

**Text of Presentation at the CC CPSU Politburo Session  
September 28, 1987**

1. I fully share the positions that were presented by the General Secretary in his presentation.
2. Perestroika has brought up the issue of democratization. It creates a contradiction, but in itself it serves as a contradiction of a new kind, which could be resolved through exclusively democratic methods under conditions of socialist civilization. There is sometimes a misunderstanding: when people talk about democracy, they presuppose some amorphous notion, like liberalization, the weakening of certain norms, and so on. However, in reality, democracy is discipline, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the development of self-discipline.
3. We speak with satisfaction about the fact that our atmosphere has changed. However, every atmosphere consists of real actions, of the "little things" with which real people live. For one person, perestroika is the attitude [shown] to him by the regional executive committee or the residential committee office; for another, it is a new novel in a journal; for a third, it is an article in the newspaper; for a fourth, a decision by the CC [Central Committee], and so on. Somebody will not like some aspect of what has been said or published. But this is reality, and we should get used to it. Any sterilization of opinions is inconsistent with democracy. It begets only infertility. It is not the press that causes deficiencies. The press is secondary; life is primary.

Of course, democracy is a sweet and a bitter fruit at the same time. It does not exist without different points of view. Not everybody likes it, and not everybody needs it. Obviously, some sweeping assessments and assertions with which we cannot agree appear in the press as well. It happens, but I am sure it is not those [extreme assertions] which take the upper hand. And in fact, sometimes points of view that are incorrect are even helpful, at least for understanding what is right and what is not right. We should not hide other points of view -- those that do not coincide with ours -- under a bushel, but use them in such a way as to develop correct views commensurate with the current societal tasks.

Today, there is much talk about how the democratization of public life has brought to the surface many things that cause indignation, or confusion, and have led us to a dead end, or caused other kinds of feelings. I think that we should not be terrified by that because previously it was just the same, except that it took place only inside the home, in the courtyard. We were aware of that, but because we did not see it we thought that it somehow did not exist. It is not perestroika that brought these phenomena about; they were produced by stagnation. Perestroika has brought them to the surface. What we see on the Arbat should encourage us not toward prohibitive legal measures, but toward work. Or take the majority of the informal organizations. [as an example] This is also an expression of the younger generation's social initiative. We should not be worried about the fact that they are organizing and growing like mushrooms, but about something

completely different. We should be worried about the question of why they are being organized outside of the Komsomol or other public organizations.

Democracy and glasnost are advancing their great historical cause. Ahead of us, for the mass media, and for all of us in general is a much more challenging task—and not only in terms of the masses' growing control over the activities of all superstructure organizations, but also in terms of building a psychological barrier against bourgeois ideology. As was said at the XXVII party Congress: each person should go through his own social experience and make his own choice.

This is why we should not stop. The country has started to move with great difficulty. It is getting back on its feet again, faith is being revived, great changes are taking place in foreign policy. Historians will be surprised at how much we have managed to accomplish in such a short time.

We know very well that at a certain point in time pessimism has already become the standard way of thinking. Today it is far from defeated, even though sometimes we manage to score a victory over it. However, even today many people believe that Russia and democratization are two incompatible phenomena, that Russia is doomed to live under conditions of a bureaucratic bog. Our history is the struggle for democracy. However, one has to say, the struggle for lawlessness was often as passionate as the struggle for freedom.

Of course we should not underestimate anything. We should analyze the current processes and react to them. But we are conducting genuine social engineering in the full sense of the term. And every emerging organism, as a rule, is susceptible to childhood diseases—be it measles, or diphtheria—but they should be treated with the appropriate medicines.

Mikhail Sergeevich said that if we falter in machine building, we will harm perestroika. I would say that if we falter in democratization, then we will do serious harm to socialism.

We are dealing with people. This is the essence of perestroika. And here I am worried about the following circumstance.

An ideological struggle, under conditions of information saturation, requires forward thinking.

The younger generation will live under fundamentally different conditions.

The uncontrolled information flow will expand. All this will mean greater and greater openness of discussion and polemics with unacceptable standards of behavior, modes of living, and moral values.

In order to be able to cope with such an information flow, one has to have a sufficiently high level of critical thinking and self-reliance in processing that information.

Another aspect is increasing the opportunities for choice. The illusion of impenetrability was always harmful, and today its consequences are complicating the situation because they have shortened the time for psychological preparation.

We are observing a process of individualization of demands, tastes, needs, and interests. And a constant danger exists that viewpoints will surface that are, so to speak, borderline, and sometimes even hostile.

The bourgeoisie already understands that a “blind” society is not capable of surviving the struggle with us during this stage of the development of glasnost and information [accessibility]. That is why they are currently undertaking reevaluation of values and of their capacity to see how beneficial that [process] is.

Our propaganda, meanwhile, is very low on sociological information; there are still topics that are not being discussed, and there are also topics of which we are constantly afraid.

And the danger is not in the fact that the press is writing something incorrectly, but in the fact that we are highly deficient in providing it with topics that are currently beneficial for society, for its democratic maturation, and for its culture.

We often expend our emotions on certain unfortunate articles, yet the danger is not in them, but in the persisting dogmatism of our press.

As is well known, Marxism is the philosophy of practice. However, the purely educational side prevails in ideological work: how much was harvested, sown, done—where—and who said what.

This is important, it is supremely important. But perestroika requires analysis—what is behind those numbers, how does a certain mechanism, person, or process work?

Until there is a breakthrough—a transition from general truths to the anatomy of perestroika at the concrete levels of societal organization, the effectiveness of our influence will be insufficient.

So far [we have] the effect of novelty, the leader’s effect.

But the stream of life is bubbling. It will demand new efforts.

4. Perestroika has truly come through the first stage, for which, from the psychological viewpoint, it was most important to arouse people’s energy, to force them to throw off their apathy, to give up their indifference—I would say, to push them to doubt the rightfulness of that cynicism, which has started to put down deep roots here.

Will we be able to manage this task? I believe that there is a deep satisfaction in society, in all its strata, with the fact that at last the elements of life began to stir in it.

5. That is why I agree completely that the main task of the next stage of perestroika is to discover and to begin—gradually and methodically—to get rid of everything that works against perestroika—in the economy, the political system, and the culture.

For these purposes we need to develop the instruments of democracy actively. Literally before our eyes, [we see that] a certain category of officials has begun to develop an immunity toward democracy. They have already learned—and their past experience was quite conducive to this—to organize elections, which are on the surface quite in the spirit of the times, but in essence quite contrary to it. They have already understood that if they do not assume the pose of someone who is offended by criticism then it is quite possible to survive that criticism as well.

Apparently, we need to look for some next steps in the development of the democratic process—[steps] that would allow us to make the position of the public more effective and would presuppose appropriate mechanisms and procedures for that.

6. In this connection—about the role of ideological work. Its explanatory, educational and cultivating functions will naturally remain. But certain other [functions] should obviously change somewhat. During the years of stagnation a considerable portion of [our] ideological work was directed toward comforting and calming society, toward “proving” that everything was not just good, but even better.

Today, this comforting function is simply harmful. Realism, truth, and realism once again. We should have some healthy anxiety. Some say “perestroika is better than anything.” But it would have been much better had we not needed perestroika. But you cannot do anything about that.

Intelligentsia.

Social sciences.

The struggle for perestroika—the fateful course.

Today, the desire is growing to change matters for the best in all spheres. But conservatism and inertia, while compromising on essential issues, and accepting new things with varied degrees of readiness, have taken up a defense along the front of the methods of work and the directions of perestroika. The blueprint is clear: to live in a new way, and to work in the old way. But these are incompatible.

7. Law, discipline.

However, in general, good processes are unfolding, a qualitative accumulation of perestroika’s potential is occurring, and this will be the way of the future.

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Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]