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GORBACHEV'S VISIT AND THE "GLORIOUS" REVOLUTION

1. As Gorbachev's forthcoming visit coincides with celebrations in this country of the 300th Anniversary of the "Glorious" Revolution, the Prime Minister might like to be reminded that Gorbachev made a passing reference to that Revolution in his book, "Perestroika". I attach the relevant pages.

2. Gorbachev's thesis is that perestroika is an extension of the October 1917 Revolution. He uses the historical analogy of the "Glorious" Revolution, among others, to show that the full achievement of the aims of a revolution can take a long time.

3. Gorbachev's reference to the "Glorious" Revolution could be used in speeches during his visit as a peg on to which to hang our appreciation of Gorbachev's efforts at constitutional reform (one stage of which will just have been completed when he comes to the UK): in 1688-9 this country laid the foundation of a Parliamentary democracy which has held good to this day and served as the model for many others. (It also of course installed a dual husband-and-wife monarchy, a parallel better not drawn in the circumstances.)

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acquired too great an influence in all state, administrative and even public affairs.

It goes without saying that in these conditions Lenin's valuable ideas on management and self-management, profit-and-loss accounting, and the linking of public and personal interests, failed to be applied and develop properly. This is only one example of ossified social thought that is divorced from reality.

Perestroika set new tasks for our policies and our social thought. They included putting an end to the ossification of social thought, in order to give it wider scope and to overcome completely the consequences of that monopoly on theory typical of the period of the personality cult. At that time the forms of the development of socialist society that had come into being under extreme conditions were made by Stalin's authority into something absolute, and were regarded as the only possible forms for socialism.

A drastic change must be made in social and political thought. And here we must learn from Lenin. He had the rare ability to sense at the right time the need for radical changes, for a reassessment of values, for a revision of theoretical directives and political slogans.

Here is a most striking example. In April 1917, when Lenin came back to Russia, he wasted little time in assessing accurately the situation, tendencies and possibilities of development in the country after the February revolution.¹ He not only correctly determined the only possible tactics of the Party and the Soviets, but also set forth a new strategic task, that of preparing the Party and the masses for a socialist revolution. Otherwise the gains achieved in overthrowing the autocracy could well have been lost. Such a change in tactics was unexpected even for many seasoned Bolsheviks. This is the kind of dialectics in political thinking that we are learning about as we carry out our perestroika.

Both then and afterwards, it often happened that the Party was too slow in understanding new ideas. It was difficult at times, with even persons most committed to the cause of the revolution revealing misunderstanding. But Lenin and his associates had the ability to convince people, to explain things, and return again and again to the

¹ The February bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917 overthrew tsarism. A provisional government was set up, which had to share power with the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies.

same issue, to fire others with energy and to win over those who hesitated and doubted. Lenin himself found it hard sometimes. He once bitterly wrote in a letter, referring to those who were unable to stand the tension and were seeking an easy life in the revolution: "there were trying times, sometimes very trying, but I would not for a world exchange the smallest bit of that period for a whole life in company with shallow persons and philistines."

I have mentioned several times, referring to Lenin, that if you take up particular issues without seeing the general perspective, you will keep bumping into this general perspective all the time. Taking this as our guideline, from the very start of perestroika, especially at the June 1987 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, we attached prime importance to a conceptual approach. Of course, we sought to make methods less chaotic. In order to make a substantial gain, it is not at all necessary to begin by turning everything upside down and then to start correcting all the mistakes.

New tasks have to be tackled, with no ready-made answers. Nor are there such answers today. Social scientists have not yet offered us anything cohesive. The political economy of socialism is stuck with outdated concepts and is no longer in tune with the dialectics of life. Philosophy and sociology, too, are lagging behind the requirements of practice. Historical science must undergo a major revision.

The 27th CPSU Congress and Plenary Meetings of the Central Committee have opened up new opportunities for creative thought and have given a powerful impulse to its development. No revolutionary movement is possible without a revolutionary theory—this Marxist precept is today more relevant than ever.

Perestroika is a Revolution

Perestroika is a word with many meanings. But if we are to choose from its many possible synonyms the key one which expresses its essence most accurately, then we can say thus: perestroika is a revolution. A decisive acceleration of the socio-economic and cultural development of Soviet society which involves radical changes on

the way to a qualitatively new state is undoubtedly a revolutionary task.

I think we had every reason to declare at the January 1987 Plenary Meeting: in its essence, in its Bolshevik daring and in its humane social thrust the present course is a direct sequel to the great accomplishments started by the Leninist Party in the October days of 1917. And not merely a sequel, but an extension and a development of the main ideas of the Revolution. We must impart new dynamism to the October Revolution's historical impulse and further advance all that was commenced by it in our society.

Of course, we don't equate perestroika with the October Revolution, an event that was a turning point in the thousand-year history of our state and is unparalleled in force of impact on mankind's development. And yet, why in the seventieth year of the October Revolution do we speak of a new revolution?

Historical analogy may be helpful in answering this question. Lenin once noted that in the country of the classical bourgeois revolution, France, after its Great Revolution of 1789-93, it took another three revolutions (1830, 1848 and 1871) to carry through its aims. The same applies to Britain where, after the Cromwellian Revolution of 1649, came the "glorious" Revolution of 1688-9, and then the 1832 reform was necessary to finally establish the new class in power—the bourgeoisie. In Germany there were two bourgeois-democratic revolutions (1848 and 1918), and in between them the drastic reforms of the 1860s, which Bismarck carried out by "iron and blood."

"Never in history," wrote Lenin, "has there been a revolution in which it was possible to lay down one's arms and rest on one's laurels after the victory." Why then should not socialism, called upon to carry out even more profound socio-political and cultural changes in society's development than capitalism, go through several revolutionary stages in order to reveal its full potential and finally crystalize as a radically new formation? Lenin repeated the following thought more than once: socialism would consist of many attempts. Each attempt would in a certain sense be one-sided, each would have its own specifics. And this applies to all countries.

Historical experience has shown that socialist society is not insured against the emergence and accumulation of stagnant tendencies and

even against major socio-political crises. And it is precisely measures of a revolutionary character that are necessary for overcoming a crisis or pre-crisis situation. The most important thing here is that socialism is capable of revolutionary changes, because it is, by its very nature, dynamic.

In the spring of 1985, the Party put this task on the agenda. The gravity of accumulated and emerging problems, and the delay in their understanding and solution necessitated acting in a revolutionary way and proclaiming a revolutionary overhaul of society.

Perestroika is a revolutionary process for it is a jump forward in the development of socialism, in the realization of its essential characteristics. From the outset we realized that we had no time to lose. It is very important not to stay too long on the starting line, to overcome the lag, to get out of the quagmire of conservatism, and to break the inertia of stagnation. This cannot be done in a evolutionary way, by timid, creeping reforms. We simply have no right to relax, even for a day. On the contrary, day after day we must add to our effort, build up its pace and its intensity. We must withstand the stresses, what cosmonauts call big overloads, at the initial phase of restructuring.

A revolution should be constantly developed. There must be no marking time. Our own past illustrates this. We still feel the aftermath of slowing down. Therefore we now need redoubled courage and boldness. Should we again get stuck, we are in for trouble. Therefore—only forward!

Of course, acting in a revolutionary way does not imply a headlong dash. Cavalry attacks are far from being always appropriate. A revolution is governed by the laws of politics, by the art of the possible. Bypassing its stages and getting ahead of ourselves must be avoided. Now the main task is to create a basis for advance to qualitatively new frontiers. Otherwise you may make a mess of the whole thing and discredit the great cause.

In accordance with our theory, revolution means construction, but it also always implies demolition. Revolution requires the demolition of all that is obsolete, stagnant and hinders fast progress. Without demolition, you cannot clear the site for new construction. Perestroika also means a resolute and radical elimination of obstacles hindering social and economic development, of outdated methods of managing