

Five Years That Shook the World

The background of the cover is a solid, vibrant red. Overlaid on this is a black silhouette of several Russian Orthodox church domes and crosses. The central dome is the tallest and most prominent, with a cross on top. To its left and right are smaller domes, also with crosses. The silhouettes are sharp and contrast strongly with the red background.

GORBACHEV'S
UNFINISHED
REVOLUTION

Edited by Harley D. Balzer

WESTVIEW PRESS

Five Years That Shook the World

Gorbachev's Unfinished Revolution

EDITED BY

Harley D. Balzer

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Westview Press

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*Half measures can kill when on the brink of precipices,
chafing in terror at the bit,
we strain and sweat and foam because we cannot
jump just halfway across.*

*Blind is the one who but half sees the chasm,
and half recoils because he lost his way...*

—Yevgeny Yevtushenko

(Translated by Alexis Obolensky
and Victor H. Winston)

*... we are in the midst of a yet unfinished revolution... The birth pains of
modern industrial society, which Marx often mistook for the death throes of
capitalism, are being enacted before our eyes.*

—Adam Ulam

Preface and Acknowledgments

Whatever the fate of his attempt to restructure the Soviet Union's economy and political system, Mikhail Gorbachev has changed the world. The political landscape of Central and Eastern Europe has been altered in ways that seemed unimaginable even in 1987 or 1988. The role of communism in the Third World will never again be the same. Yet the domestic revolution remains unfinished, and its direction uncertain. By early 1991 many analysts shifted their focus from Gorbachev's chances for "success" to the possibility of a return to Stalinism. Neither the revolution nor the debate is finished.

The goal of this volume is to present a balanced analysis of perestroika with an eye to the ongoing political, social and cultural changes. In assessing the first five years, the contributors have sought to treat the period as a coherent historical episode, despite the lack of perspective that is so important to historians. I have already written about the effects of perestroika and glasnost on Sovietology ("Can We Survive Glasnost?" *AAASS Newsletter*, Vol. 20, No. 1 [January 1989] pp. 1-2). Virtually every contributor to this volume would undoubtedly want a chance to revise what has been written by the time the book is published. We have discussed semi-seriously the comparative advantages of issuing the volume in loose-leaf binders to permit periodic updating, or perhaps publishing "on line" with regular emendations.

Sovietology may indeed come to that. But it smacks of Orwell. Instead, we have made an effort at reasoned judgments of Gorbachev's first five years, with some additions based on events up to the end of January 1991. All of the contributors completed work on their chapters by that date.

The chapters published here are based on papers prepared for a conference on "The First Five Years of Perestroika: What Have We Learned? What Has Gorbachev Learned?" held at Georgetown University March 8-9, 1990, in conjunction with the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Georgetown's Russian Area Studies Program.

The conference was sponsored by the Georgetown University Russian Area Studies Program. Additional financial support was provided by the Social Science Research Council and by the Georgetown University Graduate School.

In addition to these chapters, a number of other scholars presented papers at the conference which, for various reasons, could not be included in the volume. Alfred J. Rieber, Vladimir Voinovich, Karen Dawisha, Robert Campbell, Herbert Levine, Yaacov Ro'i, Gail Lapidus, Mark Zlotnik, Rose Gottemoeller, Dale Herspring and Ted Warner all provided insights that were of benefit in completing this volume. The panel chairs, David Ransel, Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, Valery Petrochenkov, Stuart Brown, Thane Gustafson, Richard Scribner and Robert Lieber, contributed comments and expertise.

The conference would not have been possible without the work of Jill Roese, the Russian Area Studies Program Administrative Assistant.

In preparing the manuscript for publication, compiling the appendixes and preparing the index, I was fortunate to have the assistance of Susan Brent, Laura Guinn, Eric Johnson, Elizabeth Kirkwood, Jennifer Long, Elizabeth O'Shea, Ann Rubin, Valerie Sperling, and Valerye Stochak.

Susan McEachern of Westview Press has been involved in this project from its inception, and her enthusiasm was a major factor in bringing it to fruition. Chris Arden, Diana Luykx, and Bev LeSuer were of tremendous help in processing the manuscript.

Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer has made an intellectual and personal commitment to this project far beyond what mere mention in a preface can acknowledge. Her support, in all its forms, is gratefully appreciated.

*Harley D. Balzer
Cabin John, MD*

USSR Population By Republic

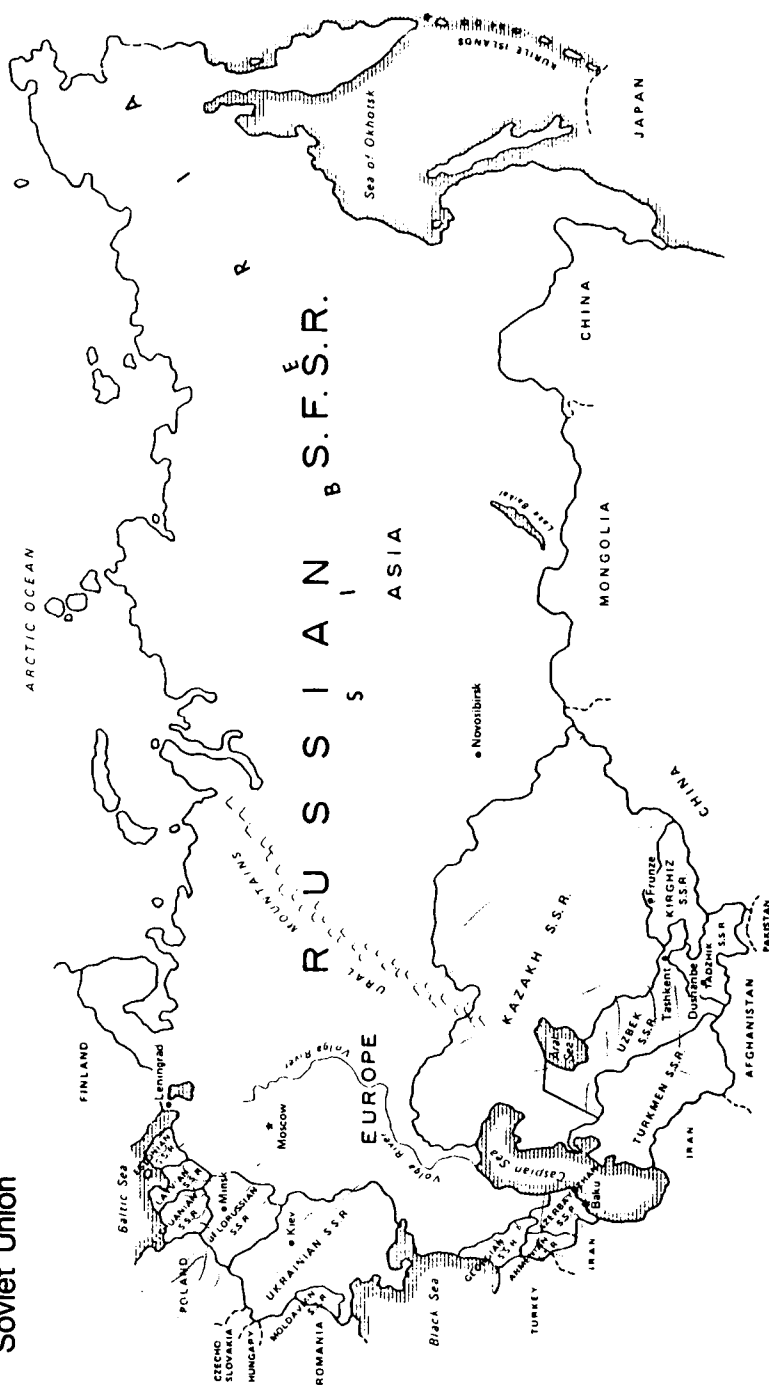
According to the 1989 Census

<u>Republic</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Titular Nationality</u>
Russian Republic	147,021,869	81.5%
Ukraine	51,471,499	72.7%
Belorussia	10,151,806	77.9%
Moldova	4,335,360	64.5%
Armenia	3,304,776	93.3%
Azerbaidzhan	7,021,178	75.6%
Georgia	5,409,841	70.0%
Estonia	1,565,662	61.5%
Latvia	2,666,567	52.0%
Lithuania	3,674,802	79.6%
Kazakhstan	16,464,464	39.7%
Kirghizia	4,257,755	52.4%
Tadzhikistan	5,092,603	62.3%
Turkmenistan	3,522,717	72.0%
Uzbekistan	19,810,077	71.4%
TOTAL	285,761,976	

Total as of January 1, 1990: 288,623,600

Source: *Soiuz*, No. 32, August 1990, pp. 12-13.

Republics of the Soviet Union



Reproduced with permission from Carl Haub. "The Population of the Soviet Union." *Population Profiles*. Second Series. Unit 4 (Washington, Conn.: Center for Information on America, 1981).

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Introduction

No one should have been expected to predict the extent of the changes in the USSR in the second half of the 1980s. To have anticipated the accession of a younger leader who would not only succeed in consolidating political power but also sustain a major assault on the inevitable resistance to reform demanded too much foresight. More than a few of Mikhail Gorbachev's closest supporters have stated that had Gorbachev himself known in 1985 just how far he would be drawn along the path of perestroika, he might not have taken the first steps. The five years from 1985 to 1990 were a time of learning for the participants as well as for the outside observers.

To have failed to predict the sweeping changes is not the same as to be taken totally by surprise when they happened or to misunderstand their character. By 1985 there already existed a substantial body of scholarship that pointed to the *possibility* of serious change in the Soviet Union.¹ Few scholars were willing to go so far as to state that dramatic change was inevitable—that sort of prognosticating is best left to mystics. But scholars who were tracking the social processes in Soviet society—particularly the ones with a comparative bent—had come to the conclusion that major changes were at least possible and perhaps even likely. many
questioned
change
was
coming

The scholars contributing to this volume do not represent a single academic school or approach to the study of the Soviet Union. Their contributions cover a range of important topics and do not conform to a single orientation. Nevertheless, all were inclined to believe that the changes that took place in the USSR during 1985–1990 were "for real." Scholars who maintain that the entire enterprise of perestroika amounted to nothing more than *pokazuka* (a facade) or *maskirovka* (deception to veil an impending attack), or that glasnost was nothing but another clever trick of Communist propaganda, are not represented here. Also absent are those who pronounced that Gorbachev was doomed to fail from the

outset.² The scholars represented here would regard the successful evolution of the Soviet Union into a non-communist state with a less restrictive political system as possible, though they would undoubtedly differ in their assessments of the likelihood of such a transition.³

The theme of the plausibility of systemic reform emerges clearly in the first chapter. Blair Ruble's contribution effectively summarizes the argument that Mikhail Gorbachev is as much the product as the initiator of change in the USSR. Previous articles by Ruble and others have detailed the changes in education, employment, urbanization and other elements of "civil society." Here, Ruble discusses these changes in the context of what he calls a "revolution of the mind," by which he means a cognitive shift that has produced conditions that could make successful perestroika possible. Critics have argued that civil society analyses are overly determinist, resembling the errors of modernization theorists in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵ Yet few of the partisans of civil society argue that democratization is inevitable or irreversible. They assert that it is possible, and should not be dismissed a priori on the basis of autocratic traditions or national character.

From their titles, one might conclude that Ruble's presentation directly contradicts Gertrude Schroeder's analysis of the Soviet economy as being on yet another treadmill of unpromising reforms. Yet both authors are guardedly optimistic. Both are aware of the tremendous problems confronting Soviet reformers, but they also detect something new in perestroika that makes it qualitatively different from previous Soviet efforts at reform. That something is the participation of civil society. Involvement of society in the reform effort rests on two reciprocal processes: A willingness on the part of the government to drop its pose of omnipotence according a legitimate place to input from "below;" and a willingness by at least some elements of society to participate in the process. Ruble frames it as a solution to the twin dilemmas of hyper-institutionalization and underinstitutionalization—a syndrome combining excessive centralization with inadequate capacity to mediate the needs of the system in any but the crudest terms.

If the lesson of the impossibility of maintaining the hyperinstitutionalized state with the resources available has finally been learned, the future does indeed look more promising. But the promise is not of a new era free from conflict. One of the important lessons of the late twentieth century is that basic political questions of power and resource distribution are constantly being reconfigured. The crucial issue is not a final allocation of power or rewards, but rather the mechanism by which reallocation takes place—the legitimate political behavior in the system. What has happened

in the Soviet Union since 1985 is a profound redefinition of legitimate political behavior. It may take some time for a balance to be struck, and we should remember that there is never a "final" version of such relationships. They are always subject to change.

Most Soviet scholars, politicians, and intellectuals would begin an analysis of perestroika by focusing on the economy. Even those who boast of their rejection of Marxist concepts often turn out to have been *imp. of the economy* influenced significantly by decades of materialist ideology. At a time when Gorbachev himself has recognized that fixing the economic mess requires social, psychological, and even spiritual renewal, many of his close collaborators, not to mention the old guard, still believe that the economic situation is the key to everything else.

In chapter 2, (Gertrude Schroeder) details the false starts and grievous errors in Soviet economic policy during Gorbachev's first five years. But the success of perestroika will not be evaluated on economic grounds alone. It was perhaps inevitable that economic change would be halting and inconsistent. To get to serious economic reform, Gorbachev himself needed to learn a great deal and the political situation had to be altered quite radically. Rather than "losing" or "wasting" five years, Gorbachev might have been using the time not only to figure out for himself what needs to be done, but also to create a political framework in which it could be accomplished. Whether he will be granted the additional time in which to implement what he has learned remains to be seen. There are few successes to report, and merely adding to the learning curve can no longer be hailed as an achievement. Most people now know what must be done, in terms of price reform and marketization, but no one has yet produced a plausible prescription for how to actually accomplish it.⁶

Western observers of the USSR are frequently struck by the contrast between dismal performance and tremendous potential. Dr. Schroeder ends on a relatively optimistic note, stressing precisely that potential. So does Alec Nove in an essay written for another collection.⁷ The natural and human resources available in the USSR and the absurd obstacles placed in the path of rational economic behavior lead many to believe that impressive results could be achieved relatively quickly if the proper formula were adopted. But not all sectors of the economy are amenable to rapid transformation: in many crucial areas, such as the energy sector, serious restructuring will require a generation.⁸

Schroeder has been one of the most consistent critics of flawed Soviet economic reforms.⁹ She may part company with the most pessimistic analysts in her conclusion that the economic problems of the USSR are still susceptible to remedy. Although there is little basis for optimism in

what has been accomplished thus far, the steps that must be taken to initiate improvements in economic performance are not a secret. What such changes require is political will combined with enough public faith or acquiescence to ride out the transition period. One of the tragedies of perestroika is that failure to carry through the economic reforms has made any future efforts even more difficult.

Among the most serious considerations in any economic program will be the nation's desperate ecological situation. A half-century of extensive development has left the USSR with myriad environmental difficulties that will require much time and money to correct. In Chapter 3, Murray Feshbach not only chronicles the ecological crisis, but also points to its consequences for the population's health and broader demographic trends. His conclusion, not so much stated as allowed to emerge from the weight of the evidence he cites, is that the costs of the remedies far exceed what even a vibrant reformed economy would be capable of generating. Resource constraints will indeed force some very difficult choices on the Soviet political system, whatever its form.

In Chapter 4, Harley Balzer focuses on the evolving political system, providing not so much a narrative as an impressionistic evaluation of developments. Drawing on his training as a historian and his experience in the U.S. political system, he seeks to place perestroika in the context of Russian and Soviet political development.¹⁰ Balzer concludes by noting the contradictions in Gorbachev's political approach. These contradictions were a source of strength when Gorbachev had to strike a balance between the Party apparat and radical reformers, but they could increasingly become a liability if an electoral system continues to develop.

National and ethnic tensions will continue to present Gorbachev with some of his most difficult political problems. In chapter 5, Paul Goble discusses the nationalities issue. His treatment can be placed in the context of three major lessons about the Soviet nationalities problem. First, comparative study reminds us that the Soviet Union is hardly the only country facing serious ethnic and national difficulties. Yet it is dangerous to assume that events must unfold in similar patterns just because some of the conditions are similar. Second, many of the ethnic problems confronting the USSR result from relative success in raising the educational levels, increasing the economic complexity, and expanding the role of the media in national areas. New elites in these regions, rather than expressing gratitude to Moscow, have become increasingly assertive. Again, however, the trend is hardly unique to the USSR. Third, national tensions were exacerbated because Gorbachev had to learn a great deal

about ethnic identity after he became Soviet leader—lessons most Western politicians learn in the process of gaining office.

The breathtaking political and foreign policy changes in 1989–1990 made it difficult to remember that during 1986–1988 glasnost appeared to far outpace perestroika. Initially, almost everyone was caught up in the exhilaration of being able to make statements, mention names, and print materials that had been taboo for sixty years. But the novelty of breaking taboos must inevitably wear thin. Many observers of the cultural scene have shifted from emphasizing the unprecedented character of things that were said and published to bemoaning the lack of truly new and stimulating cultural products.

In Chapter 6, Josephine Woll, a close observer of the panoply of changes in literature and culture, offers a concise survey of the way the cultural landscape has altered in the course of the five years under study.¹¹ Woll's overview is complemented by Helena Goscilo's in-depth analysis of developments in Russian literature in Chapter 7. Both find that the main body of glasnost literature, which Dr. Goscilo terms "alternative prose," has emphasized political alternatives more often than artistic ones. Many Soviet editors use political rather than aesthetic standards when selecting works for publication. Their journalistic emphasis, while understandable, is also regrettable. It inevitably gives much Soviet literary work of the perestroika era a time-bound rather than timeless quality.

The experience of literature shows that the traditions of censorship and imposition of limits die hard. Merely removing the most blatant mechanisms of censorship does not guarantee extirpation of all controls, especially those internalized by individuals who are products of the Soviet cultural system. By the same token, it may be quite difficult to reimpose censorship on writers and journalists who have become accustomed to freer expression.¹²

If the political, social, and cultural changes constituting perestroika are contradictory and still inconclusive, it is much more difficult to discount the results of changes in foreign and defense policy. Historians often suggest that would-be reformist Russian rulers such as Catherine the Great and Alexander II generally found it easier to expand the empire than to reform it. Mikhail Gorbachev has found it much easier to shrink the Soviet empire than to restructure it.

Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe constitutes a solution more advantageous to the NATO allies than any outcome that might have been hoped for from a military victory. If the cold war is over, the chief question facing the United States and its allies concerns the nature of the "postwar settlement." A choice exists between the model from World War

I or that from World War II—the "Carthaginian Peace" of reparations and penitence or the Marshall Plan variant of succor for the defeated. Those who oppose the latter—the "soft" peace—have noted that the Soviet military-industrial complex continues to turn out modern weapons at a rate far exceeding that necessary for defense requirements. Some of the ongoing Soviet weapons production can be explained by inertia; and some of it, by common sense: No country is going to scrap its newest, most expensive hardware when it has lots of old, obsolete equipment in its inventory. The process of defining the legitimate security needs of both sides will be protracted and difficult. No one should expect either side to unilaterally sacrifice opportunities to shore up its position. At the same time, it would be irresponsible to ignore the extent of the Soviet military effort, particularly in light of Ministry of Defense criticism of the arms control treaties and other agreements negotiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during Eduard Shevardnadze's tenure.¹³

The magnitude of change in superpower relations emerges clearly from the three contributions to this volume dealing with international affairs and security. In Chapter 8, Angela Stent focuses on Central and Eastern Europe, using her detailed knowledge of the German situation to evaluate developments related to the "common European home." German unification has clearly been the most dramatic symbol and most rapid result of the 1989–1990 Eastern European revolution.¹⁴

In Chapter 9 Robert Huber draws on his decade of experience in the U.S. Congressional policy process as well as on his academic training to provide both a summary of lessons learned in U.S.-Soviet relations and a prescription for integrating those lessons into scholarship and policy.¹⁵ His major themes are the unplanned character of the changes that have taken place and the need to respond by formulating a view that puts an end to the "uniqueness" of the Soviet Union in Western conceptions of foreign policy. It is time to regard the USSR as one very important state in an international state system, rather than as some sort of exceptional entity. The lessons about both internal politics and foreign policy learned from other transitions to democracy should be examined for clues to the Soviet situation.

Chapter 10, by Jerry Hough, is even more directly concerned with the policy process. Hough expands on arguments he has made elsewhere regarding the common interests of the USSR and the NATO nations.¹⁶ In this connection, he would extend the borders of the "common European home" to encompass everything from Vladivostok to California. Hough argues that U. S.-Soviet cooperation is crucial to any future world order. His warning that the major threat to the United States and Europe

was likely to come from another Khomeini in the Third World was written in mid-1989. It would appear to have been borne out by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Hough's chapter emphasizes that the enterprise of perestroika cannot be divorced from the outside world. Indeed, the United States has an important role to play in the developments. Even though it cannot be decisive, it can have a major influence. One of the tragedies of the late twentieth century may be that at a time when the mounting of another Marshall Plan could finish the work of rebuilding a peaceful, democratic, unified Europe, the United States is too saddled with debt and too distracted by other problems to undertake the effort.

Gorbachev and perestroika constitute a no-lose proposition for the United States. If Gorbachev fails, if his reforms really lead nowhere, then the Soviet Union will continue to be the economic and technological "basket case" that its leaders now freely admit it had become in the era of stagnation. Conversely, success is possible only if Gorbachev takes steps that make the Soviet Union much more a part of the world community, more integrated into international economic relationships, more *interdependent* with other nations. Interdependence is not a guarantee of peace, brotherhood, friendship and a security alliance between the USSR and the United States. But it is a formula that makes the Soviet Union much less threatening, much less dangerous, and much more amenable to reasonable settlement of disputes in the world. That is probably the best we can hope for.

he tried, why didn't it work?

In addition to noting what this volume contains, mention should be made of what has not been included. Despite our desire to be comprehensive, space and time limitations inevitably precluded the coverage of many important subjects. A partial list of the topics to which we would have liked to devote chapters includes religion, informal groups, gender issues, youth, the military, and science and technology.

1. As communism has lost even its formal standing as a belief system, religion has grown in importance in Soviet society. What it lacks in its capacity to serve as a basis for unity or to legitimate imperial expansion may be compensated by the genuine strength of religious feelings. As Balzer notes in Chapter 4, Gorbachev has extended his appeal for public involvement in perestroika by sanctioning the activity of religious communities. He has met with church leaders and encouraged a growing activism by many religious groups. Some of this activity has conformed to patterns that Gorbachev intended, such as medical and charitable work and the effort to provide moral and ethical guidance as Communist