



10 DOWNING STREET

Rine Nuster

Today is Gorbachev's
second anniversary in
power & there has been
quite a flurry of
articles about him.

You may like to
glance at the passages
which I have outlined.

CD?
12/3.

Thanks so very much
nd

Gorbachov faces trial of strength in third year

From Christopher Walker
Moscow

Mr Mikhail Gorbachov begins his third year in office today after a remarkable period in which he has transformed the Kremlin's power balance, revamped the Soviet Union's international image and created a new atmosphere inside the country — but has so far conspicuously failed to overcome the entrenched bureaucratic resistance to his ambitious reform programme.

Although few could have predicted when he took over from the late and little lamented Konstantin Chernenko that change would come so rapidly and over such a wide spectrum, the first doubts have begun to set in on whether Mr Gorbachov, despite his undiminished energy and drive, can succeed in the herculean task he has set himself.

As one Soviet admirer put it: "The battle is now on to see whether he can crush the opponents embedded in the system."

Hardly a day now goes by

without his enthusiastic supporters in the official media — perhaps the most radically transformed area of Soviet society — making critical reference to the internal resistance to his reforms and appealing to the public to support the cause.

So far, his main support comes from two groups, the intelligentsia and women. "I can say without shame that every night, before I go to bed, I pray for him," one Moscow intellectual told a surprised Western friend.

Her main fear was that Mr Gorbachov would suffer the same fate as Mr Khrushchev in the 1960s: overthrown because the pace of change he was forcing was too great for a country noted for its inertia.

Despite the much-trumpeted promotion of *glasnost* (and the string of Soviet disasters it has exposed) judgements about the political balance inside the party are still better made by private assessment of nuances rather than statements of attitude.

Because of the deliberate

risks that Mr Gorbachov has taken by the sweeping nature of his plans, and the bleak future they promise to millions of officials and apathetic members of the country's notoriously idle work force, there are still very many citizens hedging their bets, unwilling to

Kremlin must satisfy to prevent widespread discontent.

The difficulty in attempting to assess the precise strength of the Soviet leader's position as he embarks on this third, and by his own admission most difficult, year is that resistance to his goals of mod-

● The battle is now on to see whether he can crush the opponents embedded in the system ●

become too closely identified with "Gorbachovism".

Mr Gorbachov, whose 56th birthday slipped by without official recognition last week, has himself identified the problems which he faces with an acuteness and repetitiveness that has earned him the derogatory nickname "balalaika" ("because he always plays the same note").

As he pointed out during a recent tour of the nationalistically sensitive Baltic region, his vigorous pursuit of *perestroika* (reorganization) has led to a "revolution of expectations" which the

ernization, liberalization and democratization is mainly passive.

"You do not think that anyone really opposed to the Gorbachov line is likely to come out in public and say so?", exclaimed Pavel Havlov, a leading author from the Soviet Far-East recently introduced to a group of Western reporters. "That is not the way our society works."

One of Mr Gorbachov's main assets during his first two years at the helm has been the sheer age of those hanging over in positions of power obtained during the dis-

credited Brezhnev era. More than two-thirds of government ministers have already been replaced and a vigorous anti-corruption drive has seen the sacking of thousands of officials.

The problem has now arisen of finding people of sufficient calibre to replace them and of forcing the reluctant middle-level of the bureaucracy to implement reforms passed at the top.

Pavda last week invoked the authority of Lenin to add weight to Mr Gorbachov's drive for change.

In the run-up to today's second anniversary, a number of contradictory signals have emerged which have been taken as proof that his most far-reaching measures, such as the pardoning of some of the best-known dissidents like Iosif Begun, are meeting a tougher new strain of resistance, notably inside the KGB which has an estimated 600,000 citizens on its payroll.

The recent beating-up of peaceful Jewish demonstrators and the support

that the thuggery received in a number of ominously-worded Tass articles indicated that the backlash had wide support.

Another sign that the honeymoon is over has been the recent relaxation in Moscow of the stringent anti-alcohol regulations that have been the most controversial and widely resented of the Gorbachov reforms.

While the extraordinary transformations in Soviet cultural life brought about under the influence of Mr Gorbachov and his artistically minded wife, Raisa, have been generally well-received (although the recent emergence of skin-head-type gangs, known as Lyuberites, is regarded as a sign of a backlash in this direction too), his efforts to shake the economy out of the doldrums and force home the need for individual responsibility have been less well-received.

"When there is not a war on, an unrelieved diet of blood, sweat and tears is not easy to sell," one diplomat observed.

Richard Owen assesses the reform prospects

as Gorbachov enters his third year

THE TIMES
11/3/87

How Thatcher could help glasnost along



change. It is not even to say, as Arthur Hartman, the retiring US ambassador to Moscow, has said, that Gorbachov is doomed to failure. But we need to be realistic and resist wishful thinking. In *Crisis in the Kremlin*, published last autumn, I argued that the history of Soviet power struggles shows that a new general secretary has to continue fighting off rival personalities, ideas and power groups as he consolidates his position. In Gorbachov's case, the struggle would be fierce because he was seeking to introduce fundamental reforms in an attempt to catch up with the West, and because the cards were stacked against him in the form of conservatism and national inertia.

It is difficult to enter a note of caution without sounding ungenerous, which in itself shows how far Gorbachov has succeeded in creating a new image, even a new climate. Glasnost (openness) has brought welcome fresh air; more honesty about setbacks and disasters, more literary creativity, the airing of unorthodox ideas in the press, television and in the cinema, which is undergoing something of a renaissance; the Stalin terror is only one previously taboo subject now being dealt with. Gorbachov himself has called for a re-examination of the "blank pages" of Soviet history (although this has not so far included much about Khrushchev). Gorbachov's wife Raisa,

meanwhile, is bringing Western fashion to Moscow.

But party censorship and control remains firmly in place, and nothing will be tolerated which challenges the party's monopoly of power. The Kremlin still has a crude and blinkered view of the West, however adept it is at playing to Western opinion. The recent gathering of writers, scientists and Hollywood stars in the Kremlin may have had some cultural value, but until Gorbachov it would largely have been seen as propaganda razmatazz involving what Lenin called "useful fools". The presence of Dr Andrei Sakharov at the "World Peace Forum" was astonishing, and in itself a measure of how far things have progressed in two years; on the other hand Sakharov's critical remarks on liberalization at home and arms control abroad were not reported in the Soviet media. Neither was the release of 140 dissidents under the Gorbachov amnesty, or — perhaps less surprisingly — Gorbachov's confession to Yoko Ono, John Lennon's widow, that he and Raisa rather like the Beatles.

The brutal dispersal of Jewish demonstrators during the peace extravaganza must have been authorized by Gorbachov, who could have stopped it instead of allowing ugly images of violence by the KGB and vigilante thugs to appear on Western TV screens.

Gorbachov is saying, in effect: I have opened Pandora's box, but I am ready to slam the lid down at any moment. His aim, which was also that of his mentor, Andropov, remains the stamping out of dissent rather than the reverse, and his attitude to Sakharov is governed by the need to co-opt the country's best brains in the cause of glasnost and perestroika (reconstruction). Time is short, yet Gorbachov must know that measures such as the limited introduction of co-operatives or family-run restaurants will not turn the economy around fast enough, and will not create growth at all as long as central control of planning, raw materials and prices remains sacrosanct.

In other words Mrs Thatcher will be meeting a revolutionary — in Soviet terms — who at the same time is still a prisoner of the system which produced him. The drawback to the release of dissidents is that it draws attention to the system which put them behind bars in the first place. The drawback to controlled press freedom is that it highlights the limits of glasnost. The drawback to arms control concessions is that they risk offending Soviet military interests and expose the generals' powerful role.

The West, Nato officials say, has to combine encouragement of the new detente and Gorbachov's reforms with an awareness that he might fail, and that he can be replaced, as the no less remarkable Khrushchev was replaced in 1964. When Gorbachov said during his recent Baltic tour that he believed deeply in what he had begun and that for him there was no alternative — a phrase likely to appeal to Mrs Thatcher, who almost has copyright on it — he was undoubtedly sincere. He has gone too far to turn back. But he added that "the other comrades" also believed there was no alternative.

In reality there are plenty of "other comrades" at all levels who are horrified by his economic decentralization plans and by his hints of further liberalization, including greater freedom of travel. At the recent central committee plenum, which had been postponed three times, Gorbachov was able to make only one change in the Politburo.

The old guard (not all of it aged) is still around, watching and waiting, and its instincts are the hidebound instincts of the system Gorbachov is trying to change. The fatal flaw is that they are also, to some extent, his own instincts. Soviet leaders naturally resent being lectured to, but it would do no harm if Mrs Thatcher were gently to remind Gorbachov what political liberalism and economic enterprise actually mean in the real world outside Soviet ideology.

She might even make a significant contribution to the unfolding drama of Soviet communism's welcome attempt to adapt, update and reform itself.

The author was The Times Moscow correspondent 1982-85 and is now Brussels correspondent. This article is based on a lecture given to the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at Birmingham University.

"I told you frankly," a senior Nato official said recently, "that Gorbachov is more attractive to people in the West than some of our own leaders. We have to meet that challenge. If we keep dismissing him as a fake liberal, if we keep saying agreements with the Russians are pointless because Moscow always cheats, we will find ourselves in a crisis with our own public opinion".

Mrs Thatcher's forthcoming trip to Moscow comes at a critical point in East-West relations, with the West trying to weigh up the right response to Gorbachov two years after he started to turn the Soviet Union upside down. His reversion to the idea of detaching a deal on Euro missiles from President Reagan's "Star Wars" project is an offer that cannot be refused — provided Western Europe's fears about Soviet short-range missiles and the Warsaw Pact's conventional edge are taken into account. The Thatcher visit raises other issues too: its electoral value to the Tories and the extent to which Britain is an intermediary between Washington and Moscow when both are preoccupied with domestic matters.

But the hidden theme is ideological. Mrs Thatcher is meeting a man who is changing the Soviet Union before our eyes and presents a radically new challenge in the East-West war of ideas.

Today Gorbachov will have been in power exactly two years. After a hiatus last autumn, when he faced intense opposition to his reform plans, he has surged forward with apparent confidence. He seems determined to make good his boast when he took over in March 1985: that a modernized Russia would prove the superiority of the communist system not by force of arms but force of example.

But there is a pitfall here, as Nato generals and diplomats are well aware: through our wish to see Gorbachov succeed in liberalizing a system whose authoritarianism had seemed set in stone, we may not only underestimate the obstacles he faces but also make a false analogy between Soviet "liberalism" and Western values.

Impressed by the new intellectual freedom — and contacts with Russians are after all mainly with intellectuals — some Moscow-watchers go so far as to argue that Gorbachov is more liberal in his own terms than Mrs Thatcher, or even that Gorbachov is trying to introduce a Thatcher-style "enterprise culture". That is a dangerous line of argument: behind it lurks the intellectual dishonesty of "moral equivalence". Gorbachov has had only two years in which to chip away at a political culture rooted for centuries in coercion and fear. The Gulag remains, and ordinary people still queue for basic foods in shops which are even less well stocked than they were under Brezhnev, Andropov or Chernenko.

In foreign affairs, there is little real progress on Afghanistan (certainly no apology for the invasion) and not much more on the Sino-Soviet front.

This is not the same as saying that the Soviet Union will never

Russia's second revolution

Two years on, Gorbachev has made great strides, but the reform battle is far from won

First impressions are invariably the right ones. In the case of Mr Mikhail Gorbachev however they have been hopelessly inadequate as well. Even before he took power, when he made his famous visit to Britain in December 1984, the West suspected that startling things might be in store for the Soviet Union, were this clear-headed, incisive Politburo member, so different from the old, sick men who had been serving time in the Kremlin, to take command. But quite so startling?

Mr Gorbachev today celebrates — if that is the right word to apply to a man not over-given to frivolity — the second anniversary of his election as general secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and as such the *de facto* leader of world Communism.

Since then, his character has taken sharper relief: part pragmatist, part technocrat, part idealist, but above all deadly serious in what he is about. In a sense, his goal is deceptively simple, to make the existing Soviet system work better. But, by the congealed standards of Socialism in its citadel, the means are sensational. They imply a revolution of both practices and attitudes which, if pushed to its logical conclusion, could threaten the very survival of the system.

From a different perspective, it can appear a monumental sleight of hand, an attempt at transforming everything, while maintaining that the transformation is but a return to the first principles of Lenin. Indeed, to judge by Mr Gorbachev's words, if not yet his deeds, the economic changes he has in mind are the most radical since Lenin's New Economic Policy which allowed a dose of capitalism to revive an exhausted nation.

But the seventh leader of Soviet Russia would go further. Mr Gorbachev started with the decrepit economy. Laws were passed to shake up state enterprises, to increase incentives for better work and higher productivity, to reward the more highly skilled. He has relaxed slightly the straitjacket of central planning, and permitted a measure of private cottage industry. Foreign firms are being wooed, to establish joint ventures with Soviet partners and bring a shot of Western technology and efficiency with them. But now he has moved up a gear. "Democratisation" is the new buzzword of the vocabulary of

perestroika, the re-structuring Mr Gorbachev is thrusting upon his country.

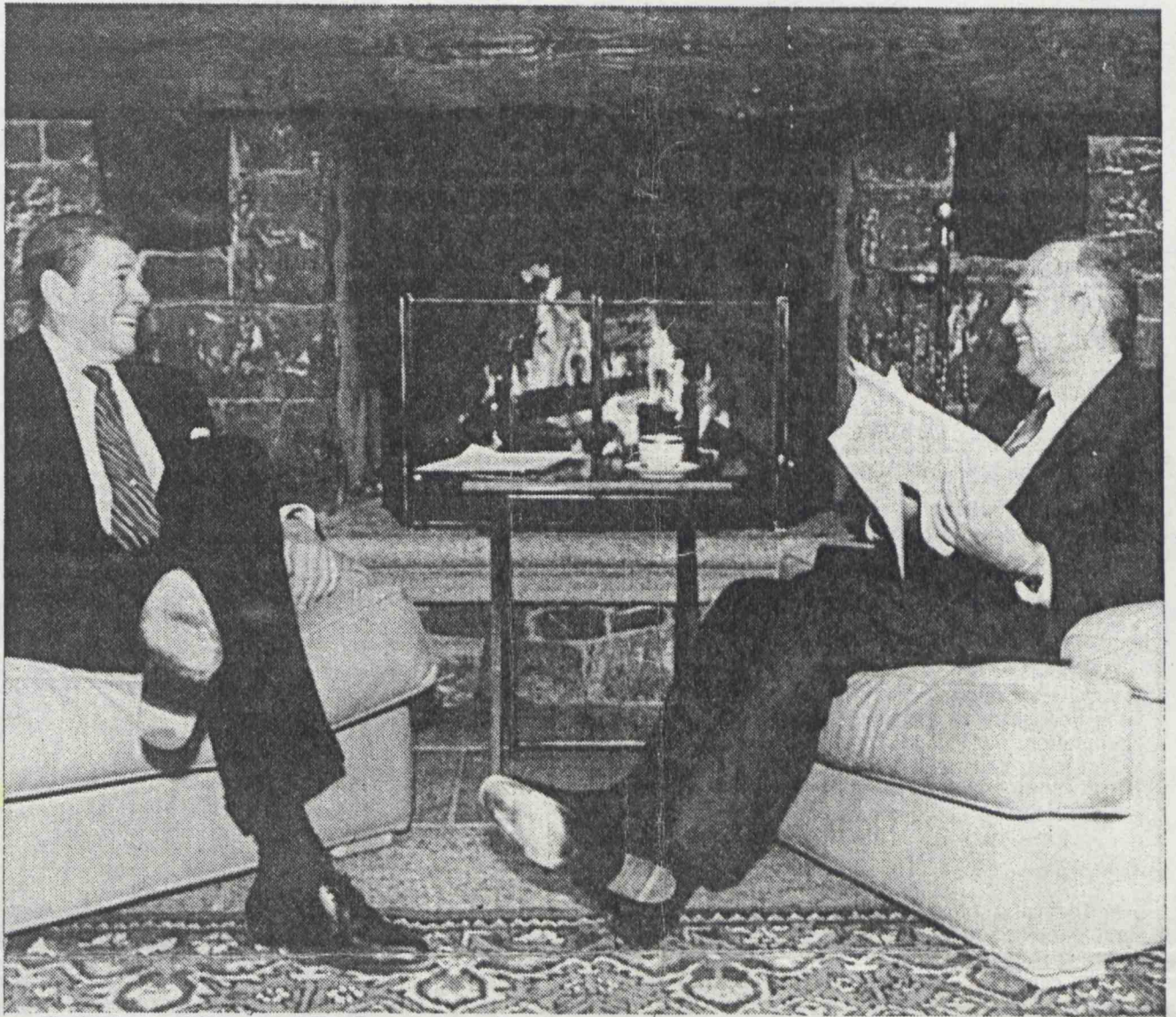
It embraces everything from secret balloting at elections for lower level posts in industry, the unions, and even the party itself, at which more than one candidate will be entitled to stand, to a more adventurous press, a new broom for the judiciary — even, conceivably, for the hitherto untouchable KGB — and a more liberal approach to the arts, even to human rights.

How many political prisoners have been freed since Mr Gorbachev took office is impossible to say. Indeed, whether all of the 140 releases announced a month ago have been carried out is not clear. But, beyond question, more dissidents are now leaving Soviet labour camps and prisons than are entering them. In early January came the unprecedented public sacking of a KGB officer in the Ukraine, for harassing and finally framing an awkward journalist.

Mr Gorbachev of course is not pursuing democracy in a Western sense. Control will remain firmly with the party: "Socialist democracy has nothing in common with permissiveness, irresponsibility and anarchy," he warned the central committee plenum in January.

The common thread running through the many faces of "democratisation" is different, but no less radical: to involve ordinary people in decisions affecting their lives. In the words of Gorbachev, the instinctive communicator, at the same occasion: "A house can only be put in order by a person who feels he owns the house." But as he sets about rebuilding, the head contractor wants as little distraction as possible. Thus foreign and domestic policy complement each other.

To loosen up at home inspires confidence abroad, while a warmer international climate gives more scope to concentrate on matters internal. The search for an arms deal, and for a way out of the Afghanistan mess, the modest cultural and human rights thaws at home are to be seen in this light, Mr Gorbachev has implied. If you are in the White House, or Downing Street, do you believe him? But if you do not, then it is a bluff on an epic scale. All of which raises the tantalising question of how much resistance he is encountering to his policies. There is much



Gorbachev and Reagan at the Geneva summit: a warmer international climate makes things easier at home

From Rupert Cornwell in Moscow

evidence that Mr Gorbachev's acceleration was forced upon him, an effort to carry the battle over the heads of opponents — both active and passive — of his reforms, to the people themselves.

Were he an American president, Mr Gorbachev would now be facing midterm elections, a sound gauge of his popularity and success. But the Soviet Union is still a very closed society, and public opinion is highly filtered before it reaches the letters columns of the newspapers. Even so, pointers abound, quite apart from the almost desperate tone of his speeches lately, that the fight against an old guard, grown fat and lazy in the Brezhnev era, is far from won.

Mr Gorbachev's disclosure that the plenum had to be postponed three times for want of a clear idea of the main issues was an astonishing admission of high level discord — *glasnost* (openness) carried to a new height.

Equally significant, the plenum's final resolutions seemed to water down proposals of his keynote speech. Nor did the changes in the top party hierarchy after the meeting come up to expectation. Mr Vladimir Shcherbitsky, for example, last of the Brezhnev appointees on the politburo, kept his seat. Mr Boris Yeltsin, the Moscow party chief whose vituperation against the bad old ways can eclipse, on occasion, Mr Gorbachev's own, was not promoted to full membership of the politburo. Abroad, some of Moscow's provincial governors in Eastern Europe had their own, differing, reasons to voice misgiving, or damn with faint praise, what the Soviet leader was attempting.

Most chastening of all though must have been recent events in China. China may be a very different animal from the Soviet Union. It has a strong merchant tradition. Its population is responsive to change in a way that the brow-beaten, cynical *homo sovieticus* is not. If the danger there is that a market economy fuse, once lit, may lead to an explosion, in Russia the risk is rather that the fuse will prove too damp. But in both Communist countries the bottom line is the same: that reform ultimately could challenge the tenets of totalitarianism.

China's conservatives have won a victory, forcing the brakes to be applied. The lesson will not be lost on Mr Gorbachev's foes here. Above all, however, he has yet, quite literally, to deliver the goods. The phrases may be ringing, but life for the man in the street is as drab as ever.

Expectations have been raised, but the queues persist. Vodka, that staple of Russian life, has become scarcer and hugely expensive. So far this year, the first to feel the full blast of the reforms, the economy has fallen short of target. New quality standards have led to lower output at many plants, smaller bonuses and in some cases wage cuts. Every day *Pravda*

receives 2,000 letters, half of them about *perestroika*, and most of those complaining that worthy goals remain just that — in other words that orders from the centre are not percolating down the parallel ministry and party chains of command, into the individual factory or collective farm. As Mr Viktor Afanasyev, *Pravda's* editor, argued the other day, the most difficult task is to instil the new mood into ordinary people: "It will be a long battle, and we can't think that in a year or two, everything will be fine."

For that long at least Mr Gorbachev of course should be safe. His natural opponents, the insecure bureaucrats, officials high and low jealous of their privileges, the complacent and the corrupt, have found no standard to rally to. Not even the most indirect, heavily coded criticism of the leadership's line has emerged of late in the press. No one, most of all, has put forward an argument to counter the Gorbachev assertion that the country has no choice but to modernise.

His own constituency, on the other hand, stretches from the pinnacle of the party down, through the intelligentsia to a middle class from whom what is happening in the wider world cannot be totally sealed off. But what if things do go wrong? Kind words from the West for what he is doing are a two edged weapon. Lenin once observed that "if your enemy is praising you, it means you are doing something wrong."

In the West Mr Gorbachev's offer to do a separate deal on medium-range missiles may be hailed as statesmanlike common sense. But how many here see it privately as weakness and climb-down?

And circumstances could swing against him. If an arms deal fails to materialise, if the economy stagnates, if there are a couple of bad harvests, what then? Gorbachev the bold might seem like a general who in his forward onrush has stretched his supply lines too far. It is questions like these, as well as the sense of genuine excitement he has created, which make the Soviet Union so intriguing a place under Mr Gorbachev.



Gorbachev follows the policy of *glasnost* but bureaucrats are less keen

GORBACHEV'S MILESTONES

SIGNIFICANT dates under Gorbachev.

11 March 1985
Gorbachev elected General Secretary of Central Committee of CPSU to succeed Konstantin Chernenko.
6 August 1985
Nuclear test moratorium declared.
19-21 November 1985 — First summit meeting with President Reagan in Geneva.
25 February 1986
Address to 27th Party Congress setting out blueprint for reform for the rest of the century.
26 April 1986
Chernobyl nuclear power station disaster.
10-11 October 1986
Second summit with President Reagan in Reykjavik.

19 November 1986
Announcement of new law permitting limited forms of private enterprise.
18 December 1986
Test moratorium called off.
19 December 1986
Doctor Andrei Sakharov, the leading Soviet dissident and human rights champion, freed from internal exile in Gorky.
27-28 January 1987
Thrice postponed plenum on party personnel is finally held, with new proposals for reform.
26 February 1987
Soviet Union carries out first nuclear test for 19 months.
28 February 1987
New Soviet proposal for intermediate range missile deal, irrespective of SDI.

Two Years On, Gorbachev Faces Growing

By Marshall I. Goldman **Resistance**

WELLESLEY, Massachusetts — Mikhail Gorbachev completes his second year in power Wednesday. He has attracted so much attention that it seems more like a decade.

There are some strong indications that he is encountering widespread opposition. Some American specialists like Jerry Hough doubt this, arguing that he is relatively secure. How real is his opposition?

Since October 1982, shortly before Leonid Brezhnev's death, 70 percent of the members of the Politburo and 40 percent of the members of the Central Committee have been replaced. Not all of these replacements necessarily support Mr. Gorbachev, but they should provide him with a comfortable political base.

The Gorbachev reforms have been welcomed by most of the Soviet intelligentsia. They seem elated by the release of Andrei Sakharov from exile, the freeing of many dissidents from prison and the easing of censorship.

But by no means does Mr. Gorbachev have a free hand. The Soviet press carries daily criticism of life in the Ukraine, indicating that Mr. Gorbachev wants to remove Vladimir Shcherbitsky, the party chief there. But thus far he has had no success. Mr. Gorbachev himself has complained that he had to postpone the January meeting of the Central Committee three times because of opposition to his proposals. When the Central Committee Plenum was finally held, his bold calls for secret balloting and multicandidate elections for party and government positions was ultimately muffled in a final report.

Mr. Gorbachev's problem is that the very things that win him support from the intelligentsia engender opposition from other parts of society. And an expanding circle of vested interests is affected by the unprecedented scope of these measures. Nor is there any indication that Mr. Gorbachev plans to slow down to consolidate his position. It is as if he has decided to offend almost everyone at once and hope the shock immobilizes them.

The evidence points to these major sources of opposition to reforms:

- **The bureaucrats.** Officials in party and state organizations are distressed. To them, the call for election is equivalent to abolishing tenure in U.S. universities — a threat to those who had taken the future for granted.

- **The military.** Soviet defense officials resent what they see as their downgrading. Although Viktor Chebrikov, the head of the KGB, is a full member of the Politburo (as was Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov), the current defense minister, Sergei Soko-

lov, is only a nonvoting member. Reportedly there has been grumbling about a secret Gorbachev speech in Minsk in May 1985, in which he criticized military cost overruns and threatened to cut defense spending. The generals also have complained about Mr. Gorbachev's moratorium on atomic weapons testing, and about his new arms proposals.

- **The workers.** For them, reforms have meant only more work and in-

*He presses forward,
as if trying to offend
almost everyone at once.*

convenience, while food and housing supplies remain as poor as ever. Workers also complain that Mr. Gorbachev has begun to institute shift work, disrupting family life. And he has tightened quality requirements, so that if output does not pass inspection, workers are not paid. These procedures are said to have provoked riots at the big truck plant on the Kama River, a tributary of the Volga.

- **The ideologues.** Soviet conserva-

tives are stunned by what they consider a rejection of fundamental tenets of communism. For instance, after a 50-year absence, capitalist businessmen are being welcomed into the Soviet Union as partners in joint ventures. And beginning May 1, a new decree will legitimate the operation of private business.

Criticism of the reforms has appeared in the press. A reporter for Trud, the trade union paper, asked whether it is necessary to involve capitalists in developing the Soviet economy. He asked: "Will this not make us dependent on capitalist states?"

The conservatives are said to have insisted on a crackdown against illegal private activity before they would agree to any legitimation of private trade. The KGB's roughing up of protesters in Moscow is also a conservative reaction. A Soviet newspaper's decision not to publish an interview with Andrei Sakharov is another.

For most conservatives there are already too many signs of liberalization. They worry that this lax atmosphere may spawn dangerous social upheaval, as presaged by the recent riot in Kazakhstan and another in Moscow by 500 high school students.

Can Mr. Gorbachev carry out his reforms? It will not be easy. Unlike Deng Xiaoping in China, who could point to an immediate spurt in farm output, Mr. Gorbachev has had no instant success. And even Mr. Deng recently had to retrench.

For Mr. Gorbachev, the danger is that he may go the way of Nikita Khrushchev. There are many similarities. Khrushchev also tried to circumscribe the power of party and state bureaucrats; he proposed limits to how long a functionary could stay in office; he tried to force a cutback in the military; and he supported some far-reaching economic reforms. He managed to put down one party insurrection in 1957, but a new coalition finally deposed him in 1964.

That the conservatives might prevail worries many Gorbachev supporters. As Alexander Bovin, an advocate of reform, put it, "in my lifetime they have twice thrown us back." The question now is whether "they" will try to do so again.

The writer is a professor of economics at Wellesley College and author of the forthcoming "Gorbachev's Challenge: Economic Reform in the Age of High Technology." He contributed this comment to The Washington Post.

Gorbachev's Real Test Is Afghanistan

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON — Mikhail Gorbachev understands that the Soviet Union pays a price in the world for its abuses of human rights. The end of Andrei Sakharov's exile and the release of some important political prisoners were, at a minimum, gestures to the opinions of mankind. Incomplete as we may think them, we have to understand that they were bold steps for a Soviet leader.

A more profound test of Mr. Gorbachev's understanding, boldness and political skill is at hand. The issue is Afghanistan. Soviet policy there has caused human suffering on a scale so large it is hard to grasp. Unless and until the policy changes, Afghanistan will cast a shadow on all Western negotiations with Moscow.

Seven years after the Soviet invasion, 115,000 Soviet troops are in Afghanistan. We have not paid enough attention to its sufferings. But if Moscow thinks Afghanistan will be forgotten, or somehow kept separate from East-West relations generally, it is wrong.

Consider this: There are about five million refugees from Afghanistan now. That is half the refugees in the world, nearly a third of Afghanistan's pre-invasion population. Of those remaining in the country, perhaps two million have fled their homes because of Soviet bombing and other dangers.

The best studies of Afghanistan's torment were published jointly in December and a year earlier by two private human rights organizations in New York, Helsinki Watch and Asia Watch. One practice they described is the use of "toy bombs" — explosive devices disguised as toy trucks, dolls and other objects. When children pick them up, they explode, blowing off hands, maiming, blinding.

"The practice of using toys to kill is such an outrageous concept that many have refused to accept it as true," the 1986 report of the two watch committees said. "Yet Helsinki Watch has received scores of testimonies about such weapons, from credible witnesses who often have no notion of the significance of what they were reporting."

Children are also the targets of an extraordinary Soviet political enterprise. That is the sending of Afghan children to the Soviet Union in large numbers for indoctrination.

No one in the West knows exactly how many children have been taken to the Soviet Union, but sources among the mujahidin, or resistance movement, put the figure as high as 60,000. Two men in the resistance movement who are now visiting the United States, Mohammed Es'Haq and Wakil Akberzai, saw a deep and depressing message in the program to indoctrinate young Afghans.

"The Soviets came on a short-term pretext," Mr. Akberzai said, "to safeguard their borders. But it has turned out to be a long-term process, the Sovietization of Afghanistan and of Afghan children."

By now it seems clear that the Soviet Union cannot impose itself on Afghanistan without a continuing heavy cost. The mujahidin fight on. The Soviet-imposed government in Kabul has not attracted any respected Afghans to join it. Is there any way out of a situation that is destroying Afghanistan and bleeding the U.S.S.R.?

United Nations-sponsored negotiations, just resumed in Geneva, are looking for that way out. The crucial issue is whether Soviet leaders, who have talked of withdrawing their forces from Afghanistan over a period of years, will agree to withdraw in a time period short enough to make the Afghans — and the West — believe that they really intend to let Afghanistan decide its own fate.

Soviet leaders no doubt fear that if they pull out unconditionally, a government hostile to Moscow will take over — and that the United States will keep sending weapons to the Afghan rebels. Those are risks. But they are risks that must be taken if Mr. Gorbachev wants to get out of the Afghan quagmire. And it is as good a time as any to take them.

The Reagan administration, ready to do business with Mr. Gorbachev on other matters, is more likely now to respond with restraint to a genuine move from him in Afghanistan. As for the resistance, Mr. Es'Haq said: "We have no real disputes with the Russians, in land or economics. We can assure them that a government chosen by Afghans would have a nonaligned status. I see no real problem except the pride of a big power."

That is a terrible problem, as the United States demonstrated in Vietnam. Mr. Gorbachev will not find it easy in his political system to pull out of the Afghanistan disaster. But the initiative has to come from him.

The New York Times.

Straining Mightily to Uproot Stalinism

By Stephen F. Cohen

PRINCETON, New Jersey — Two years after Mikhail Gorbachev became leader, it is clear that he represents the possibility of historic change. The reforms he is proposing, if fully implemented, would greatly reduce the monopolistic system of state control created by Stalin. This possibility explains Mr. Gorbachev's call for "revolutionary transformations" and the intense resistance it has aroused on many levels.

The importance of the struggle cannot be understood apart from the history of the Stalinist system. A much less encompassing kind of Communist rule existed in the 1920s, the era of Lenin's New Economic Policy, or NEP. It was characterized by limited state intervention in society; a market economy in which a large private sector competed with nationalized enterprises; a vigorous cultural and intellectual life; and a significant degree of open debate in the political institutions.

All of these features were abolished in the 1930s by Stalin's draconian policies of collectivization, industrialization and mass terror. They were re-

placed by a vast, hypercentralized bureaucratic state demanding absolute control over almost every social undertaking. The Stalinist system turned a backward peasant country into a world power, but its continued survival has long been viewed by many Soviet citizens as anachronistic.

The first effort to reform the Stalinist system, under Nikita Khrushchev from 1953 to 1964, achieved important successes. Mass terror was ended, state and party controls were relaxed and debates about more far-reaching change were permitted. But Khrushchev's reforms stopped far short of challenging the basic Stalinist structure or principle of statist control over society.

Therein lies the historic nature of Mr. Gorbachev's proposals to transfer effective management of government-owned industry and agriculture from Moscow ministries to factories and farms; to end the state economic monopoly in important areas by encouraging private enterprise and market

relations; to reduce censorship; and to diminish bureaucratic control.

These reforms would devolve considerable authority to local work places, soviets, unions, theaters, editorial offices and the like. The new system would still be subject to Communist Party domination, but it would constitute a substantial de-stalinization and liberalization, and therefore a fundamental de-Stalinization of the Soviet system.

That such a reformation is the goal of Mr. Gorbachev and his supporters is confirmed by their demand for "a deep restructuring of the entire system." Calling upon Lenin's NEP for inspiration and legitimacy, their indictment of Stalinism exceeds anything previously allowed.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Gorbachev's call for a new way of governance has collided with powerful interests and attitudes. The Central Committee plenum in January endorsed much less than Mr. Gorbachev proposed, despite his apparent threat to resign.

His hope seems to be that reformers eventually can erode conservative attitudes that form the most widespread obstacle to change. Here, too, Mr. Gorbachev is in direct conflict with the Stalinist era. Viewed in this context, his campaign for glasnost, or openness, in the media, which has pitted his way of "new thinking" against Stalinist dogmas, is his most important achievement so far.

Mr. Gorbachev and his supporters now say the full reformation they seek will require decades. Increasingly, they speak of the need to find ways "to make the process of change irreversible." These words reflect the scope of their anti-Stalinist purpose and the resistance it is meeting.

All this demands a clearer understanding of what Mr. Gorbachev represents. And we must at least consider the historic possibility of a new kind of relationship with the Soviet Union.

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