable to control this

pressure from departmental interests. It became a universal rule that the body taking the decisions bore no economic responsibility for the implications of its actions.

Another serious shortcoming of the political system that had taken shape was the excessive governmentalisation of public life. To be sure, the tasks and functions of the state under socialism are much bigger in scope than under capitalism. But as conceived by the founders of Marxism-Leninism, management functions should be expanded not by strengthening power resting upon high-handed administration and compulsion, but above all by increasing the role of the democratic factor and involving broad sections of the people in administration . . . State regulation was extended to an inordinately broad sphere of public activities. The tendency to encompass every nook of life with detailed centralised planning and control literally straitjacketed society and became a serious brake on the initiative of people, civic organisations and collectives. This gave rise, among other things, to a 'shadow' economy and culture, which thrive as parasites on the inability of state bodies to provide timely and adequate satisfaction of the population's material and spiritual requirements . . .

II.3 Perfecting the Organisation of Government

Summing up these views, the CPSU central committee is submitting the following proposals for consideration by the conference:

First, that representation of the working people in the top echelon of government be extended considerably. With this end in view, direct representation of the civic organisations incorporated into our political system should be added to the currently existing territorial representation of the entire population on the Soviet of the Union and the representation of our nations and nationalities on the Soviet of Nationalities.

Thus 1,500 deputies would be elected, as they are now, from the territorial and national districts, and approximately another 750 deputies would be elected at the congresses or at plenary sessions of the governing bodies of party, trade union, co-operative, youth, women's, veterans', academic and artistic organisations. The list of these organisations and the quotas of their representation could be incorporated into the Constitution. All these deputies, elected for a five-year term, would comprise a new representative supreme government body – the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. It would be convened annually to decide on the country's more important constitutional, political and socio-economic issues.

The Congress of People's Deputies would elect from among its members a relatively small (say, 400- to 450-strong) bicameral USSR Supreme Soviet which would consider and decide all legislative, administrative and monitoring questions and direct the activities of the bodies accountable to it and of the lower-level soviets. It would be a standing supreme government body reporting to the Congress of People's Deputies. In this way, all legislative

and monitoring work would be concentrated directly within the Supreme Soviet and its commissions. That would be a new step forward in the democratisation of the highest structures of government. We can also consider a periodic renewal of part of the USSR Supreme Soviet . . .

II.5 Promoting Inter-ethnic Relations

Comrades, the union of our country's nations and nationalities which enjoy equal rights is one of the greatest accomplishments of socialism. Today this enables us to state with profound conviction that in the future, too, consistent implementation of Lenin's ethnic policy will be the only sound basis of our development . . . You know that the central committee plans to devote a special plenary meeting to the promotion of inter-ethnic relations. But since this subject is extremely important and topical, we should discuss it right now, at this conference . . . It is natural for the development of our multi-ethnic state to be accompanied by a growth of ethnic self-awareness. That is a positive development, but since the new requirements arising in this connection were not always treated with the attention they deserved, some issues began to develop complications and acquire a nationalistic aspect in some cases – although in principle, they could have been settled normally, without providing a pretext for all sorts of speculations and emotionally charged outbursts . . .

In advocating further consolidation of inter-ethnic relations, we proceed from the premise that the development of the Soviet Union, the internationalist ties within the brotherhood of our peoples are vibrantly dynamic processes. Both republican and Union-level agencies should never lose sight of them. The problems related to them should be tackled in accordance with the will of our peoples, in the spirit of concord and in the interests of all Soviet society . . .

II.6 Establishing the Socialist Rule of Law

. . . Just as all citizens have obligations to our state of the whole people, the state has obligations to our state of the whole people, the state has obligations to its citizens. Their rights must be firmly protected against any abuse by the authorities. Perestroika has thrown into particularly bold relief the conservatism of our legal system which is so far largely directed not at democratic or economic but at command-style methods of administration and government with their numerous bans and petty regimentation. Many legal instruments currently in force in fact hinder social development . . .

III.1 Democracy within the Party Should be Fully Revived

. . . We have defined the functions of the CPSU as the political vanguard. But to perform these functions the party should remodel its activity, style, methods and forms of work – from the grass-roots level up to the central committee. Each communist should really be a fighter for implementing its

policy, for the interests of the people . . . The matter is, in the first place, that the principle of democratic centralism, which underlies the structure and activity of the CPSU, was at a certain stage largely replaced by bureaucratic centralism. This occurred primarily because the primary party organisations and rank-and-file communists to a great extent lost real opportunities to influence the party's activities. Lenin's demand that all party bodies and their cadres should be under the constant control of the party masses was grossly violated. Many negative phenomena in the party had been caused also by the decrease in the role of elective bodies and excessive growth of the role played by the party apparatus at all levels . . .

The plenary meeting of the Central Committee in October 1964, it will be recalled, was held, in fact, under the slogan of restoring Lenin's principles and norms of party life. But the real processes took a different turn and in the years of stagnation they sometimes appeared to be badly deformed . . . For that purpose the task now is to fully restore in the party an atmosphere of fidelity to principle, openness, discussion, criticism and self-criticism, conscientious discipline, party comradeship, unconditional personal responsibility, and efficiency. The current processes in primary party organisations proceed in these directions, and it is the task of the conference to give them resolute support and open up unlimited opportunities for them to go on . . .

It is necessary for elections at all levels to be conducted in a democratic atmosphere, which ensures a broad discussion of candidates, competitiveness and, as a result, the election of talented and worthy people who are genuinely dedicated to our cause, enjoy unquestionable authority and are capable of pursuing the policy of perestroika . . . There is universal interest in the proposal to establish a uniform five-year term for all party committees, to limit the holding of elected office in the CPSU to two successive terms, and to permit election for a third term only in exceptional cases . . .

III.2 Demarcating the Functions of Party and State Bodies

A factor of tremendous importance in the functioning of the party as a political vanguard in present conditions is the correct solution of the problem of clearly demarcating the functions of party and state bodies . . . It must be said that the question of separating the functions of the party and the state was raised more than once at different stages in the history of our society, with recognition being given to the abnormal character of the existing situation and the need to modify it in line with Lenin's principle . . . In these matters, we should fully assert the Leninist principle under which the CPSU is to conduct its policies via the communists working on government bodies and in all spheres of the social fabric. All party organisations are to act in strict compliance with the USSR Constitution and Soviet laws. We should rule out the practice of party committees adopting resolutions with direct instructions to government or economic agencies or civic organisations . . .

III.3 Revolutionary Perestroika for a New Image of Socialism

. . . Perestroika has pushed glasnost to the forefront. Glasnost is being practised in the most diverse forms – in the work of governmental and civic organisations, at meetings, at scientific and other conferences and at gatherings of citizens . . . Glasnost presupposes a plurality of opinions on all questions of home and international policy, a free play of different points of view, and discussion. It cannot fulfil its social role, it cannot serve the interests of the people and socialism in the absence of this approach.

But like any other token of democracy, glasnost presupposes a high sense of responsibility. It is incompatible with any claim to monopoly of opinion, with imposition of dogmas in place of those that we have rejected. It is incompatible with group interests, and doubly so with any distortion of the facts and with any settling of personal scores . . . Our aims are more democracy, more socialism, a better life for the working people and greatness and well-being for the country. In these several days, we shall have to sum up the work accomplished in the drive for these aims and adopt documents of tremendous importance – documents that will give new momentum to perestroika, that will make it irreversible. This, indeed, determines the measure of responsibility to the party and the people of every delegate, and our conference as a whole.

Sources: Mikhail Gorbachev, 'On Progress in Implementing the Decisions of the 27th Party Congress and the Tasks for Promoting Perestroika', 28 June 1988, Soviet News, *no. 6432, 6 July 1988, pp. 237, 238, 243, 244, 245, 248–9, 251, 252, 254–5, 256, 257, 258; 'O khode realizatsii reshenii XXVII s"ezda KPSS i zadachakh po uglubleniyu perestroiki', in Gorbachev,* Izbrannye rechi i stat'i, *vol. 6, pp. 323–98.*

Document 10.13 Dismantling the Apparatus

On the basis of the Nineteenth Party Conference decisions, the CC plenum on 30 September 1988 reorganised the Central Committee's Secretariat, abolishing its many departments, and in their place established six broad commissions. The change marked the end of the apparatus's ability to monitor and control political processes in the country. A whole epoch of party power came to an end. Vadim Medvedev, responsible for ideology, summarised the changes as follows.

When examining the issues of reorganising the Party apparatus, the plenum passed a decision on Central Committee commissions on key aspects of home and foreign policies.

It found it expedient to have the following Central Committee commissions:

- A commission on Party building and personnel policy (Georgi Razumovsky was endorsed as its chairman).

- An ideological commission (with [Vadim] Medvedev endorsed as its chairman).
- A commission on agrarian policy (with Yegor Ligachev as chairman).
- A commission on international policy (with Alexander Yakovlev as chairman).
- And a commission on legal policy (with Viktor Chebrikov as chairman).

The plenum instructed the Politburo to effect practical measures to create a new structure for the apparatus of the CPSU Central Committee and local Party committees with account taken of the changed function of Party bodies in conditions where the perestroika (restructuring) drive is making further headway and the country's political system is being reformed . . .

Referring to the reorganisation of the CPSU Central Committee apparatus, Vadim Medvedev stressed that a substantial reduction in the number of departments and apparatus is to be effected. 'Maybe by half'. The measure will affect not only the central apparatus but also those of the central committees of the communist parties of the union republics and regional Party committees, albeit to a lesser extent, it is true, than the Central Committee apparatus. As to the primary Party committees, district and city ones, there will be practically no reductions there . . .

Some of the Central Committee departments will be enlarged and merged . . . The Central Committee's ideological commission and ideological department are being organised on the basis of three existing Central Committee departments, one for propaganda, another for culture and the other on science and institutions of learning. In other cases, existing departments will be abolished. This applies to the departments dealing each with a specific economic sector. Their functions are being handed over to the Council of Ministers and to the Supreme Soviet and its commissions . . . Naturally enough, the Central Committee apparatus will have political rather than administrative functions, just as suggested at the [nineteenth] Party conference.

Source: 'News Conference on Plenary Meeting', 30 September 1988, Soviet News, *no. 6445, 5 October 1988, pp. 375, 382.*

Document 10.14 The First USSR Congress of People's Deputies

One of the most important constitutional changes envisaged by the Nineteenth Party Conference was the election of a 2,250-strong Congress of People's Deputies (CPD), to meet on average twice a year for about ten days with the power to change the constitution, that would in turn elect a smaller Supreme Soviet with normal legislative powers. The necessary changes to the old Soviet constitution were adopted on 1 December 1988, and the first relatively free elections were held in March 1989. Many of the most illustrious communist leaders were defeated,

while Gorbachev himself did not have to face the electorate since he was one of the 750 deputies nominated directly by social organisations. The first convocation of the CPD was televised live and enthralled the nation; for the first time a Soviet legislative assembly was the scene of uninhibited debate. Gorbachev's speech on 30 May set the guidelines for domestic and foreign policy. Some of his earlier buoyancy was beginning to wear off as the economic situation deteriorated further.

Our Congress is in its fifth day. For all this time this hall has witnessed the simmering of passions. I think that we all agree that the work of the Congress is riding the wave of democratic renewal and deep-going revolutionary processes in society. There is hardly any need now to prove that the Congress itself, everything that preceded it and the character of the debates that have been started, signify a convincing victory for perestroika and open a new page in our state's history . . .

By the beginning of the 1980s, as a result of many years of stagnation, the country found itself in a serious crisis that had embraced all spheres of life. The situation demanded that the Party make a sharp turn. That was a crucial choice, and the Party made it. Today, we all see the correctness of that choice. The wave of renewal has woken the country. The process of mastering new forms of public life, in economy, politics and culture, has become established . . .

What is the matter? Why don't we yet feel even the effects of what has been achieved? First of all, because the country's financial system was seriously distorted, and the consumer market unbalanced. Any kind of shortage of consumer items gives rise to strong and legitimate discontent among people, and adds to the social strain in society. The causes are various. These negative phenomena are the hard legacy of the past and the tremendous losses connected with the fall in world prices of fuel and raw materials, the Chernobyl accident [April 1986], and natural calamities. At the same time the economic situation is connected to a considerable extent with our own actions and sometimes inaction even during the years of perestroika.

To begin with, the state continues to live beyond its means. Budget expenditures in the current five-year plan period grow faster than national income. Hence, the growing budget deficit. This is simply inadmissible from the economic point of view and should not be regarded other than as a serious miscalculation in economic policy, for which responsibility is borne primarily by the USSR Ministry of Finance and its apparatus . . .

Tackling problems of the nation's social and economic development, we should consistently realise the principle of social justice. It is not enough to proclaim it, it is essential to stimulate social and economic mechanisms to make it possible to remove the principal brake on our progress – levelled wages and the deeply ingrained psychology of parasitism. I have already had occasion at this Congress to touch upon the problem of social benefits and privileges. I will add the following to what I said then. The system of

privileges – be it differentiated pensions or vacations, medical services or housing, and the provision of material and cultural benefits to different social, age and professional groups, territories and agencies – has taken shape over many dozens of years. Apparently, these issues should be treated in such a way as, on the one hand, to stimulate talent and highly efficient work and on the other, to help those groups of the population that need it. Of course, any aberrations or abuses must be resolutely eradicated . . .

Reliable defences were and remain a vital issue for our people who have lived through a most arduous war, and the Soviet Army has always been given special care. But in the present world there are increasing possibilities to ensure security by political and diplomatic means. This makes it possible to reduce military expenditures through giving new quality to the Soviet Armed Forces without detriment to the country's defence capability. Over the past two years military spending has been frozen. This helped save 10 billion roubles.

Now I'd like to give the real figure for military spending in 1989: 77.3 billion roubles. You are invited to consider a proposal for slashing the military budget for 1990–1991 by another 10 billion roubles, or by 14 per cent, and working further on all aspects of this issue at the Supreme Soviet, taking into account domestic requirements and the tasks of ensuring a reliable defence potential for the country. Outlays on space programmes have already been partially scaled down. These outlays are not that big. You will see it when working on this issue later on . . .

We spend some 40 billion roubles a year on the upkeep of the administrative apparatus in this country. Significantly, 2.5 billion of this goes to maintain state management bodies, whereas the rest is absorbed by the administrative staff of conglomerates and factories. This issue must be made clear . . .

One more thing, comrades. Life has demonstrated graphically that economic reform is simply impossible without radically updated socialist property relations and developing and combining various forms of this property. We favour establishing flexible and effective relations to use public property so that each form of property may prove its vitality and right to exist in real and fair competition. The only condition that should be made is that there be no exploitation of workers and their alienation from the means of production. Another decisive aspect of economic reform – the creation of a full-blooded socialist market – is inextricably connected with this attitude to property. The market, of course, is not omnipotent. But mankind has not been able to devise a different, more effective and democratic mechanism of economic management. A socialist plan-based economy cannot do without it. We should recognise this. We believe that as reform makes headway, we shall see the formation of such a system of relations in the economy as can be called a legal economy. It will be based on law-regulated relations rather than administrative injunctions and orders. Government guidance over the economy management will be clearly separated . . .

We together can state with every foundation – and this has already been stated here – that the broad democratisation of state and public of our country is the most substantial accomplishment of perestroika. The elections of People's Deputies of the USSR, the work of our Congress and the atmosphere of its deliberations convincingly attest to this . . .

First of all this is the implementation of the historic slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' that we have advanced again. The reconstruction of representative bodies, all-round widening of their rights and powers in accordance with the constitution, the unconditional subjugation of the apparatus to them is the first prerequisite for the return of real levers of power and management of the Soviets. Many people here have already declared in favour of this, and we should register this in the final documents of our Congress. Another condition for this is a clear delimitation of the powers of Party and government bodies. The Party condemned decisively the state of things when its organisations were substituting government bodies and were actually performing the functions of direct management of the economy and all other areas of life. Assuming the tasks uncharacteristic of them, party committees lost the ability to appraise critically the developments of society and play the role of its vanguard . . . At issue are principled questions pertaining to the structure of the federal state, the rights and opportunities of the local Soviets, the broadening of the self-governing principles in the whole of our political system . . .

I must say that Party and Soviet bodies are receiving proposals to hold the regular elections within the time span stipulated by the constitution: next spring when the term of office of the present Soviets is to expire. Both the first stage of political reform and everything that has to be done at its successive stages progress along the road of creating a social rule-of-law state, it goes without saying, however, that this does not resolve the task of building such a state. The task is a much vaster one, encompassing a broad domain of democratic regulations of society's life. Legal protection of the individual and ensuring all the conditions enabling the citizen to exercise all his rights and, naturally, to discharge his obligations *vis-à-vis* the state moves to the forefront here. All our steps to build a rule-of-law state, and their effectiveness, must be measured by the main criterion – by what they give to the Soviet man . . . Democracy can exist only with strict compliance by all – the state, public organisations, every collective and every citizen – with the rights and duties. This is axiomatic . . .

Comrades, the first days of the Congress brought to light again the acuteness of the nationalities question, the complexity of inter-ethnic relations. Indeed, multi-ethnic character is a unique quality of our state and society. On the one hand, it is a source of its strength, but on the other, given the slightest distortions of the nationalities policy, it can become the cause of the weakening of the state, of instability in society with unpredictably heavy consequences . . . Democratisation and glasnost made it possible to see the

whole truth and start rectifying distortions, eliminating injustice. But it should be admitted that at the beginning of the perestroika drive we have not realised in full measure the need to renew the nationalities policy. Probably there has been a delay about solving a number of burning problems. Meanwhile, natural dissatisfaction with the accumulated economic and social problems came to be viewed as an infringement of national interests. Speculating on these common difficulties, definite elements tried to aggravate the situation still more. This resulted in excesses in a number of republics and led to the generally known tragic consequences with the loss of life . . .

The principle of national self-determination advanced by Lenin has been and remains one of chief elements of the nationalities policy of the Communist Party. It was at the basis of socialist statehood when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed . . . The federal structure of the state should now be filled with real political and economic content so that this form should fully meet the requirements and aspirations of nations and be in keeping with the realities of the present. On the whole, we view the key aspects of the restructuring of nationalities policies in the following way. In the political area these are the substantial widening of the rights of union and autonomous republics, of other national formations, relegation of an ever broader range of managerial functions to local government, and the enhancement of independence and responsibility of republican and local government bodies. There is a need for a firm definition in a federal state as to what should be in the jurisdiction in the union and what is a sovereign right of a union or autonomous republic. There should be juridical mechanisms for settling conflicts that might arise in their relations . . .

The vesting of Supreme Soviet members with special functions should in no way mean belittling the role of the other People's Deputies. Each of them has the chance to be elected to the Supreme Soviet during the annual renewal of one-fifth of it. Many Deputies will be included in Supreme Soviet committees and commissions, making up half of their members and having the right to vote. It appears reasonable that they may be invited to fill leading positions in commissions and committees as, say, deputy chairmen, representing this half. As I see it, we all agreed that every People's Deputy of the USSR may participate in the work of this or that commission or committee and in sessions of the chambers of the Supreme Soviet if he so wishes. And each of them should get full information on the current work of the Supreme Soviet, the government or other bodies of power.

And finally, each of them has an opportunity to engage in active political work in his own region or public organisation, maintaining permanent contact with his constituents and sending this or that enquiry or suggestion to local and central authorities. Local bodies should see to it that the Deputies have the opportunity to receive citizens and meet constituents. All these issues must be tackled immediately. Thereby we shall succeed in maintaining the most valuable quality of the Soviet system – the permanent

link between the people's representatives and their constituents or, quoting Lenin, to combine the benefits of parliamentarism with those of direct democracy.

Sources: Mikhail Gorbachev, 'On the Main Directions of Internal and Foreign Policy of the USSR', 30 May 1989, Soviet News, *no. 6478, 7 June 1989, pp. 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189; 'Obosnovnykh napravleniyakh vnutrennei i vneshnei politiki SSSR', in Gorbachev,* Izbrannye rechi i stat'i, *vol. 7 (Moscow, Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), pp. 558–89.*

Document 10.15 Can the Party Survive?

The Congress was followed by an upsurge of worker unrest, in particular strikes by miners, and many new civic associations were founded. In late 1989 Gorbachev penned an important article arguing that even under conditions of democratisation the Communist Party would continue to exert an important role. As political order began to disintegrate there was a certain logic to Gorbachev's argument, yet he failed to convert the party into a competitive organisation suitable for a pluralistic multi-party environment. Gorbachev's article was summarised as follows.

Some people try to reproach us that we have no clear-cut detailed plan to realise the concept of perestroika . . . A new quality of social being and a new aspect of socialism are crystallizing in the competition of various economic and social forms, institutions and ideological trends. The renewal of developing socialism is a process which goes beyond the turn of the century . . . There is a world experience of socialism on which we can rely in determining the goals of our development. We now take a wider, deeper and more realistic view of socialism than in the recent past. We view it as a world process in which, along with the socialist countries with different stages of socio-economic and political development, there are also various currents of socialist thought in the rest of the world and some social movements different in their composition and motivation . . . Of everlasting importance is the fact that Marxism, developing the idea of socialism, represented socialism as the natural product of the progress of civilisation and of the historical creative endeavour of the people . . .

A special role in the new social organism belongs to the Communist Party which is called upon to be the political vanguard of Soviet society. The destiny of perestroika and the attainment of a qualitatively new state of society and a new aspect of socialism depends on the Party's activities immensely if not decisively . . . Getting rid of day-to-day administrative and managerial functions, the Party is now turning into the centre for the elaboration of political and ideological platforms recommended to society and the state in the shape of its elective bodies. Such a change of the Party's functions determines anew its place in the political system as the ideological, political and ethical vanguard of the people . . .

At the present complex stage, the interests of the consolidation of society and the concentration of all its sound forces on the accomplishment of the difficult tasks of perestroika prompt the advisability of keeping the one-party system. And in this case the Party will promote the development of pluralism, the emulation of opinions in society and the broadening of glasnost in the interests of democracy and the people. In the efforts to renew socialism the Party may not concede the initiative to either populist demagoguery, nationalist or chauvinistic currents or to the spontaneity of group interests . . . The socialism to which we advance during perestroika means a society based on the effective economy, on the highest achievements of science, technology and culture, and on the humanised social structures.

It means a society which has democratised all aspects of social life and has produced conditions for the active creative life and work of people. At the same time many processes of renewing socialism are common to the entire civilisation and develop in this or that form on other social soil. Global problems common to everyone begin to occupy more and more room in mankind's life. All this gives ground to suppose that various social systems, while retaining their peculiarities, develop within the framework which to an increasing extent is limited by the priority of universal human values such as peace, security, freedom and the opportunity for every people to decide its future. The world of socialism advances to the goals common to the whole of mankind within the framework of a single civilisation, without abandoning its own values and priorities, but increasingly developing and refining them along the road of revolutionary perestroika and the building of a genuinely humane society on the principles of reason and humanism.

Sources: Gorbachev, 'The Socialist Idea and Revolutionary Perestroika', Pravda, *26 November 1989; summarised in* Soviet News, *no. 6503, 29 November 1989, pp. 401–2.*

Document 10.16 The Abolition of the Party's Leading Role

Despite Gorbachev's effort to salvage a 'leading role' for the party the tide of pluralism appeared inexorable. In late 1989 the communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell one after the other, while in the USSR hostility to the communist regime took ever stronger forms. Gorbachev's attempts to maintain a dominant role for the party, defended in his article of 26 November 1989, was no longer tenable. Even as the Central Committee met in early February 1990 a demonstration of over 250,000 carrying placards declaring 'seventy-three years on the road to nowhere' demanded the end of party rule. Gorbachev was forced to bow to the inevitable.

Comrades, I think you will agree that we have gathered for a very important plenary meeting, a meeting which communists and all society have been

waiting for with immense interest and impatience . . . The Soviet Communist Party initiated perestroika and generated its concept and policy. Profound revolutionary changes encompassing all spheres of life and all sections of the population have been launched on this basis in the country.

Of no less importance is the understanding of the fact – which is the other aspect of the problem that also demands the bringing forward of the congress – that the Party will only be able to fulfil the mission of political vanguard if it drastically restructures itself, masters the art of political work in the present-day conditions and succeeds in co-operating with all forces committed to perestroika. The crux of the Party's renewal is the need to get rid of everything that tied it to the authoritarian-bureaucratic system, a system that left its mark not only on methods of work and interrelationships within the Party, but also on ideology, ways of thinking and notions of socialism . . .

The Party's renewal presupposes a fundamental change in its relation with state and economic bodies and the abandonment of the practice of commanding them and substituting for their functions. The Party in a renewing society can exist and play its role as vanguard only as a democratically recognised force. This means that its status should not be imposed through constitutional endorsement. The Soviet Communist Party, it goes without saying, intends to struggle for the status of the ruling party. But it will do so strictly within the framework of the democratic process by giving up any legal and political advantages, offering its programme and defending it in discussions, co-operating with other social and political forces, always working amidst the masses, living by their interests and their needs. The extensive democratisation currently under way in our society is being accompanied by mounting political pluralism. Various social and political organisations and movements emerge. This process may lead at a certain stage to the establishment of parties.

Source: 'Mikhail Gorbachev's Report at Party Plenum', 5 February 1990, Soviet News, *no. 6512, 7 February 1990, p. 41.*

Document 10.17 The Amendment of Article 6

On 14 March 1990 the Third Congress of People's Deputies finally amended article 6 (for the old version, see Document 9.5) to remove the party's 'leading role'. The new version read as follows:

Article 6. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other political parties, as well as trade union, youth and other public organisations and mass movements, shall take part in the elaboration of the policy of the Soviet state and in the running of state and public affairs through their representatives elected to the Soviets of People's Deputies and in other ways.

Source: Novosti Press Agency, *London, July 1990, p. 6.*

The very next day (15 March) Gorbachev was elected president of the USSR. Gorbachev ignored calls to use the opportunity to place himself and the party before the people's judgement, and instead he was elected by the Congress of People's Deputies alone. Gorbachev's claim to represent the best interests of the people was thereafter fatally undermined. Disquiet over this undemocratic procedure was reflected in the voting figures: of the 1,878 deputies who voted, 1,329 supported his candidature, 495 voted against and 54 ballot papers were spoilt. He received 59.2 per cent of votes of the total number (2,245) of people's deputies, 66.45 per cent of the votes of deputies (2,000) who received ballot papers and 70.76 per cent of the votes of those who took part in the election (1,878) (*Izvestiya*, 17 March 1990). Even within this limited 'selectorate' Gorbachev failed to win by a convincing margin. The lack of an alternative candidate imbued the whole exercise with a slightly farcical tone and undermined the democratic legitimacy of Gorbachev's leadership.

Transcending the Cold War

In foreign policy this was a time of great changes, some of which have been suggested in the speeches reported above (in particular, Document 10.8, where Gorbachev had noted that a capitalist economy could develop without militarisation). On 8 February 1988 Gorbachev announced the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, and the last troops left on 15 February 1989, having lost 14,453 dead and 50,000 wounded since the invasion of 25 December 1979. A total of 620,000 military conscripts and officers had served in Afghanistan, traumatising a generation. Relations with Europe were now conducted within the framework of what Gorbachev called 'the Common European Home', and the USSR now committed itself to closer relations with the European Community and the Council of Europe. In the Third World, Gorbachev advanced the thesis that development should precede socialist revolution, thus undermining the logic of the Bolshevik revolution itself. Contrary to Stalin's assertion (Document 7.14) that capitalism inevitably leads to war, Gorbachev argued (on the basis of post-war German and Japanese experience) that capitalism could develop without militarism. Above all, superpower relations underwent an unprecedented thaw, allowing the signing of an INF treaty in 1987, for the first time abolishing a whole category of weapons: intermediate nuclear forces with a range of some 600 kilometres.

Document 10.18 The New Political Thinking in Action

In a speech to the United Nations on 7 December 1988 Gorbachev dramatically announced heavy cuts in Russian military forces. Typically, he had not discussed the question with the Russian High Command itself. The speech reflected the belief of the time that with the end of the Cold War the United Nations could come into its own and that a new era of politics and international relations would dawn. Above all, Gorbachev advanced his argument that nuclear weapons were fundamentally

illegitimate instruments of war. 'Freedom of choice', moreover, was now to be extended to the countries that made up the 'Soviet bloc' in Eastern Europe.

We have come here to show our respect for the United Nations, which increasingly has been manifesting its ability to act as a unique international centre in the service of peace and security . . .

What will mankind be like when it enters the 21st Century? People are already fascinated by this not-too-distant future. We are looking ahead to it with hopes for the best and yet with a feeling of concern. The world in which we live today is radically different from what it was at the beginning or even in the middle of this century. And it continues to change, as do all its components. The advent of nuclear weapons was just another tragic reminder of the fundamental nature of that change. A material symbol and expression of absolute military power, nuclear weapons at the same time revealed the absolute limits of that power . . .

Some of the past differences and disputes are losing their importance. But conflicts of a different kind are taking their place. Life is making us abandon established stereotypes and outdated views, it is making us discard illusions. The very concept of the nature and criteria of progress is changing. It would be naive to think that the problems plaguing mankind today can be solved with the means and methods which were applied or seemed to work in the past. Indeed, mankind has accumulated a wealth of experience in the process of political, economic and social development under highly diverse conditions. But that experience belongs to the practices and to the world that have become or are becoming part of the past. This is one of the signs of the crucial nature of the current phase in history . . .

It is also quite clear to us that the principle of freedom of choice is mandatory. Its non-recognition is fraught with extremely grave consequences for world peace. Denying that right to the peoples under whatever pretext or rhetorical guise means jeopardising even the fragile balance that has been attained. Freedom of choice is a universal principle that should allow for no exceptions. It was not simply out of good intentions that we came to the conclusion that this principle is absolute. We were driven to it by an unbiased analysis of the objective trends of today. More and more characteristic of them is the increasing multi-optional character of social development in different countries. This applies both to the capitalist and to the socialist system. The diversity of the socio-political structures that have grown over the past decades out of national liberation movements also attests to this. This objective fact calls for respect for the views and positions of others, tolerance, a willingness to perceive something different as not necessarily bad or hostile, and an ability to learn to live side-by-side with others, while remaining different and not always agreeing with each other. As the world asserts its diversity, attempts to look down on others and to teach them one's own brand of democracy become totally improper, to say nothing

of the fact that democratic values intended for export often very quickly lose their worth. What we are talking about, therefore, is unity in diversity. If we assert this politically, if we reaffirm our adherence to freedom of choice, then there is no room for the view that some live on Earth by virtue of divine will while others are here quite by chance . . .

What are the practical implications of that? It would be natural and sensible not to abandon everything positive that has already been accomplished and to build on all the gains of the past few years, on all that we have created by working together. I am referring to the process of negotiations on nuclear arms, conventional weapons and chemical weapons, and to the search for political approaches to ending regional conflicts. Of course, I am referring above all to political dialogue – a more intense and open dialogue pointed at the very heart of the problems instead of confrontation, at an exchange of constructive ideas instead of recriminations. Without political dialogue the process of negotiations cannot advance . . .

In this specific historical situation we face the question of a new role for the United Nations. We feel that states must to some extent review their attitude to the United Nations, this unique instrument without which world politics would be inconceivable today. The recent reinvigoration of its peace-making role has again demonstrated the United Nations' ability to assist its members in coping with the daunting challenges of our time and working to humanise their relations . . .

Take, for example, the problem of development, which is a truly universal human problem. The conditions in which tens of millions of people live in a number of Third World regions are becoming a real threat to all mankind. No closed entities or even regional communities of states, important as they are, are capable of untangling the main knots that tie up the principal avenues of world economic relations – North–South, East–West, South–South, South–East. What is needed here is joining the efforts and taking into account the interests of all groups of countries, something that only this organisation, the United Nations, can accomplish. External debt is one of the gravest problems . . .

We have immersed ourselves in constructing a socialist state based on the rule of law. A whole series of new laws have been elaborated or are nearing completion. Many will enter into force in 1989, and, we believe, comply fully with the highest standards in ensuring human rights. Soviet democracy will be placed on a solid normative base. I am referring, in particular, to laws on the freedom of conscience, glasnost, public associations and organisations, and many others. In places of confinement there are no persons convicted for their political and religious beliefs. Additional guarantees are to be included in the new draft laws that rule out any form of persecution on these grounds . . . The problem of exit from and entry to our country, including the question of leaving it for family reunification, is being dealt with in a humane spirit. As you know, one of the reasons for refusal to leave is a person's

knowledge of secrets. Strictly warranted time limitations on the secrecy rule will now be applied. Every person seeking employment at certain agencies or enterprises will be informed of the rule. In case of disputes there is a right to appeal under the law. This removes from the agenda the problem of the so-called 'refuseniks' . . .

We are present at the birth of a new model of ensuring security – not through the build-up of arms, as was almost always the case in the past, but on the contrary, through their reduction on the basis of compromise. The Soviet leadership has decided to demonstrate once again its readiness to reinforce this healthy process not only by words but also by deeds. Today, I can report to you that the Soviet Union has taken a decision to reduce its armed forces. Within the next two years their numerical strength will be reduced by 500,000 men. The number of conventional armaments will also be substantially reduced. This will be done unilaterally, without relation to the talks on the mandate of the Vienna meeting. By agreement with our Warsaw Treaty allies, we have decided to withdraw by 1991 six tank divisions from the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and to disband them. Assault landing troops and several other formations and units, including assault crossing units with their weapons and combat equipment, will also be withdrawn from the groups of Soviet forces stationed in those countries. Soviet forces stationed in those countries will be reduced by 50,000 men and their armaments by 5,000 tanks. All Soviet divisions remaining, for the time being, in the territory of our allies are being reorganised. Their structure will be different from what it is now: after a major cutback of their tanks it will become clearly defensive. At the same time, we shall reduce the numerical strength of the armed forces and the numbers of armaments stationed in the European part of the USSR. In total, Soviet armed forces in this part of our country and in the territories of our European allies will be reduced by 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery systems and 800 combat aircraft.

Source: 'Mikhail Gorbachev's Address to the UN General Assembly', 7 December 1988, Soviet News, *no. 6455, 14 December 1988, pp. 459, 460, 461, 462.*

Beyond *Perestroika* – Yeltsin Resurgent

The plan to introduce socialist democracy from above soon gave way to radical democratisation from below. Boris Yeltsin (*b.* 1 February 1931) trained as a construction engineer and had been party boss in Sverdlovsk region from 1976 until Gorbachev called him to Moscow in April 1985 to make him head of the construction department of the Central Committee Secretariat. In late 1985 he was appointed head of the Moscow party organisation, the largest in the country. Untainted by corruption, Yeltsin became increasingly disillusioned by the slow pace of change. In late summer 1987 he voiced his discontent to Gorbachev, indicating his wish to resign. Gorbachev hoped to delay the issue until after the seventieth anniversary celebrations, but this was beyond Yeltsin's patience. The conflict came out into the open, and Yeltsin was dismissed as Moscow party head and humiliated. Thereafter he became the symbol of the struggle against the regime.

Document 10.19 Sakharov on Political Reform and his 'Decree on Power'

In his speech to the First Congress of People's Deputies on 9 June 1989, Andrei Sakharov, in language remarkably reminiscent of some of the speeches at the First Congress of Soviets in June 1917 although with a diametrically opposed purpose, proposed a radical change to the Soviet system. The aim was to separate state functions from the interference of the CPSU, while at the same time limiting the powers of the KGB, above all depriving it of the right to interfere in domestic politics.

Comrade deputies, on you now – precisely now – lies an enormous historical responsibility. Political decisions are required, without which it will be impossible to strengthen the power of soviet authorities in the localities and to resolve economic, social, ecological and national problems. If the Congess of People's Deputies cannot take power into its own hands here, then there is not the slightest hope that soviets in the republics, *oblasts*, *raions* [districts] and villages can do so. But without strong soviets in the localities agrarian reform will be impossible or any reasonably effective agrarian policy differing from the senseless transfusion of resources into loss-making collective farms. Without a strong Congress and strong soviets it will be impossible to overcome the diktats of departments, the working out and implementation of laws about enterprises, the struggle against ecological folly. The Congress is called upon to defend democratic principles of popular power and, by the same token, the irreversibility of perestroika and the harmonious development of the country. I once again appeal to the Congress to adopt the 'Decree on Power'.

Decree on Power

Proceeding from the principles of democracy, the Congress of People's Deputies declares:

1 Article 6 of the USSR Constitution is annulled.

2 The adoption of USSR laws are the exclusive right of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. On the territory of a union republic USSR laws gain juridical force only after they have been ratified by the highest legislative body of the union republic.

3 The Supreme Soviet is the working body of the Congress.

4 Commissions and Committees are created by the Congress and Supreme Soviet on principles of parity and are accountable to the Congress. They