## Praise for *The Glasnost Papers*

"There is no doubt that the most important step taken by Gorbachev in his perestroika was his introduction of glasnost at the beginning of 1987. All that followed in every sphere of domestic life was possible primarily because of glasnost. But Gorbachev did not at the time foresee the far-reaching consequences of this step. The guided reform of perestroika was transformed into a revolution with its own internal dynamics. This excellent volume on glasnost, edited by one of the most respected American Soviet-ologists, Professor Gail Lapidus, and our distinguished Soviet colleague Andrei Melville, is must reading for anyone who wants to know not only what is happening, but why."

—Seweryn Bialer
*Columbia University*

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This unique compendium of Soviet thought and dialogue introduces Western readers to the broad range of current debates in the Soviet Union concerning the past, present, and future of the country and its people. The text draws on articles and letters extracted from dozens of major Soviet periodicals, including statements by political analysts, economists, historians, journalists, and writers, interspersed with excerpts from readers' letters published in the media. The extracts are placed in context by original essays that focus on the themes that underlie all discussion of the implications of reform. The book paints a rich portrait of the diversity of opinions—from reformist to conservative—expressed in the public debates unleashed by glasnost.

**Andrei Melville** is vice-president of the Soviet Peace Committee. **Gail W. Lapidus** is a professor of political science at the University of California–Berkeley and chair of the Berkeley-Stanford Program in Soviet Studies.

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# The Glasnost Papers

## *Voices on Reform from Moscow*

edited by
Andrei Melville and Gail W. Lapidus

Westview Press

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**compiled and with a commentary by**
**O. Aliakrinskii, S. Filatov, P. Gladkov, I. Isakova, A. Melville, A. Nikitin, A. Pankin, V. Vlasikhin**

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# Contents

# *Acknowledgments*

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*Gail W. Lapidus*
*Andrei Melville*

inertia. Improvement of relations between East and West will help to remove many real and imagined fears and anxieties from the consciousness of the people. Many notions adopted in the time of the cold war will clear up by themselves as they are seen to be groundless.

Finally, perestroika and glasnost have awakened a feeling of personal dignity and civic activism among people. There is still much nonsense in our lives, but people are no longer willing to be resigned to it. Relations with the outside world are becoming demystified. An ever-increasing number of people are striving to overcome blind admiration of the outside world without replacing it with either a feeling of superiority or jingoism. People are becoming more independent in their judgments and less inclined to accept on faith any kind of dogma. This process has begun and is continuing, however slowly and agonizingly, with retreats simultaneously from above and from below. An analogous phenomenon—establishing more normal and healthy relations with the East—is gradually taking place in the West. One wants to think that these processes are intersecting movements that in the course of development will strengthen one another.

*ANDREI MELVILLE*

# *Conclusion*

My colleagues and I have been working on this book for some two years, and in all candor we could not have predicted that it would prove to be such a challenging enterprise. It has been difficult not only in the technical sense: choosing the articles, selecting the quotations, writing the comments, translating the entire work, editing and reediting it, adding new materials, using overseas mails and FAXes, holding working sessions in Moscow, Berkeley, and Stanford. The most difficult, almost impossible, part of the job was to keep up with the incessant flow of events, with the interminable changes, the ups and downs of current Soviet life, the ebb and flow in the public mood.

These days everything in Soviet society seems to be changing so quickly that for those of us who have worked on this book it is hard to avoid a feeling of frustration as we register that something is no longer newsworthy, something else is already outdated; new problems appear on the agenda and at times new ideas as well.

Even so, we are convinced that what we have tried to do is useful. We have tried to provide the American reader with an outline of the major ongoing debates and the logic of the arguments and counterarguments presented in them. These arguments continue to be voiced in the current discussions on perestroika and glasnost. They still mark the dividing lines between different political and ideological camps in our society. Meanwhile the public debate is evolving further. It is becoming sharper and less inhibited; new participants get involved; the spectrum of problems under discussion is expanding; and new ideas emerge. Here are a few examples.

Two years ago, to ask whether Afghanistan had not been a tragic mistake in Soviet foreign policy was to test the limits of glasnost. Today more and more people ask that the courts impose penalties on those responsible. Demands for the conversion of the military-industrial com-

plex to peaceful uses have become much more pronounced, and practical proposals concerning such conversion are being widely discussed. Until recently, the history of Soviet foreign policy was another taboo. It is now becoming the subject of heated discussion: the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, for example, the fate of the Baltic states, and Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The virtual explosion of national tensions within the Soviet Union has produced crisis after crisis and has stimulated a search for new approaches. In the process, participants in our public discussions have called into question the constitutional basis of our union, the principles underlying our federalism, and the legality of past actions in this field.

There are scarcely any "sacred cows" left in the debates over Soviet history. It is symptomatic that this reevaluation has spread from personalities to historical categories and events, such as the collectivization of agriculture and industrialization during the first Five-Year Plans. The notion of *alternativnost'*—the premise that history could have gone along different paths—has for the first time encouraged public discussion of the alternatives that existed in Russia in 1917, at the time of the October Revolution. The very idea of political opposition—both past and present—has gradually been legitimized. The whole process of historical rewriting has not been simply a repainting in opposite colors: Yesterday's villains are hardly emerging as today's heroes. It is, rather, a sense of tragedy that pervades the new understanding of our history. One thing is clear: The social amnesia typical of our past is no longer possible.

In the discussions of economic policy, a general tone of pessimism and dissatisfaction has become prevalent, the obvious reasons for this being the deteriorating economic conditions and the insufficiency of the proclaimed reforms, which are being blocked both by the bureaucratic apparatus and by the existing social and economic institutions. There is now a growing awareness that in the economy there are no quick fixes and that we face a long and painful period of stringency in the years ahead. As a result, people are more prepared to consider options that were hardly imaginable a few years ago—like the introduction of private ownership of land and reliance on the market as a neutral and value-free mechanism. Moreover, an entirely new reality has been created by the unprecedented series of well-organized and massive strikes, beginning with the miners, which prompted another round of public discussions and debates.

The list of issues under discussion keeps growing. Old and new arguments continue to clash, but many of the earlier illusions and expectations of easy and rapid solutions have vanished; optimism has diminished; resentment and fatigue have increased. Moreover, new



challenges seem to appear before the old ones are disposed of. Hence a growing feeling of social overload, which contributes to an ambivalence about the future: People have high expectations for tomorrow and yet a growing fear of it. The old social guarantees for tomorrow are now being called into question, creating a sense of insecurity very alien to the traditional Soviet psyche.

When perestroika was first launched, many regarded it as a miraculous panacea for all the ills and problems of the stagnant system. Glasnost likewise was endowed with the qualities of political magic: All that was needed was to curse the crimes and errors of the past and to proclaim the new verities, and reality would miraculously be transformed into a new world of justice and abundance. In other words, glasnost was widely regarded not as a precondition of perestroika but as its guarantee. Alas, the miracle did not occur.

So people came to understand that the long-awaited glasnost would not work its magic, would not create a new and very different society by instant exorcism. We would not find any shortcuts around historically inevitable obstacles on the long and wearisome road to democracy.

That road has already produced its obvious rewards. It has also demonstrated their high price. There is no doubt that we now live in a much more open society. We are able to express our views freely, and we have begun to experience and value basic political freedoms. But glasnost is not the only measure of current Soviet life. We also live amidst strained and even violent interethnic relations, unprecedented strikes, spiraling inflation and rising prices, and a rapid social and political polarization that undermines the traditional Soviet ethos.

If glasnost deserves the credit for the broadening spectrum of public discussion, it also leads to a hardening of political positions and the intensification of political struggle in a polity that lacks both consensus and the tradition of democratic conflict resolution. The result is a growing destabilization of our society.

Conservative stalwarts and other opponents of glasnost use this as a pretext for critical attacks on glasnost itself, which they blame for the destabilization, for the loss of "law and order," for the critical conflicts of interest, for the fragmentation within our society, and for the deterioration of civic morale and public virtue. In fact, however, glasnost, as an integral element of and a precondition for democratization, did not create these cleavages but merely brought them to light, lifting the repressive lid that in the past had forced conflicting tendencies to remain out of view.

There are other, independent variables that fuel the present crisis. A major one, widely discussed to the point of becoming a cliché, is the resistance to perestroika and to the changes it seeks to bring about.

There is no doubt that the discontent of the bureaucracy is increasing. But this is not the only group opposed to radical change. A broad coalition of unskilled workers as well as the "workers' aristocracy," organized and semi-organized social and professional groups with diverse interests and aspirations, is united by their nostalgia for a past in which they thought they were better off. The rise of a conservative wing of Russian nationalism that seeks to unite all these forces is another ominous trend.

At the same time, we learn something else as we advance along the road of perestroika: Change itself proves, paradoxically, to be a source of crisis. To be sure, this is a very special sort of crisis caused not by the immobility of a stagnating and repressed society but by the very efforts to democratize it and bring about radical change. This should not have surprised us. Both political history and political theory teach us that the democratization of formerly totalitarian regimes is never a smooth and simple process. Not only does it include an authoritarian stage but it typically balances on the brink of social, economic, and political chaos. The aggravation of this systemic crisis has in fact led a good many people to wonder whether we have not moved from a period of stagnation to a period of social disintegration and collapse. One of the dangers is that such a crisis shrinks the space for political maneuver for the major driving forces of perestroika. As a result the authorities propose half-measures that cannot lead the society out of this crisis.

Very few people would have expected that after four or five years of perestroika they would see signs of a new erosion of power, a disintegration of old power structures before new ones had emerged. The current worries about social chaos are fueled by the perceived weakness and near paralysis of the political center, surrounded as it is by opposing and extremist forces, from conservative bureaucracy to radical intelligentsia and from nationalists of all sorts to populists. But whatever the reasons for it, and remembering that the chaos is as yet only the nightmare and not the reality, there is the general sense that the social overload is becoming unmanageable.

The delegitimation of traditional social and political structures—in the first place, power and ideology—has reached a point of no return. Rather than trying to galvanize them, the solution is to create alternatives to them. Today parallel and alternative sources of social and moral authority in the country are regarded as perfectly legitimate and no longer marginal. Thus in Soviet public opinion the ideas of an Andrei Sakharov or a Boris Yeltsin are seen as equally legitimate as those of a Yegor Ligachev.

Within the ruling party one can hear sharply contradictory voices. Perhaps even more important, one can clearly see different wings or



political orientations within the party, and all of them are perfectly legitimate today. A good case can be made that a de facto multiparty system has emerged within the single party. Although perestroika was begun from the top down, today the party cannot claim a monopoly on "restructuring." Too many other forces outside the party, including those at the grass roots, have become actively involved in radically reshaping Soviet society.

It is also important to mention a significant increase of discontent with perestroika, above all, with the way it is carried out. This discontent comes from two opposing but mutually reinforcing sources. Conservative advocates of the status quo ante are expressing increasing alarm at the dangers of what they call the "excesses of democracy" (modest as it is in the USSR today); very often they are led to use practically the same language as American neoconservatives did in the 1970s. Their opponents on the left, previously passive social and political groups now dissatisfied with the modest pace and scope of perestroika, are for the first time being roused to democratic activism and are calling for its radicalization. To these two politically and ideologically motivated sources of discontent one must add those with grievances over the deteriorating economic situation and the quality of life, those alarmed about prospects for the future, and those troubled by the uncertainties of the current scene. This tension encapsulates the central dilemma of transformation: radicalization of reforms versus social stability. What balance to strike between them will be one of the most challenging tasks for Soviet statesmanship.

It may be safe to predict that the discontent will most likely manifest itself in a further radicalization of the population rather than in attempts to return to a conservative status quo ante. More than that, within a broader framework, this dilemma—stability versus radicalization—ought to be overcome because the conditions for the self-preservation of the system are changing. Today, ensuring stability is possible only by radicalizing the reform agenda. Otherwise, radicalism will feed opposition, in turn adding to political and social destabilization.

Another problem arises from the fact that effective reforms from above require a strong leader. Yet the logic of reform is precisely to activate societal forces that demand a voice in influencing its direction, pace, and scale. This creates a dilemma for the leader. To accept the logic of democratization is to recognize the many new players in the political arena who have their own interests, goals, and constituencies and who may very well seek to go their own way. To accept this fact is obviously not so easy for an ardent reformer at the top.

Such hard choices have become even more pressing since the first Congress of People's Deputies in 1989. Even if the elections and the

course of the Congress itself failed to fully live up to a democratic ideal, they were an unprecedented development in the politics of Soviet reform. They marked a watershed after which society and politics would never be the same again. It is no exaggeration to speak of the Congress as our school for democracy and our battlefield of democratization.

In particular, it stimulated a further democratic activism from below. And it legitimized a broadening of the political and ideological spectrum of contemporary Soviet society. As a result it also legitimized the position of those who stand for more radical reforms than Gorbachev as the national leader is able to promote in the current situation.

The Congress can also be regarded as a means of institutionalizing glasnost. Many of the authors quoted in this book became deputies and began to play active political roles in Soviet life as participants rather than merely as observers. One result of the unprecedented openness and sharpness of the debates during the Congress is that glasnost acquired a life of its own, with its own rules and logic. While there are still limits to glasnost and a few "sacred cows," its scope keeps expanding and, perhaps even more important, the fear of taboos is vanishing.

We are often asked whether glasnost has become irreversible. I suppose everything in politics is reversible, and there are still influential forces of restoration in Soviet society. But one doubts whether such a reversal is either probable or feasible. An attempt at restoring the old order would exact an unbearable price economically, politically, socially, and morally, for society as well as for those in power. At the same time, I would argue that glasnost will be irreversible only after two conditions are met: first, when legal guarantees of glasnost are established (including stable and secure mechanisms for the unimpeded collection and dissemination of information); and second, when the need for glasnost becomes a staple of mass political culture. That, it must be admitted, has not yet occurred.

Nonetheless, it is safe to assert that glasnost has awakened Soviet society. It will never be the same as before: One might even be tempted to introduce a new abbreviation in Soviet historiography: B.G. and A.G. (Before Glasnost and After Glasnost). What the future of glasnost and of the Soviet Union will be remains impossible to fathom. That is why we would like to conclude our *Glasnost Papers* with the words, "To be continued."

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# About the Book and Editors

This unique compendium of Soviet thought and dialogue introduces Western readers to the broad range of current debates in the Soviet Union concerning the past, present, and future of the country and its people. Andrei Melville, the Soviet academic who spearheaded this work, is convinced that Mikhail Gorbachev's initiatives have led his country to the brink of a domestic transformation, one that will lead to an entirely new stage of development. Melville chronicles the societal ills—repression, crime, and apathy—and the structural flaws—corruption, a stagnant economy, a monolithic bureaucracy, a stifled flow of information—that have undermined the foundations of the existing system. In response to this crisis, Gorbachev conceived of the idea of perestroika—a program for the revolutionary restructuring of the whole of society, a wrenching process that has led to intense conflicts and strong disagreements between the guardians of the old and the proponents of the new.

This book presents all facets of the debate, drawing on articles and letters extracted from dozens of major Soviet periodicals, including statements by political analysts, economists, historians, journalists, and writers, interspersed with excerpts from readers' letters published in the media. The extracts are placed in context by original essays that focus on the themes underlying all discussion of the implications of reform. The book paints a rich portrait of the diversity of opinions—from reformist to conservative—expressed in the public debates unleashed by glasnost.

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