

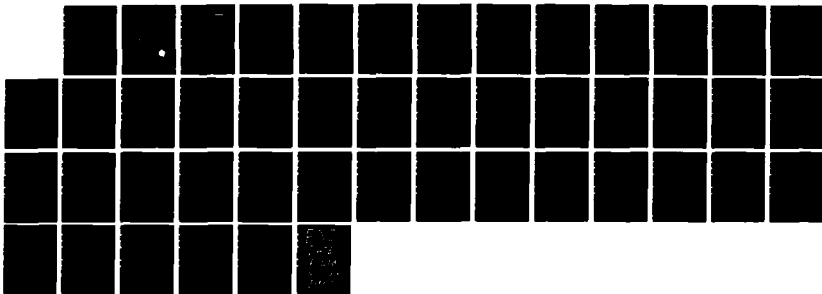
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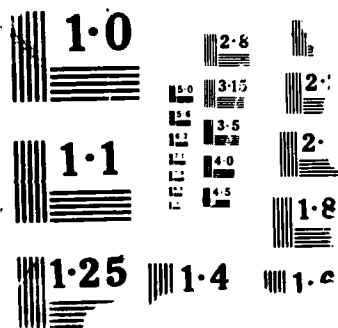
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GLASNOST' IN THE USSR:
HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND MILITARY PERSPECTIVES

BY

NATALIE GROSS

June, 1987

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GLASNOST' IN THE USSR: HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND MILITARY PERSPECTIVES

Gorbachev's glasnost' (public openness) policy has generated debate in the Western media and among scholars about the scope and significance of political reform in the Soviet Union. Regardless of their political biases, most Western analysts have based their arguments on limited evidence drawn from official Soviet press reports. This study will examine Gorbachev's policy in a broader historical, conceptual and social context. The paper will briefly outline the origins of glasnost' in nineteenth-century Russia, and analyze the Soviet concept of public criticism in the post-revolutionary period. A comparison with Gorbachev's current views and a discussion of glasnost' as reflected in civilian and military media will help define the scope and limits of openness in Soviet society. The paper will conclude with an analysis of political-military implications of the glasnost' policy for Western policy-makers.

The Origins of Glasnost'

The concept of glasnost' became known in Russia in the last decade in the reign of Nicholas I, during the debates on emancipation of the serfs and the Great Reforms.¹ Introduced by

¹. I am indebted to Dr. Jacob Kipp of the Soviet Army Studies Office, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for drawing my attention to the origins of glasnost' in Imperial Russia.

"enlightened bureaucrats" in the central government, glasnost' meant an exchange of opinions within the bureaucracy about the country's much needed social and economic transformation (preobrazovanie).²

The champions of public openness viewed institutional debates as an effective policy tool for correcting failures of bureaucratic institutions and thwarting corrupt practices among government officials.³ These discussions - held within strictly defined boundaries - were restricted to internal domestic issues: the abolition of serfdom, the judicial process, the administration of the Naval Ministry. Proponents of glasnost' among government officials emphasized more extensive statistical reporting in the press to aid the central government in decision-making.

Glasnost' was no less constrained by bureaucratic institutions and conservative officials than by the autocracy as a form of government. Only when their proposals encountered opposition from influential bureaucratic groups, did the "enlightened bureaucrats" engage broader segments of the educated

². The discussion is based on a scholarly study by W. Bruce Lincoln, In the Vanguard of Reform (DeKalb: North Illinois University Press, 1983), 102-204.

³. This approach can be found, for instance, in the views of a liberal Russian censor Alexander Nikitenko. See Diary of a Russian Censor: Alexandr Nikitenko, ed. and trans. Helen Jacobson (University of Massachusetts Press, 1975).

public in political debate. Interestingly, such a discussion was conducted in the Naval Ministry under the patronage of the Grand Duke, Konstantin Nikolaevich, who held that an artificially induced debate (iskusstvennaia glasnost') within the naval establishment was imperative for drafting the new regulation.⁴ By initiating the debate and promoting seeming conflict of opinion, the naval establishment sought to create the impression that the legislation reflected public opinion rather than approved decisions of the central government.

During the reign of Alexander II several liberal-minded officials had unsuccessfully attempted to extend glasnost' to a genuinely open political debate in order to co-opt radical intelligentsia groups and check the growth of the revolutionary movement in Russia. However, the limited notion of glasnost' that prevailed stressed that public opinion should invariably reflect public support for the state and its policies. Arguing that genuine public criticism stood in opposition to the Russian principle of autocracy, Alexander restructured Russian censorship in order to curtail criticism of the state policies in the press.⁵

⁴. For a detailed discussion see Jacob W. Kipp and Maia A. Kipp, "The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich: The Making of a Tsarist Reformer, 1827-1853," Jahrbuecher fuer Geschichte Osteuropas, 34 (1986): 3-18.

⁵. For censorship practices of the period cf. Charles Ruud, Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

Soviet Tradition of Public Criticism

The term *glasnost*' appeared in Lenin's works discussing economic and political organization of the socialist state during 1918-1919. Lenin advocated the need to criticize openly and publicly inefficient operation of the country's socialist economy and cumbersome state bureaucracy, including individual organizations and their officials.

Everything that takes place at a socialist enterprise should be made public (*predavat' glasnosti*). The shortcomings in the economic activity of each and every commune should be disclosed to the public. We need public criticism which will expose the evils of our economy, strike a responsive chord with the public and help us cure social problems.⁶

In the tradition of the nineteenth century "enlightened bureaucrats" Lenin viewed *glasnost*' in narrow terms as leadership-initiated and regulated public criticism designed to reverse undesirable socio-economic trends, accelerate economic development and boost labor productivity. In the political realm, the function of *glasnost*' was to castigate bureaucratic malpractice, stimulate public participation in political life, that is to say, serve to strengthen the regime's legitimacy.⁷ In

⁶. Vladimir Lenin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (Moscow: Politizdat, 1969), vol. 36: 147-150.

⁷. Ibid. vol. 45: 389-406.

Lenin's view, "the state is strong when the masses know everything, render their opinion on every issue and consciously respond to every policy."⁸ Interestingly, Gorbachev has on numerous occasions quoted Lenin's statements in his public speeches, undoubtedly in order to provide an authoritative stamp of approval to the glasnost' policy and thwart attacks by its opponents.⁹

It should be noted that Lenin's view of glasnost' differs fundamentally from the Western concept of the free flow of information. Glasnost' was designed to promote public discussion in the best interests of the regime by setting the parameters within which divergent opinions could be voiced. Open public debates in the media at the time were largely restricted to sanctioned policy issues. Predictably, Lenin believed that sensitive foreign policy issues such as foreign credits and Western technology transfers to Russia should not be reported in the media for the general public.¹⁰ Extending the dialectical process to media policy, he also called for a "balanced" coverage of positive and negative information in the media: positive accounts of the country's successes should outnumber critical comments on its shortcomings and failures.

⁸. Ibid., vol. 35: 21.

⁹. Cf., for instance, Gorbachev's speeches at the 27th Party Congress and January 1987 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee in Pravda, 26 February 1986 and 28 January 1987.

¹⁰. Lenin, vol. 45: 195.

It is symptomatic that at the time of Lenin's writing on glasnost' the Bolsheviks had reestablished pre-publication censorship, declared a state monopoly on printing and closed down newspapers owned by other political parties. The November 1917 Decree on the Press and related legislative acts had banned dissemination of opinions critical of the new regime.¹¹ Furthermore, to silence the regime's critics, Lenin had instituted Military Revolutionary Tribunals for the Press operating under state security organs. However, for Lenin's dialectical thinking repressive measures against free political thought were not inconsistent with the policy of glasnost' that allowed for a relatively free factional debate within the party on controversial issues of party policy.

In order to move forward and improve relations between the people and the leaders we should keep the valve of self-criticism open. We should give the Soviet people an opportunity to criticize their leaders for their mistakes so that the leaders would not put on airs and the masses would not distance themselves from their leaders.¹²

Although the statement sounds similar both in substance and style to both Lenin and Gorbachev, it was written by Joseph Stalin in

¹¹. Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti (Moscow: Politizdat, 1957), 24-25.

¹². Iosif Stalin, Sochineniia (Moscow: Politizdat, 1952), 31-32.

the aftermath of the so-called Shakhta affair, a ploy used to uncover economic sabotage by a number of non-communist experts in order to justify the leader's call for increased vigilance.¹³ By the late 1920s, the defeat of Stalin's opposition had silenced any open public debate in the Soviet Union; yet Stalin's writings of the time reiterated Lenin's principles of glasnost' in socialist society. Verbally supporting public criticism, Stalin emphasized the need for an open communication channel between the leaders and the people as a prerequisite for social progress. Indeed, carefully manipulated critical campaigns in the media directed against opponents served Stalin's policy goals - hence, the dictator's endorsement of public criticism. In a similar vein, an occasional airing of unauthorized political views or the publication of unorthodox literary writings in the press often set the stage for an orchestrated public campaign, serving as a prelude to a subsequent massive purge.¹⁴ Other themes that emerge in Stalin's writings on the media deal with his disapproval of Western-style investigative reporting and, specifically, his opposition to criticizing in the press the mid-level enterprise managers and party apparatchiks who constituted the backbone of Stalin's power support during the years of power struggle. To sum up, both the imperial Russian legacy and early

¹³. Leonard Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (New York: Random House, 1960), 363.

¹⁴. For instance, the publication of seditious literary works in the journals Zvezda and Leningrad in the late 1940s was followed by a purge in Zhdanov's Leningrad party organization.

Soviet practice indicate that glasnost' was used selectively by the top leadership as a tool of policy to reform bureaucratic institutions as well as to eliminate political opponents and consolidate power.

Gorbachev's Concept of Glasnost'

In the post-Stalin period the ideological perspective on glasnost' has undergone some change in emphasis rather than essence. The initial phase of Gorbachev's career occurred during the Khrushchev period when the media was directed to criticize Stalinism and its political supporters. The publication of unorthodox literary writings and discussion of sensitive political issues served to co-opt Khrushchev's allies, especially among the intelligentsia, against the Stalinist rank-and-file in the party bureaucracy. However, this relatively liberal information policy was a far cry from the freedom of information in the Western sense. Criticism of the Soviet political system, of the Party First Secretary or his "hair-brained" schemes, was not allowed in print. An anti-Western propaganda campaign proceeded in full gear and was especially intense during political crises in Hungary, West Germany and Cuba.

In the early 1970s, when Mikhail Gorbachev was rapidly advancing to the higher echelons of the party bureaucracy, an essentially Leninist attitude towards criticism still prevailed.

Leonid Brezhnev explained his approach to public criticism in the following terms:

Communists should not be apprehensive of serious and business-like criticism and self-criticism on the grounds that it might be used by our enemies.¹⁵

By that time, Brezhnev curtailed public criticism of Stalinism, restricted artistic freedoms, but, on the other hand, expanded the policy debates among experts and elites on selected issues. By the mid-1970s, an influential representative of the Soviet mass media argued that glasnost' was imperative for the country's technological development, especially in the areas of electronic media, computer and information sciences. Professor Zasurskii, the Dean of the Moscow University's School of Journalism, further stated that a freer exchange of information would help overcome the trends towards inertia and stagnation in Soviet society: "glasnost' is an effective method of intensifying ideological and political processes."¹⁶

Mikhail Gorbachev seems to have been receptive to this rational, technocratic approach to the issue of glasnost'. Closely following Lenin's recommendations, Gorbachev encourages criticism of management and personnel failures at industrial

¹⁵. Leonid Brezhnev, Leninskim kursom (Moscow: Politizdat, 1972), 45.

¹⁶. Y. Zasurskii, ed., Zhurnalistika v politicheskoi strukture obshchestva (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), 81-82.

enterprises to meet production norms and to develop new technologies. Gorbachev argues that glasnost', by stimulating competition between enterprises and creating the incentives for employees to change their attitudes towards work, improves sluggish labor productivity. Gorbachev also calls for holding open public discussions at party, Komsomol, trade union and enterprise meetings in order to stimulate mass participation in decision-making on local issues.¹⁷ Citizen participation in low-level policy-making, Gorbachev believes, would restore the public's eroded trust in the communist leadership and its ideology. As the Soviet leader pointed out during the January 1987 CPSU Central Committee Plenum:

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

Gorbachev's motives for pursuing a more open information policy are similar to the imperatives of glasnost' outlined by proponents of reform in Imperial and post-revolutionary Russia. Like his predecessors, Gorbachev needs glasnost' to accelerate the country's technological development, lagging behind the technologically advanced Western world. In Gorbachev's political

¹⁷. Mikhail Gorbachev, "O perestroike i kadrovoi politike partii," Pravda, 28 January 1987.

parlance, glasnost' should trigger perestroika(restructuring), a synonym for Lenin's "socialist construction" (stroitel'stvo), or nineteenth-century "transformation" (preobrazovanie). Victor Afanas'ev, the Editor-in-Chief of Pravda, emphasized this role of glasnost' in a speech to a Press Day meeting on 5 May 1987:

It is the duty of all Soviet journalists to translate the policy of restructuring into reality. For us journalists there is no nobler mission, nothing we treasure more, than to impart Leninist principles to the masses and to be in the front ranks of the fighters for communism.¹⁸

Although Gorbachev's policy has not changed the fundamental principle of centralized party control over the mass media, it has partially unveiled the cloak of secrecy that shrouded political and social events in the country. Gorbachev has encouraged public criticism of the party apparatus, the state bureaucracy and individual officials up to the republic level. In practice, this means that major institutional actors, i.e., the party, the Komsomol, the ministries, the military, the KGB, and the judiciary, immune to criticism during the Brezhnev period, now regularly come under fire in the Soviet press. Not unlike Joseph Stalin in the late 1920s or Nikita Khrushchev in the late 1950's, Gorbachev has been using these critical campaigns in the press to remove opponents from positions of

¹⁸. "Moguchii instrument perestroiki," Pravda, 6 May 1987.

power.¹⁹ Today critical articles containing complaints about the lack of glasnost' in a particular area usually hint at the need for personnel changes in an oblast or republic. Of course, corruption in the higher echelons of power and has been no secret to the Soviet public in recent decades, yet their portrayal in the media challenges the credibility of the ruling elite in a traditionally authoritarian society.

Other manifestations of glasnost' noted in the Western media include a more complete reporting of accidents and disasters, as well as a more realistic coverage of the country's social problems. The Soviet handling of the nuclear plant accident in Chernobyl' has graphically demonstrated the limits of glasnost' in reporting disasters: information on the accident has been released in response to pressure from the West and domestic audiences were consistently denied specific information related to their health and safety of environment.²⁰ On the other hand, the Soviet press has recently discussed nationality conflicts, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, the poor quality of medical

¹⁹. For instance, a report about the illegal arrest of a Soviet journalist, Victor Borisovich Berkhin, in the Ukraine, in reprisal for criticism was followed by a letter of apology written by the First Secretary of the Ukraine to the party newspaper. It can be argued, therefore, that the publicity accorded the case by the media served to compromise Gorbachev's opponent and graphically demonstrate the need for Shcherbitsky's removal from the Politburo. See Pravda, 15 February 1987.

²⁰. For a well-documented discussion of Soviet media behavior during the Chernobyl' accident see Ellen Jones and Benjamin Woodbury, "Chernobyl' and Glasnost'", Problems of Communism (March-April 1987): 28-39.

care, problems of poverty and vagrancy, draft-dodging and other controversial issues. These problems associated with social justice have been previously mentioned in the Soviet press only with reference to Western capitalist societies. The authorities have also started to release more quantitative data on negative social trends, including alcoholism, drug abuse, infant mortality, infectious diseases and male life expectancy. Interestingly, a demand for more extensive reporting of statistical data in the media is consistent with earlier notions of glasnost' advocated by Russian reformers in the 1850s and resurrected by Lenin in 1918-19. Conceivably, a partial release of selective statistical data serves to provide lower-level planning agencies with the information necessary for decision-making. As one Soviet military writer has observed, "we need information not for the sake of information, but as a basis for decision-making."²¹

In this respect, glasnost' responds to the demands of intellectual elites to learn the truth about their own society, without turning to alternative, unofficial sources of information - dissident literature (samizdat) and foreign radio broadcasts. For the same reason, the Soviet artistic elites have been granted greater freedom in discussing politically sensitive issues in their works. A more liberal cultural policy was designed to co-

²¹. N. Kiziun, "Operativnost', dostoversnost' partiinoi informatsii," Kommunist_voeruzhennykh_sil 23 (1986), 13.

opt the intelligentsia to support the new leader and to promote his reforms among broad segments of Soviet population. It should be remembered that artistic elites enjoy unusually high prestige and moral authority in Soviet society. Gorbachev's more lenient cultural and information policy has also been apparently intended to check the growth of the dissident movement and prevent emigration of the country's intelligentsia to the West. In this respect Gorbachev seems to have also learned from the Russian historical experience of co-opting the intellectual elite to serve the regime's political, economic and military priorities.

Although available evidence indicates that glasnost' has been intended, first and foremost, for domestic consumption, it can be argued that it has the potential to yield foreign policy gains as well. The new image of openness serves to restore Soviet international prestige eroded in the post-detente years as a result of a continuing military build-up and the invasion of Afghanistan. By winning favors with Western public opinion, the new leadership hopes to gain access to Western technology and secure favorable concessions in arms control negotiations. The insistence and intensity with which Soviet representatives have been trying to convince Western politicians that glasnost' portends a meaningful reform of the Soviet Union suggests that Gorbachev's domestic policy is being used for public relations purposes, if not outright deception. The Western press has been instrumental in this campaign in a number of ways. First,

prominent Soviet cultural figures who enjoy the reputation of "closet liberals" with the Western public have published articles in the Western press praising Gorbachev's policy for the renaissance of culture and art in the Soviet Union.²² Second, departing from past practice, Soviet officials in the Press department of the Foreign Ministry in Moscow have willingly set up interviews with Soviet officials for Western correspondents, while at the same time continuing to deny them the right to travel to Soviet cities without supervision.²³ Soviet journalists, especially those representing more "liberal" journals associated with glasnost' (e.g. Egor Iakovlev, editor of Moskovskie novosti) have held press conferences abroad in which they discussed the changes which have occurred in the Soviet political scene as a result of glasnost'.²⁴

The Limits of Glasnost'

The Soviet political system, centrally controlled as it is from above, severely constrains an open information policy. So long as the mass media is institutionally subordinate to the party, glasnost' will continue to reflect the regime's political

²². Cf., for instance, Andrei Voznesenskii's article in New York Times, 16 March 1987 and Evgenii Evtushenko's article in Time (9 February 1987): 32-33.

²³. David Satter, "The Foreign Correspondent in Moscow", Encounter (May 1987): 58-63.

²⁴. "Ikh interes k nashei glasnosti," Izvestiia, 15 May 1987.

priorities. In statements targeting domestic audiences Gorbachev has emphasized the use of glasnost' as an instrument to further the party's political goals:

The main task of the press is to help the nation understand and assimilate the ideas of restructuring, to mobilize the masses to struggle for successful implementation of party plans... We need...glasnost', criticism and self-criticism in order to implement major changes in all spheres of social life... but criticism should reflect the interests of the party.²⁵

In accordance with Gorbachev's directives, reports from the Journalists' Congress held in Moscow in March 1987 explicitly stated the need for local-level party committees to intercede in the daily operation of the press: "the party committees should direct the press to focus on the main avenues of restructuring."²⁶

Gorbachev - like his predecessors - has set the limits within which critical opinions can be voiced. The leader's latest speeches define glasnost' in narrower terms and caution critics against going too far in their denunciations of the past.²⁷ During the meeting with mass media representatives in

²⁵. "Ubezhdennost'--opora perestroiki," Krasnaya zvezda, 14 February 1987.

²⁶. "Raionnye gazety," Pravda, 28 March 1987.

²⁷. Cf. texts of Gorbachev's speeches during meetings with mass media representatives and space engineers in Krasnaya zvezda, 14 February and 14 May 1987.

February 1987, Gorbachev has reaffirmed that criticism of the country's historical experience and revolutionary ideology would not be permitted. Warning against excessive criticism of the local level party committees or against personal attacks on party officials, he calls on the media to portray the country's current problems in an overall positive light. In addressing space researchers and engineers, i.e., audiences likely to be supportive of the glasnost' policy, at the space complex in Kazakhstan in May 1987, Gorbachev did not mention glasnost' or other issues related to democratization of Soviet society but instead focused on traditional propaganda themes of discipline, dedicated work and patriotism. Arguing the principle of economic independence of the Soviet Union from the West, Gorbachev strongly condemned Western criticism by moderates of his restructuring policy. The leader's call for greater discipline and public order indicates his intention to keep the disruptive trends associated with glasnost' to a minimum.

An analysis of the Soviet press shows that criticism of the General Secretary, his policies or his political allies has not appeared in print. Dissenting views and opinions of Gorbachev's opponents have not been made public. For instance, a political debate which had apparently taken place during the January CPSU Central Committee Plenum has not been reported in the Soviet

press.²⁸ According to a Yugoslav visitor to Moscow, a brochure criticizing Gorbachev's policy is now being circulated through samizdat.²⁹ The text of Academician Sakharov's arms control proposals made in February 1987 at the much-publicized Moscow Conference for a Nuclear-Free World and Survival of Mankind has yet to be released.³⁰ The Soviet press continues to deny its citizens specific information pertaining to the country's foreign policy initiatives, military doctrine, and military and technological capabilities. The quality of statistical reporting in this area has not improved: the figures related to the defense budget, allocations for defense programs, volume of international trade, technology transfers or arms sales to the Third World remain secret.

The Soviet press now sometimes publishes views of Soviet emigres living abroad, especially when they are critical of the West or supportive of Gorbachev's political initiatives. The recent publication of a letter by ten leading emigre dissidents who voiced skepticism about Gorbachev's reforms and proposed major revisions in Soviet ideology and international behavior was preceded by publications in the Western media. The editor of the

²⁸. The list of speakers at the Plenum was published in Pravda, 28 January 1987.

²⁹. Yugoslav Situation Report 3 (8 May 1987), Radio Free Europe.

³⁰. Andrei Sakharov's speeches were published in Time (16 March 1987): 40-43.

Soviet newspaper, without attempting a free discussion of points raised in the letter, has labeled emigre demands as "counterrevolutionary" and further warned the authors that this seditious criticism will bar them from returning to the Soviet Union.¹¹

Glasnost' has had a marginal effect on Soviet media discussions of the West in general and the United States in particular. The new policy has gone hand in hand with an anti-Western propaganda campaign which subsided on a regular basis prior to or during superpower summit meetings, only to be launched again a few weeks later. This pattern of media behavior on foreign policy issues is consistent with Gorbachev's statement made at the 27th Party Congress in February 1986 about a continuing need to conduct psychological warfare against the United States.¹² The guidelines recently issued to Soviet journalists on the coverage of foreign policy issues to domestic audiences leave little doubt that the Stalinist tradition of propaganda vis-a-vis the West still prevails. To quote the Chairman of the Journalists' Union:

The press, radio, and television are called upon to disclose the reactionary nature of modern capitalism.

¹¹. Moskovskie novosti 13 (29 March 1987) quoted in Soviet Analyst 10 (20 May 1987).

¹². Mikhail Gorbachev, "Otechetnyi doklad," Pravda, 26 February 1986.

It remains our duty to criticize convincingly bourgeois ideology, disclose reactionary imperialist policies and enemy lies about socialism. We should remember that our ideological adversaries today act against socialism more insidiously, with more sophistication, and in a more aggressive, coordinated manner. That is why our ideological weaponry should be accurate, stinging and capable of repelling any attack.³³

Consistent with this policy statement is a plethora of Soviet articles accusing the United States of human rights violations, an unprecedented military build-up and an expansionist foreign policy.³⁴ Glasnost' notwithstanding, Soviet authorities have warned the public that unauthorized circulation and viewing of Western video films containing violence, pornography, or anti-Soviet propaganda will continue to be punished as criminal offenses.³⁵ On the other hand, a slight drift away from traditional Soviet views of a bipolar Western society can be observed in some media accounts depicting not only the workers pitted against capitalists but also a prosperous middle-class resistant to the idea of social revolution.³⁶ Consistent with Gorbachev's interest in exploiting Western liberal public opinion to support his foreign policy initiatives,

³³. "Na pul'se perestroiki," Pravda, 15 March 1987.

³⁴. For recent examples see, for instance, Pravda, 3 and 16 March, and 3 and 4 April 1987.

³⁵. Zhurnalists 12 (December 1986): 58-59 and Pravda, 1 March 1987.

³⁶. For a good discussion of changes in Soviet media coverage of international issues cf. Ellen Mickiewicz, "Making Media Work: Soviet Society and Communication", forthcoming study, M. E. Sharpe.

is an increasing attention paid by the Soviet media to Western middle-of-the-road parties and movements. Departing from previous practices, the Soviet media now sometimes reports the views of Western politicians and commentators which significantly diverge from the official Soviet position. However, in most cases these discussions are followed by counter-arguments presented by a Soviet writer.³⁷ Therefore, by the admission of Alexander Bovin, a well-known Izvestiia reporter, Soviet journalists writing on foreign policy issues have not been the beneficiaries of Gorbachev's glasnost' policy. Unlike their counterparts writing on domestic politics, Soviet foreign-coverage reporters are required to follow the party line which leaves little room for independent critical judgment.³⁸

At the present critical discussions are to a large extent limited to the central press and Moscow-based public organizations. The central press is replete with articles criticizing this lack of glasnost' in provincial towns and rural locations.³⁹ For instance, a group of workers from Pskov oblast' (region) complained to the newspaper Pravda that discussions held at their party meetings are not reflected in

37. For reporting of Western views of Strategic Defense Initiative see, for instance, "S raznykh pozitsii," Pravda, 28 February 1987.

38. "Na pul'se perestroiki," Pravda, 15 March 1987.

39. See, for instance, "Posle attestatsii," Pravda, 18 January 1986, "Opasnost' staroi kolei," Pravda, 1 September 1986 and "Kogda razgovor seriozny," Pravda, 29 October 1986.

final written reports. Newspapers in Saratov oblast' have not informed their readers that the five-year plan is unfulfilled.⁴⁰ Resistance to the glasnost' policy indicates that Gorbachev has not succeeded so far in exercising full control over provincial party organizations -- due to incomplete personnel turnover as well as resistance to his policies put up by many provincial party leaders whom he had brought to power. Numerous cases of reprisals for criticism have been documented by the press and mentioned in Gorbachev's speeches: party members criticizing management during party meetings are often removed from their jobs or forced to leave the area.⁴¹ For example, the secretary of the party organization in a power station in the city of Ufa was removed from his party post for criticizing corruption of the enterprise management.⁴² This explains why Gorbachev's glasnost' policy has encountered opposition in the provinces among local leadership and population at large. This trend towards a freer political discussion in the central press, on the one hand, yet a more repressive information policy in the provinces, on the other, represents a significant departure from recent experience. During the Brezhnev period, for example, more liberal, unorthodox views and writings were as a rule published in the provinces, and left untouched by the central press.

⁴⁰. "Legko li gazete byt' ostroi," Pravda, 13, March 1987 and "3 tochki zrenia skeptika," Pravda, 18 March 1987.

⁴¹. Pravda, 18 March 1987.

⁴². "Glasnost' bez ogovorok," Pravda, 6 June 1987.

Major bureaucratic players stand in opposition to glasnost' because public criticism of their actions threatens their status, career advancement and privileges. Remarkably, the new press centers created at the ministerial level and specifically designed to promote glasnost' are said to represent obstacles to Gorbachev's policy. According to Soviet reports, the press centers not only deny public release of unfavorable information but also commission laudatory articles in the central press about their organizations within ministries.⁴³ By providing some freedom to criticize opponents, glasnost' has exacerbated institutional conflict in Soviet society.

Soviet political culture itself, with its deeply ingrained intolerance for differences of opinions, constitutes another constraint on glasnost'. In the absence of appropriate legislation, policy statements or even specific guidelines on freedom of information, Soviet citizens are confused about the limits of permitted criticism and understandably reluctant to support Gorbachev's policy. Mindful of Stalin's purges and more recent dissident trials, the Soviet public recognizes the uncertainties associated with glasnost'. Continuing reprisal for public criticism in the provinces reinforces a deep-seated suspicion that participation in public discussions may have

⁴³. "Konveiry pokazukhi," Pravda, 27 February 1987 and "Orientirovat' pressu po delikatnym voprosam," Literaturnaiia gazeta, 11 March 1987.

serious and unforeseen repercussions for people's careers and future lives.

The fragmentary evidence available in the official Soviet press shows that many Soviet citizens are distrustful of Gorbachev's policy and skeptical about his chances for success. Some have labeled glasnost' a "game" or a "facade"; others have complained that in reality glasnost' is "banned".⁴⁴ Citizens writing letters to newspaper editors view with skepticism the chances for their publication. At least one editor of political science literature has noted that the glasnost' policy has not changed the content and quality of works currently submitted for publication.⁴⁵ Petr Chernetskii, a collective farm chairman who has suffered reprisal for criticizing the organization of fishing industries in the Far East, glibly identified popular sentiment about Gorbachev's policy in the following terms:

One should not criticize. You pay a high price for this afterwards... Democratization, glasnost', are, for the time being, words, but reality is different.⁴⁶

An old reader of Izvestiia, flatly refuting Marxist belief in the locomotive of history, has summed up popular doubts about the ability of the communist system to change in this way:

⁴⁴. Pravda, 24 November 1986, 18 and 29 March 1987.

⁴⁵. "Podvizhniki," Pravda, 10 March 1987.

⁴⁶. "Nakhlobuchka za kritiku," Izvestiia, 8 April 1987.

It's fashionable now to talk, write and do television broadcasts about restructuring. In general, it's almost all the same things about which you used to write: let's go, let's go, speed it up, speed it up. In my lifetime M. S. Gorbachev is, I think, the seventh leader. Typically, correspondents make a business-like adjustment to every one of them. Under Stalin it was five-year plans, domestic and foreign enemies, but prices fell. Under Khrushchev it was corn, peas, chemistry, and price increases. Under Brezhnev it was the virgin lands, Malaia Zemlia, Orders of Victory, marshal stars, pace-setting and decisive years, price increases, etc., etc. Tomorrow we will be singing to any kind of music...⁴⁷

One can argue that a demand for unrestricted freedom of public opinion or political discussion has never been strongly advocated in Soviet society. Many proposals made by Soviet dissidents on information policy envisage some restrictions on the free flow of information either on moral or political grounds. Surveys of Soviet emigres consistently demonstrate that former Soviet citizens perceive freedoms enjoyed by Western media as excessive, if not pernicious. In their view, full reporting of social disturbances, conflicts within the government or criticism of the top political leadership jeopardize the stability of a strong state.⁴⁸

⁴⁷. "Vy i my," Izvestiia, 14 March 1987.

⁴⁸. Stephen White, "Continuity and Change in Soviet Political Culture: An Emigre Study", Comparative Political Studies, 11 (1978): 381-95.

One can, however, discern some signs of pressure by some citizens to widen the limits of artificially controlled glasnost'. A well-known poet and a popular actor have insisted that society needs genuine public openness and a right to criticize every government organization and its management.⁴⁹ A group of Russian nationalists from an unofficial association Pamiat' (Memory) have held a demonstration in Moscow demanding official recognition of their organization and government protection of Russian historical monuments.⁵⁰ The protesters who reportedly hold the values of the Imperial Russian autocratic government in high regard, have declared a war on Soviet bureaucrats opposing glasnost'.

Although Soviet youth has apparently been less enthusiastic about glasnost' than other segments of the population, e.g., older members of the intelligentsia, the Gorbachev leadership sees it as an important tool for co-opting the young generation to support its policies. Partial available data from the surveys of youth from fifty industrial enterprises in the city of Donetsk has shown that the majority of young people were not familiar with Gorbachev's new policies and had only a vague idea about their role in "restructuring."⁵¹ These responses reflect the

⁴⁹. Literaturnaia gazeta, 8 April 1987 and Sovremennaiia dramaturgia 3 (March 1986): 223-225.

⁵⁰. "Kuda uvodit pamiat'," Izvestiia, 3 June 1987.

⁵¹. "Govorit' s molodizhiu," Pravda, 27 April 1987.

process of estrangement of Soviet youth which took root in Soviet society in the 1970s. As Western research on Soviet youth has demonstrated, in rejecting official collectivist values, young Soviets have been seeking retreat from involvement in public life in the family, hobbies and participation in unofficial associations.⁵² These long-term trends in the behavior of youth account for their reluctant support of Gorbachev's glasnost' policy which ultimately emphasizes mobilization of society for the 'public good.' Apathy and distrust of social ideals, including glasnost', seem to set the young generation of the 1980s apart from their fathers whose political values, shaped during the Khrushchev "thaw" period, were based on a belief in the possibility of reforming the Soviet political system. This probably explains why the vocal supporters of Gorbachev's reform have been middle-aged intellectuals (T. Zaslavskaja, A. Aganbegian, E. Evtushenko) rather than their younger counterparts.

The Soviet press has obliquely alluded to generational conflict between young people and older representatives of the ideological establishment on the issue of glasnost'. For example, during political discussions in Donetsk young men and women who posed probing questions were labeled "dissidents" by

⁵². See a detailed discussion in Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Soviet Youth under Gorbachev: Pioneer in the Privatization of Society", paper presented at the Airlie House Workshop "Soviet Society under Gorbachev" 14 - 16 October 1986.

local ideological workers. Furthermore, under the new glasnost' policies half of this oblast's professional ideology officials have reportedly refused to work with young audiences.

An official authorization to hold discussions on selected politically sensitive issues has challenged some young people to expand the limits of permitted debate and demand wider participation in decision-making. For instance, during a discussion in Leningrad a young man suggested the adoption of a Western-style competitive system for top leadership positions and advocated full rights for citizens to criticize the central authorities and their policies.⁵³ When city authorities in the same town, disregarding a public outcry, decided to raze a historical building, hundreds of young people held a demonstration in the hope of reversing this decision.⁵⁴

These instances of conflict seem to indicate that by stimulating political debate glasnost' provokes young people into asking disturbing questions about the underlying causes of corruption and failure in socialist society. Since the process of intellectual introspection and social analysis cannot be easily controlled, glasnost' might, in the long term, radicalize selected groups of well-educated and socially active young people. This leads one to believe that, provided the glasnost'

⁵³. Moskovskie novosti, 1 February 1987.

⁵⁴. Literaturnaja gazeta, 25 March 1987.

policy continues, some young people may find themselves at odds with those who support a restricted glasnost' policy. These facts indicate that, despite the leaders' efforts to confine public debates within sanctioned limits, glasnost' cannot be kept under full control. The Soviet press today portrays Soviet society as one rife with institutional rivalries, group and personal conflict. Lacking a consensus either among the major bureaucracies or among broader segments of the population, glasnost' may yet have a potentially destabilizing effect on society, thus resulting in political and ideological costs to the Gorbachev leadership.

Glasnost' in the Armed Forces

Gorbachev's glasnost' policy has encountered strong resistance in the Soviet Army. Compared to the Brezhnev period, the reporting of social and political issues in the military press has not markedly changed. The military press has been haphazardly reporting Gorbachev's partial domestic reforms and foreign policy initiatives. The text of the economic reform which allows for a restricted private initiative in the service sector has not been published; the General Secretary's speech at the January CPSU Central Committee Plenum has appeared in an abridged sanitized version. The military censor omitted the passages strongly criticizing bureaucratic resistance to the glasnost' policy from the proceedings of the Journalists'

Congress. Unlike the civilian history journals which now regularly discuss the loss of life during the Stalin purges, the Military History Journal has consistently failed to mention the cause of death of prominent military commanders in the 1930s.⁵⁵

The military press, glossing over the summit meetings between Gorbachev and President Reagan, reiterated familiar propaganda themes of the Western military build-up, now with a new emphasis on the Strategic Defense Initiative. The high point of the anti-American campaign in the military press was marked by the publication of an article vividly describing plunder and sadistic atrocities allegedly inflicted by the American expeditionary force on the Soviet civilian population during the Allied Intervention of 1918.⁵⁶ Consistent with this approach political officers during exercises recommend that hatred for the enemy be instilled by recounting the atrocities committed by the Germans during World War II.⁵⁷

⁵⁵. See Voennyi vestnik 2 (February 1987): 15 for the biography of a civil war commander Gaia Gai and Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal 2 (February 1987): 49-50 for the biographies of commanders Iosif Nemerzeli, Fedor Raskol'nikov and Iosif Rozenblium. For a call in the civilian press to tell the truth about Stalin and the purges see, for instance, Sovetskaiia kul'tura, 21 March 1987 translated in Current Digest of the Soviet Press 12 (1987): 1-3.

⁵⁶. "Interventsia," Krasnaya zvezda, 14 February 1987.

⁵⁷. V.K. Luzherenko, "Puti sovershenstvovaniia partiino-politicheskoi raboty v nastuplenii," Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal 3 (March 1987): 62-68.

Glasnost' in the military press has been extended to critical discussions of bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption in the military establishment as well as to the censure of shortcomings in training and discipline in individual military units. Interestingly, during the glasnost' campaign of the past two years senior military officers and the Ministry of Defense as an institution have been subjected to serious public criticism for inefficiency and misappropriation of funds in both the civilian and military press.⁵⁸ The military press has selectively disclosed information on social problems in the Armed Forces: alcoholism (but not drug abuse), nationality conflicts, draft dodging (with references to service in Afghanistan), selection of unqualified candidates for officer and NCO schools, and the flagrant violations of army discipline both in the ranks and among officers.

The coverage of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, which has been gradually expanding since 1984-85 independent of glasnost', seems to reflect the general 'preemptive' approach of Gorbachev's media policy. More candid and truthful reports about the war as well as discussions of the problems of Afghanistan veterans, which have become more frequent during the glasnost' campaign, are designed, on the one hand, to prevent Soviet audiences from turning to alternative Western sources of information, and, on

⁵⁸. "Mysl' i rabotat' po novomu," Krasnaya zvezda, 22 March 1986 and "Piatna na mundire," Pravda, 21 March 1987.

the other hand, to check rumors based on first-hand accounts of witnesses returning from the battle zone. In other words, the coverage of Afghanistan under glasnost' has taken into account the potential for independent verification which has increased in proportion to the growing numbers of returning soldiers. As the death toll has mounted, the Soviet press has become more explicit in dealing with the problem of casualties as well as more skillful in exploiting it for inculcating patriotic, nationalistic and martial values. By giving a general human treatment to the heroic deeds of Soviet soldiers with an emphasis on combat friendship, courage and virility, the media has eulogized a new post-war generation of popular heroes -- an approach which plays an important educational and ideological role.⁵⁹ Recent accounts of mujahideen raids across the border into Soviet territory released in connection with glasnost' emphasize both the significance and the defensive nature of the war to the ordinary citizen.⁶⁰

An interesting aspect of Afghanistan reporting is acknowledgement beginning in 1985 of the reluctance among some conscripts to risk their lives in combat, as well as the disclosure of methods used by parents to keep their children from

59. For recent eulogies of Afghanistan heroes see "Zhizn i smert' zhaymchikov," *Pravda*, 4 April 1987 and *Izvestija*, 10 April 1987.

60. *Pravda*, 19 April 1987 reported in *Soviet Analyst*, 20 May 1987.

being drafted.⁶¹ A bolder departure from the old propaganda line can, perhaps, be seen in a frank admission by a returning serviceman that the mujahideen, who constitute a considerable part of the country's population, had not been recipients of foreign military aid prior to direct Soviet military action.⁶² Although the cryptic language of these reports indicates considerable differences of opinions about the war effort, the constraints of the glasnost' policy do not allow their straightforward discussion in the media. The lack of an open policy debate in the Soviet Union about the costs and benefits of a low-intensity conflict presents a stark contrast to the galvanization of public opinion in democratic societies in similar situations - in the United States during the Vietnam era and in Israel during the war in Lebanon.

Another aspect of glasnost' in the military press has been the new candor in assessing Soviet military performance during World War II. Though criticism of selected aspects of Soviet operations (e.g., organization of logistics and medical service, the initial period of war) appeared in the military press during the late 1970s-early 1980s,⁶³ the recent discussions scrutinize

⁶¹. "Muzhskoe delo," Pravda, 18 May 1987.

⁶². Radio Moscow broadcast cited in Soviet Analyst, 20 May 1987 and in "More Selective Glasnost' About Afghanistan", Radio Liberty Research Bulletin, 28 April 1987.

⁶³. For examples of criticism of the organization and performance of military medical service see Voenno-meditsinskii zhurnal 5 (May 1980): 69-73 and 5 (May 1981): 61-64.

Soviet military failures during all phases of the past war. A noted military historian writing in a civilian journal has severely criticized Stalin for military incompetence in planning many World War II battles, including the Battle of Stalingrad, and called for the publication of historical documents and scholarly works dealing with controversy over Vlasov's encircled army and the treatment of Soviet prisoners of war.⁶⁴ The Soviet Military Historical Journal has provided a detailed critical treatment of the use of operations-level maneuver of anti-aircraft artillery and an in-depth analysis of Soviet failures during offensive operations in the Ukraine in 1944.⁶⁵ Since the Soviets view military history as a model for refining their military doctrine and operational art for a future war, their military science and art are likely to benefit from this manifestation of glasnost', which can be expected to bring about improvements in the quality of Soviet military historical analysis. In the view of Soviet military historians, the research and teaching of controversial issues in Soviet military academies will have a favorable impact on the training of future

⁶⁴. Argumenty i fakty, March 14-20, 1987 translated in Current Digest of the Soviet Press 12 (1987) : 5-7.

⁶⁵. V. Subbotin, "Provedenie operativnogo manevra protivnoartilleriei v khode frontovykh nastupatel'nykh operatsii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 4 (April 1987) : 30-36 and S. Mikhailov, "Iz opyta nastupatel'nykh operatsii na pravoberezhnoi Ukrainе v nachale 1944 goda," 3 (March 1987): 19-27.

military commanders and defense planners.⁶⁶

Soviet political officers have also redefined the scope of glasnost' to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces, while avoiding posing undue risks to combat readiness or soldiers' morale. One aspect of glasnost' is to promote discussions in military units on topics ranging from awards and admonitions to shortcomings in training and exercises. By castigating corruption, alcoholism and related social maladies, public openness will also assist in correcting some of the army's present discipline and morale problems. Commanders are now requested to solicit recommendations from junior personnel on issues related to education and training.⁶⁷ According to the Chief of the Political Administration of the Air Force, General L. Batekhin, public openness should be used to discuss possible improvements in training standards, namely, to introduce tighter combat readiness standards.⁶⁸ A new emphasis on training ("obuchenie") over indoctrination ("vospitanie") means that Soviet military commanders can use glasnost' in order to improve training methodologies and ameliorate the quality of Soviet

⁶⁶. See, for instance, Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal, 1 (January 1987): 3-12.

⁶⁷. M. Popkov, "Partiinaiia demokratiia i partiinaiia distsiplina," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 16 (1986): 19-26.

⁶⁸. L. Batekhin, "Vremia novykh podkhodov," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 21 (1986): 17-24.

manpower, especially its junior command component.

Another aspect of glasnost' is to encourage grass-roots initiative in suggesting improvements in military hardware and training procedures -- changes designed to make the military system more cost-effective. For instance, within the framework of glasnost, Soviet logistics experts are encouraged to improve efficiency in the areas of resource allocation, cargo transportation and more extensive incorporation of computer technology.⁶⁹ Admiral A. Sorokin, The First Deputy Chief of the Main Political Administration, recognizes the role of public debate in facilitating the decision-making process, namely, in making the military bureaucracy more responsive to inputs from below.⁷⁰ In addition, he has emphasized the need to keep the soldier informed about command decision-making -- a prerequisite for developing low-level initiative in peace and wartime.

The extent of glasnost' enjoyed today by a professional soldier in the Soviet Army depends on rank and party membership. The Chief of the Political Administration of the Ural Military District has warned military personnel that criticism of commanders and their decisions would not be tolerated, but party members among soldiers and junior officers can use authorized

⁶⁹. Tsl i snabzhenie 11 (1986): 17-21.

⁷⁰. A. Sorokin, "V tsentr partiinoi raboty-- cheloveka," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 22 (1986): 9-18.

party channels to criticize their superiors.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the new policy has produced tensions in units where low-ranking military personnel have petitioned senior military authorities to investigate misconduct of their commanders. Military personnel initiating such investigations reportedly suffer reprisal for criticism. For instance, a navy captain stationed at the Leningrad Naval Base was reprimanded for informing senior military authorities about unauthorized employment of enlisted men in an illegal souvenir workshop on post as well in menial jobs in the commander's home.⁷² For fear of reprisal the majority of enlisted men and NCOs are said to be reluctant to engage in critical discussions. As the First Deputy Minister of Defense, Army General P. Lushev admitted, "criticism is not respected in all military units, criticism from below is expressed in the form of timid suggestions, with caution."⁷³ Nevertheless, judging by indications in the Soviet media, the military establishment finds Gorbachev's policy disquieting. Censorship of party documents, the restrictive use of the term 'glasnost' and the lack of substantive social criticism in the military press point to mounting dissatisfaction with Gorbachev's policies among senior officers. Inasmuch as the Soviet military leadership perceives its role as an educator of civilian youth, a

71. O. Zinchenko, "Kritika i samokritika," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 18 (1986): 52-59.

72. "Defitsit glasnosti," Krasnaya zvezda, 17 March 1987.

73. P. Lushev, "Vysokaia otvetsvennost' kadrov," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 5 (1987): 17.

guardian of ideological and martial values in civilian society, it views Gorbachev's more open information and cultural policies as detrimental to its institutional interests.

The Soviet military fear that even a limited glasnost' might in the long term soften stringent Soviet ideological assumptions about the continuing conflict between the socialist and capitalist systems. General D. Volkogonov, Deputy Chief of the Political Administration and a prominent military expert on psychological warfare, has recently warned military personnel that the regime's traditional view of the West's military threat remains valid. General Volkogonov has also reaffirmed continued Soviet support for revolution in the Third World -- a possible allusion to the military's steadfast commitment to maintaining a strategic and military foothold in Afghanistan:

There is no and will be no parity with our class enemy as far as the human factor is concerned. As always before, the Marxists do not condemn war in general. This would amount to... pacifism. Our support will always be with those nations who conduct a just struggle for social and national liberation, against imperialist domination and aggression.⁷⁴

Along the same lines, a military representative at the recent Journalists' Congress has accused the civilian press of inadequately covering the military threat from the United States:

⁷⁴. D. Volkogonov, "Chelovecheskii faktor," Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil 2 (1987): 14-15.

Imperialism is preparing for war. None would deny that. Unfortunately, these issues are often not covered by our civilian newspapers.⁷⁵

These alarmist statements portray genuine concern by the Soviet military about the ramifications of Gorbachev's glasnost' policy for the fighting spirit of the army.

As can be seen from this analysis, the military have redefined Gorbachev's concept to suit their interests by channelling discussions and criticism in ways which might potentially enhance combat readiness and overall military effectiveness. At the same time the new policy has increased apprehensions of potential negative effects of public criticism on the army's political and ideological reliability, morale, as well as the status of the military profession in Soviet society.

Conclusions

Gorbachev's policy is best understood in the context of the Russian-Soviet political tradition of state control over public criticism and political debate. The Soviet view of public criticism as a skillfully manipulated political tool is fundamentally different from the Western concept of freedom of speech. Since glasnost' in the Soviet sense does not imply a

⁷⁵. "Na pul'se perestroiki," Pravda, 15 March 1987.

commitment to a free exchange of information, Gorbachev's policy cannot guarantee Soviet compliance with the Helsinki accords in areas of human rights and information policy (the so-called "third basket").

Glasnost' can be used as a tool of Soviet foreign policy to facilitate access to Western technology and improve credibility of the Soviet political system in Western eyes. Although the rationale for glasnost' is far broader and more complex than the disinformation campaign directed against the West, its sporadic and selective use for deception purposes cannot be excluded.

Western policy-makers should, therefore, view with skepticism the Soviet argument that glasnost' is an indication of good political will in trade and arms control negotiations. Arms control proposals and trade agreements should be assessed, adopted or rejected on their own merits. Most important, the new policy has not changed an essentially hostile Soviet view of the West in general and the United States in particular. In negotiating with the Soviets, Western decision-makers should seek ideological linkages to economic and political agreements, namely, a Soviet commitment to end the psychological and propaganda war against the United States. Western decision-makers should also bear in mind that glasnost' as a policy lacks consensus and as a result can be easily reversed.

The value of glasnost' to the Western community lies in providing more extensive and reliable information about Soviet society. Furthermore, constraints notwithstanding, glasnost' promotes some mode of free expression and critical thinking in society. On these counts, communism with glasnost' is better than one without it.

The West should also be aware of the efforts by the military establishment to use glasnost' to improve the quality of military manpower, training standards and the overall effectiveness of the defense system.

Although glasnost' does not expose the Soviet Union to serious risks of a major political crisis, it has some destabilizing effect on the political system and society at large and thus presents both a challenge and a danger to the United States.

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