

Gorbachev's Reforms and the Crisis of the Soviet Union: An Assessment of Perestroika and Glasnost

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Abstract

The Soviet Union entered the 1980s burdened by economic stagnation, bureaucratic rigidity, declining political legitimacy, and institutional inefficiency. Decades of centralized planning and authoritarian governance had produced a highly controlled state apparatus that increasingly proved incapable of responding to domestic and international challenges. Upon assuming power in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the reform programmes of Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) with the objective of revitalizing socialism rather than dismantling it. This article examines the origins, implementation, and consequences of these reforms, arguing that while they were intended to modernize the Soviet political and economic system, they simultaneously weakened the institutional foundations upon which the Soviet state had long depended. Drawing upon contemporary scholarship and historical evidence, the study analyses how economic decentralization, political liberalization, and increased freedom of expression transformed the relationship between the Communist Party, state institutions, and Soviet society. It further explores the emergence of public criticism, nationalist movements, and demands for political pluralism that accompanied the reform process. The article contends that Perestroika and Glasnost exposed structural weaknesses that had accumulated over decades of centralized rule, thereby accelerating the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Rather than viewing the collapse of the USSR as the product of reform alone, the study argues that Gorbachev's policies revealed and intensified long-standing institutional crises that the existing state apparatus could no longer contain.

Keywords: Perestroika, Glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev

Introduction

For much of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union represented one of the world's most centralized political systems, characterized by the dominance of the Communist Party, centralized economic planning, and extensive bureaucratic control over political, economic, and social life. While this system enabled rapid industrialization and transformed the Soviet Union into a global superpower, it also generated structural rigidities, economic inefficiency, and administrative stagnation. By the early 1980s, these weaknesses had become increasingly apparent as economic growth slowed, corruption spread within the state bureaucracy, and public confidence in the political system steadily declined. The accession of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of

the Communist Party in 1985 marked a turning point in Soviet history. As the youngest Soviet leader since the Second World War, Gorbachev inherited a state confronted by mounting economic difficulties, technological backwardness, and growing social dissatisfaction. Recognizing that the existing system was incapable of sustaining long-term stability, he introduced the reform programmes of Perestroika and Glasnost, intending to restructure the economy, increase governmental transparency, and revitalize socialist governance. This article argues that these reforms fundamentally transformed the Soviet state apparatus. While designed to strengthen socialism through modernization and institutional renewal, they unintentionally undermined the centralized mechanisms that had maintained political cohesion for decades. The relaxation of political controls, expansion of public debate, and decentralization of economic authority weakened the monopoly of the Communist Party and encouraged demands for greater political autonomy among both citizens and the constituent republics. By examining the interaction between reform policies and institutional change, this study demonstrates that Perestroika and Glasnost became catalysts that accelerated the crisis of the Soviet state and ultimately contributed to the dissolution of the USSR in 1991.

The monolithic structure was characterized by major of controlled and centralized mechanism prevalent all over the Union. This feature was every issue. State machinery had been characterized by the confinement within their own premise just to safeguard their interest. This narrow mindedness had smash every feature of diversity. Cracks started to develop in the monolith set up after the death of Stalin and became more pronounced by the end of Brezhnev era. At that crucial juncture Gorbachev emerged on the shambled political front of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with intentions to reform the entire empire. Gorbachev was youngest General Secretary ever elected. At the time of his succession he was the first leader of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with less and less enthusiasm about October revolution. He had inherited very fragile economic and political structures and the institutions have reached at the verge of collapse. All the initiatives under taken by him later were not outcome of his own mind rather these may also be attributed to the deterministic compulsions of history. When Gorbachev came to power he was engulfed in such condition in which Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reached a point which necessitated drastic changes.ⁱ He was aware of the dire need to institute what were considered revolutionary reform. It is interesting to note that Gorbachev's policies were welcomed and supported by younger generation which yearned for reforms. This generation was main beneficiary of the parallel economy which the soviet centralized economy failed to curb. In fact, the former grew as a result of the corruption and misappropriation of the state officials. The second economy was on being regulation on the basis of the mechanism of demand and supply, the characteristics of capitalism. Ironically, the younger generation emerged as the main beneficiary of paralleled economy and when Gorbachev initiated a reform process aimed at de-regulation, economic-de-centralization and allowing greater role to market forces, these reforms rescued enthusiastic support of this generation. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics people found that their new leader was rather completely different from predecessors.ⁱⁱ

Structural fabric had been changed in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics since long time but now they had a different leader, though very late. It would not be out of the place to make a comparison of what went wrong at October revolution and what went wrong in 1985 when Gorbachev's policies hastily embarked upon reformist program. In 1917 when Lenin introduced his socialist program, Russia was not appropriately prepared for these reforms. Likewise, Gorbachev also stalled his reform in the similar situation when Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was ill prepared for these reforms. However, it was not only executed but also perpetually consolidated through whatever means. Gorbachev was aware of the reality that the entire political, economic and social setup needed reformation. Soviet polity was in shambles and economy was shattered. The

extremely centralized system dominated by communist party had victimized the whole social and political structure of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. System was pronouncing its loss of vitality in operations. This situation had the potential to upset the whole system.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Soviet economist had been highlighting the need for reforms even before the period of Gorbachev. In 1983 a Russian think tank 'Academy of science' had prepared a report titled Novosibirsk Research Paper. This paper described the Soviet super centralized structure as incredibly compromised and out dated. According to this report the basic features of the existing system were created some 50 years ago. Now at that time this system became outdated because of lack of any significant change.^{iv} Present system of management was lagging considerably behind the production both in quantity and quality. This report pointed towards the declining standards of administrative bodies at the top and bottom level.^v The imbalance in political powers between local administrative and party bodies on one hand and central authority on the other was responsible for chaos, tension and disturbance prevalent in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at that time. Novosibirsk report described the Soviet economy as reaching at dead end and heading for disaster.

Most important point suggested by Novosibirsk papers was that, in spite of troubles, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was not prepared for radical reform. Paper warned that sweeping reforms cannot have brought positive change without conflict and without being at heavy cost. This report suggested a very slow and gradual replacement system through market reform, decentralization etc. Report signified the failure of past reform because of their minor character. The Research report of think tank was proposed a total package of restructuring the economy of Soviet system gradually at slow pace. However this report did not mention any sort of political reform because it was a report prepared and presented by an economist.^{vi} When Gorbachev became General Secretary he was aware of above stated proposals of this research presentation. He appreciated the points and ideas of report but when he introduced and launched his policy his recipe was of reform differed with this report that instead of going for gradual reform, he embarked upon a process of swift reform (Whereas the report had warned against the implication of swift reform) If Gorbachev's reform are assessed from this perspective, then these appear to be flawed from the very outset. This was the major fault line with Gorbachev liberalization package even before the launch.

Radical Reforms and their Unexpected Impact

The goal of reforms that Gorbachev set was without the precedent of coercion. He considered coercion and repression as part of problem. He started with his design of glasnost (openness). First and foremost objective of his policy was to acquire himself with the ground realities through openness.^{vii} For decades bureaucratic orthodoxy had stifled any sort of liberal initiatives. These wishful thinking were all about glasnost. It wanted to replace the blind dogmatism of communist era with more practicable solution for addressing the pluralistic realities of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Glasnost was all about pursuing these objectives.

Implementation of glasnost was aimed at paving way for the radical restructuring of economic sector. In other words it was designed to prepare ground for the launching of (Perestroika).^{viii} Gorbachev wanted to get support from general public. Gorbachev could not acknowledge the blunder he has made by launching Glasnost. He developed a misunderstanding in his mind that liberalism, openness and free debate will facilitate the process of restructuring the economy. Thus he took initiatives to allow more free speech and openness in television and newspaper. Gorbachev hoped that through this liberal attitude Soviet people will get new freedom of speech and capacity to reach information. This policy backfired as the desired objective could never be realized. It exposed the monstrous character of Stalin and other leaders of Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics. Policy of relaxation in censorship had undermine the politburo control on media and caused much embarrassment for the government. Glasnost produced unintended consequences by exposing political, social and economic realities that confronted the state.^{ix} Gorbachev had unleashed a Pandora box by launching Glasnost. That was starting a process of undermining the entire political system.

The books, which were banned in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics since long, started to publish. These books included George Orwell's 1984; Boris Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago and most important author of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book the Gulag Archipelago that was about the prison camp repression and cruelty. The free publishing of such literature had produced consciousness among people about the cruel faces of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and others.^x This awareness caused massive resentment against the central authorities. Most significant result of the Glasnost was come after the explosion of Chernobyl. In past, Soviet government used to hide major crises and tragedies through its centrally controlled policy about media functioning. But after Glasnost it was impossible. Soviet authorities could not hide about the explosion of Chernobyl. Chernobyl had destroyed the prospects of expected certainties connected with perestroika. This catastrophic incident had unleashed a chain of discoveries that in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics central mechanism, technology concealed only backwardness and underdevelopment. Now they do not were of the believe everything they were told about in the past. A new culture of rejection of everything which state proclaimed started to flourish. In such a very condemnation of state converted into critical objection toward every policy of state including reforms policies of Glasnost and Perestroika.^{xi} Glasnost had opened the gates for massive and varied grassroots organization and produced articulation for the outside element of the politburo.

A culture of opposition and plural thinking started to get currency. Communist party started loose its unchallenged authority and legitimacy, as the sole sovereign of Union. The second most important reform program was Perestroika (a Russian word for restructure). By the time of Gorbachev, Soviet economy had a negative GNP. It was on decline. Major objective of Perestroika was to overcome the structural crisis that was caused by central planning.^{xii} Perestroika was a command and top-down process this program was comprised of four major objectives to bring change in four areas. First to grant rights to private enterprises, second was to retain powers in central authorities with some modification in decision making procedure, third was to bring structural changes in price mechanism and fourth, and last was to give more freedom to enterprises, industrial association and large corporations .^{xiii} Gorbachev launched new set of bureaucratic agency to supervise this program. Early years of Perestroika was characterized by Gorbachev,s attempt to delegate decision making powers to the authorities of enterprises. Wage and price mechanism was relaxed to some extent so that newly delegated authorities of enterprises could stimulate their reform designs for better production. According to this new agenda worker were supposed to get empowered enough to put their influence to elect managers of factories.

What the pivot of Perestroika was the command system of Lenin's NEP type of economic policy which aimed at restrained and limited state regulated capitalistic system of market mechanism. That was accorded to limited privatization co-operative initiatives and small scale free enterprises.^{xiv} With the help of this program Gorbachev attempted to re-organize the centralized super structure and commanded economy. Perestroika had to take the monumental problem of shifting a massive centralized state apparatus of economic functioning into a market economy. This design could not be achieved policy interference in price control system. In Union of Soviet Socialist Republics prices were regulated by state with high subsidized investment by state to curb the high level of price. Price regulation in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was used to maintain very artificially. The price did not reflect the actual cost of production of commodity. Due to this

factor, semi-market economy could not be operationalized because market economy owes much to the demand and supply procedure and this procedure could not work with free fluctuation of price mechanism. This mechanism has a self-regulatory feature. Thus to get operationalize the designs of Perestroika; Gorbachev had to deal with formidable hurdle so that move from tightly controlled economy to the market socialism could be made easily. In a desperate attempt to get the Soviet economy out of the stagnation, Gorbachev promoted institution for the genuine competition in consumer market now working on free market mechanism.

But all the desired modification could not bear fruits. Every designed project was remained ineffective to achieve desired objectives and proved effective in outburst and backlashes. Gorbachev soon found his program Perestroika in a crisis and he realized that economic reform is much difficult and complicated task as he ever thought of it.^{xv} What went wrong was his bold and unprepared program to reform the economic sector on radical lines. He wanted to catch up with the west but all was in vain because Perestroika was not a calculated program and without any well thought out plans. It was not even a program but mere a vision without a blueprint and without an overall strategy to bring actual reform. Another blow to monolithic setup was the policy of Gorbachev to abolish the ministry of foreign trade monopoly. According to Perestroika, Soviet economy had to become integrate more into the world economy by conducting joint economic ventures with Capitalist Corporation of Europe. This was the biggest attack on Stalinist model of centrally controlled mechanism working in isolation. This policy discarded the politburo's monopoly over economic policy and made sector almost autonomous. Indirect economic functioning had to replace the central commanded economy.

Perestroika was carrying out sweeping and bold reform in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics but not in desired way rather just opposite to it. This profound change was a catalyst for entire societal transforming of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.^{xvi} Radical reform in fixed price mechanism was the most important decision. Before the promulgation of this new mechanism, prices were set by central planners for more than two lakh commodities. According to new mechanism prices had to be fluctuating through the impulse of market forces. Although it was very important step to restructure the economic management but it was resulted into setback for consumerist market. Central planning did not let the prices of commodities rise and maintained it up to a fix level. Due to it Soviet people had a good deal with commodities to buy them easily. But new policy had dismantled it and caused anarchy in market.^{xvii} Soviet consumers were accustomed to get facilitated by state subsidies which kept prices low and fixed for a long time. But this market oriented policy proved technically difficult and caused disturbance massively enough to disrupt the pace of Perestroika. Gorbachev dismantled the control over economic administration but his policies failed to bring about a meaningful decentralization on the account of severe opposition from the communists. Thus Perestroika proved contradictory because in several key areas his efforts to delegate de-centralization were emasculated by bureaucratic elite and turned out into a messy situation as centre became powerless and power could not be transformed to lower levels. Thus Soviet economy became even more complicated in functioning. The main and foremost important reason behind this contradiction was that Gorbachev administration still relied on the central party mechanism as a sole driving force of the reform process instead of making promotion in Soviet masses. Communist party was the linchpin of entire functional mechanism and was not ready to transform the authorities to local level accordingly. Perestroika was based on course of holding the communist party together.^{xviii}

In spite of promulgation according to Perestroika almost entire system of investment and production was still in the hand of central government up to 1990. Ownership remained in the hands of state overwhelmingly. By 1990 private sector accounted less than 7% of total GNP. Perestroika had barely modified the state patterns of ownership in Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics. Almost 90% economic ministries were retained by central authorities. Prices and interest rates were still promulgated by central mechanism. Output and productivity began to fall.^{xix} This contradiction shows that old guards of politburo did not want to go along Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika and wanted to retain the monolithic setup in orthodox style. Gorbachev did not challenge and continued the privileges of party officials. This attitude had undermined his own personality in the eyes of Soviet public. With the deepening of multi-dimensional crisis Gorbachev relied more and more on the central party apparatus. Gorbachev wanted to return to the communism of Lenin with the notion of socialist democracy. But he underestimated the Soviet masses that were raising their voices against the fragile process of reform. He held that if Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would open and free, then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and eastern European masses would follow his economic reform but it resulted shockingly opposite to thought out program. Consequently, unintended effects of these policies started to spur not only in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics but also in satellite states of Eastern Europe.

Liquidation of C.P.S.U.

In 1988 Gorbachev abolished the article six of the constitution which guaranteed the communist party its supremacy of political power in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.^{xx} Thus C.P.S.U. began disintegrating into national components. National movements were characterized by political nationalism. These nationalistic movements began to sprout in the mid-eighties due to the glasnost but with the abolishing of article six these movements increasingly caught up in a dilemma as all these movements had gained popularity on the slogan of socialist democracy but after that they could not formulate any calculated, well thought out and workable program. This allowed the pro-capitalistic elements to hijack those movements and the movements fell under the control of anti-communist elements.

Gorbachev's policy was failed not because of failure of socialist ideology pertains to the union demise. In fact, in spite of all crumbling and crisis, anti-monolithic forces were not gaining ground and were survived only due to the liberal policies of Glasnost.^{xxi} Reason of fragility lies in the fact that when Gorbachev re-organized the party on flexible lines with weak center. This re-organization was aimed at devolution of power but indigenous authorities could not grasp this devolution accordingly. This situation resulted into power vacuum that was filled by pro-capitalist leadership which had got opportunity to lead the republics movements. Second reason of this pro-capitalist emergence, was due to the ideological stagnation and curbs, no alternative political ideology could flourish. So that was why when these local agitation movements found unexpected maneuvering space and ideological vacuum which had been created after the retreat of communist party amid the dismantling of monolithic structure provided pre-capitalistic forces much awaited opportunity to present capitalistic program as practicable ideological alternative to communism.

Liquidation of C.P.S.U. and holding of free election in Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the first time had speeded up the process of disintegration. Poland and East Germany were allowed to break with Union. Pluralism and diversity became political culture of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with amazing speed. Zbigniew Brzezinski described it as an end of bolshevism and beginning of neo-menshivism and socialist democracy.^{xxii} The Supreme Soviet of U.S.S.R created by the elections of 1989 passed law that proclaimed the supremacy of federal law over the federated units. This was the last constitutional effort to sustain the supremacy of Union. But it was all about all in vain. All fifteen republics had proclaimed their sovereignty. This process was started by Estonia and ended with Russia.

In Russia, the administration of central ministries and other factors formed an alliance led by Boris Yeltsin. Thus alliance had to face another powerful group seeking for material incentives as well as power. Both group had one common thing about their objective and that was not to maintain

the socialist system. The opposition group within Communist party were not satisfied with the Gorbachev policies. They formed an emergency committee and attempted to seize power from Gorbachev but could not succeed. Military did not support the coup of emergency committee. The coup failed and strengthened the Boris Yeltsin. On December 26, 1991 the Supreme Soviet issued an official proclamation to end the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Conclusion

Perestroika and Glasnost marked a decisive turning point in the history of the Soviet Union. Conceived as programmes to reform and strengthen the socialist system, they instead exposed the deep structural weaknesses that had accumulated within the Soviet state over decades of centralized rule. Economic restructuring, political openness, and administrative decentralization weakened the Communist Party's monopoly of power and encouraged demands for greater political participation and national autonomy. Rather than causing the Soviet Union's collapse by themselves, these reforms accelerated an institutional crisis that was already underway. The experience of the USSR demonstrates that meaningful political and economic reforms, when introduced into a rigid and highly centralized system without corresponding institutional stability, can produce unintended and far-reaching consequences. The transformation initiated by Gorbachev ultimately reshaped the Soviet state apparatus and paved the way for the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

References

ⁱ Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, (1931). His efforts to democratize his country's political system and decentralize its economy led to the downfall of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. In part because he ended the Soviet Union's postwar domination of Eastern Europe, Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1990. Gorbachev was the son of Russian peasants in Stavropol territory (krai) in southwestern Russia. He joined the Komsomol (Young Communist League) in 1946 and drove a combine harvester at a state farm in Stavropol for the next four years. He proved a promising Komsomol member, and in 1952 he entered the law school of Moscow State University and became a member of the Communist Party. He graduated with a degree in law in 1955 and went on to hold a number of posts in the Komsomol and regular party organizations in Stavropol, rising to become first secretary of the regional party committee in 1970.

Gorbachev was named a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1971, and he was appointed a party secretary of agriculture in 1978. He became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1979 and a full member in 1980. He owed a great deal of his steady rise in the party to the patronage of Mikhail Suslov, the leading party ideologue. Over the course of Yury Andropov's 15-month tenure (1982–84) as General Secretary of the Communist Party, Gorbachev became one of the Politburo's most highly active and visible members; and, after Andropov died and Konstantin Chernenko became General Secretary in February 1984, Gorbachev became a likely successor to the latter. Chernenko died on March 10, 1985, and the following day the Politburo elected Gorbachev General Secretary of the CPSU. Upon his accession, he was still the youngest member of the Politburo.

In October 1988 Gorbachev was able to consolidate his power by his election to the chairmanship of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet (the national legislature). But, in part because his economic reforms were being obstructed by the Communist Party, Gorbachev tried to restructure the government's legislative and executive branches in order to release them from the grip of the CPSU. Accordingly, under changes made to the constitution in December 1988, a new bicameral parliament called the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies was created, with some of its members directly elected by the people in contested (i.e., multicandidate) elections. In 1989 the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies elected from its ranks a new U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet that, in contrast to its predecessor of that name, was a real standing parliament with substantial legislative powers. In May 1989 Gorbachev was elected chairman of this Supreme Soviet and thereby retained the national presidency.

Gorbachev was the single most important initiator of a series of events

The new freedoms arising from Gorbachev's democratization and decentralization of his nation's political system led to civil unrest in several of the constituent republics (e.g., Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan) and to outright attempts to achieve independence in others (e.g., Lithuania). In response, Gorbachev used military force to suppress bloody interethnic strife in several of the Central Asian republics in 1989–90, while constitutional mechanisms were

devised that could provide for the lawful secession of a republic from the U.S.S.R. With the CPSU waning in power and steadily losing prestige in the face of the mounting impetus for democratic political procedures, Gorbachev in 1990 further accelerated the transfer of power from the party to elected governmental institutions. In March of that year the Congress of People's Deputies elected him to the newly created post of president of the U.S.S.R., with extensive executive powers. At the same time, the Congress, under his leadership, abolished the Communist Party's constitutionally guaranteed monopoly of political power in the Soviet Union, thus paving the way for the legalization of other political parties.

Gorbachev was conspicuously successful in dismantling the totalitarian aspects of the Soviet state and in moving his country along the path toward true representative democracy. He proved less willing to release the Soviet economy from the grip of centralized state direction, however. Gorbachev eschewed the totalitarian use of power that had traditionally worked to keep the Soviet economy functioning, but at the same time he resisted any decisive shift to private ownership and the use of free-market mechanisms. Gorbachev sought a compromise between these two diametrically opposed alternatives in vain, and so the centrally planned economy continued to crumble with no private enterprise to replace it. Gorbachev remained the undisputed master of the ailing Communist Party, but his attempts to augment his presidential powers through decrees and administrative reshufflings proved fruitless, and his government's authority and effectiveness began a serious decline. In the face of a collapsing economy, rising public frustration, and the continued shift of power to the constituent republics, Gorbachev wavered in direction, allying himself with party conservatives and the security organs in late 1990.

But the Communist hard-liners who had replaced reformers in the government proved undependable allies, and Gorbachev and his family were briefly held under house arrest from August 19 to 21, 1991, during a short-lived coup by the hard-liners. After the coup foundered in the face of staunch resistance by Russian Pres. Boris Yeltsin and other reformers who had risen to power under the democratic reforms, Gorbachev resumed his duties as Soviet president, but his position had by now been irretrievably weakened. Entering into an unavoidable alliance with Yeltsin, Gorbachev quit the Communist Party, disbanded its Central Committee, and supported measures to strip the party of its control over the KGB and the armed forces. Gorbachev also moved quickly to shift fundamental political powers to the Soviet Union's constituent republics. Events outpaced him, however, and the Russian government under Yeltsin readily assumed the functions of the collapsing Soviet government as the various republics agreed to form a new commonwealth under Yeltsin's leadership. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned the presidency of the Soviet Union, which ceased to exist that same day.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Seweryn Bialer *The soviet paradox* (New York, 1989), 19.

^{iv} Christian Schmidt, *Gorbachev: The path to power* (London, 1988), 40.41.

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^{vi} Hedrick Smith, *The new Russians* (New York, 1991), 15.16.

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^x Hedrick Smith, *The new Russians* (New York, 1991), 101.

^{xi} Helen Carrere Encausse, *The end of an empire* (New York, 1993), xii.

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^{xiii} Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York, 1991), 241.

^{xiv} Douge lorimer, *The Collapse Of Communism In The U.S.S.R.* (Sydney, 1997), 21.

^{xv} Hedrick Smith, *The new Russians* (New York, 1991), 177.178.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*,

^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 273.241.

^{xviii} Douge lorimer, *The Collapse Of Communism In The U.S.S.R.* (Sydney, 1997), 23.

^{xix} The Economist, *Survey of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*. (London, 1989), 12.13.

^{xx} *Ibid.*, 15.

^{xxi} Moshe Lewin, *Russia, U.S.S.R. Russia: Drive and drift within an empire* (New York, 1995) p.273

^{xxii} Tom Lorell, *The Fall of The U.S.S.R.*, The Raleigh Philosophical Society Journal, London, Vol., iii.

^{xxiii} Boris Yeltsin, in full Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin, (1931, 2007), Russian politician who became president of Russia in 1990. In 1991 he became the first popularly elected leader in the country's history, guiding Russia through a stormy decade of political and economic retrenching until his resignation on the eve of 2000. Yeltsin was demoted to a deputy minister for construction but then staged the most remarkable comeback in Soviet history. His popularity with Soviet voters as an advocate of democracy and economic reform had survived his fall, and he took advantage of Gorbachev's introduction of competitive elections to the U.S.S.R. Congress of People's Deputies to win a seat in that body in March 1989 with a landslide vote from a Moscow constituency. A year later, on May 29, 1990, the parliament of the Russian

S.F.S.R. elected him president of the Russian republic against Gorbachev's wishes. In his new role, Yeltsin publicly supported the right of Soviet republics to greater autonomy within the Soviet Union, took steps to give the Russian republic more autonomy, and declared himself in favour of a market-oriented economy and a multiparty political system. In July 1990 Yeltsin quit the Communist Party. His victory in the first direct, popular elections for the presidency of the Russian republic (June 1991) was seen as a mandate for economic reform. During the brief coup against Gorbachev by hard-liner communists in August 1991, Yeltsin defied the coup leaders and rallied resistance in Moscow while calling for the return of Gorbachev. When the coup crumbled a few days after it had begun, Yeltsin emerged as the country's most powerful political figure. In December 1991 he and the presidents of Ukraine and Belarus (Belorussia) established a new Commonwealth of Independent States that would replace the foundering U.S.S.R. When the Soviet Union collapsed after Gorbachev's resignation as Soviet president on December 25, the Russian government under Yeltsin's leadership then assumed many of the former superpower's responsibilities for defense, foreign affairs, and finance.