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Gorbachev's Chances

"Gorbachev the Bold" by Peter Reddaway, in *The New York Review of Books* (May 28, 1987), 250 West 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

Since taking office in 1985, Soviet Communist Party Chief Mikhail Gorbachev has advocated a policy called *glasnost*, or "openness." To Westerners, the word, like the policy, sounds new. But Reddaway, secretary of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, points out that 30 years ago, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev also espoused a *glasnost* movement.

"Can Gorbachev the Bold hope to succeed where Khrushchev the Intrepid failed?" Reddaway asks. His answer: probably not.

To "get the country moving again," Khrushchev introduced wide ranging economic and political reforms, says Reddaway. He released millions of political prisoners, and curbed the powers of the *nomenklatura*, or high government officials, before he was ousted in 1964.

Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev is trying to restructure the Soviet economy and bureaucracy. Although his policy is known as *glasnost*, Gorbachev has stressed *perestroika*, or "reconstruction"—which requires, as he expresses it, "the serious, deep democratization of Soviet society." Among other things, Gorbachev has pushed for differential wage rates, which reward the industrious. In agriculture, he has favored market-oriented small-scale cooperatives and the use of private plots over the larger, more cumbersome state farms.

The Kremlin under Gorbachev has released more than 100 political



"Gorbachev's gone too far!" says a Soviet official. Despite *glasnost*, only about 100 political prisoners have been released.

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prisoners, tolerated political demonstrations, and permitted Soviet diplomats to discuss the sensitive topic of human rights. Against the Central Committee's wishes, Gorbachev has supported multi-candidate elections for some party posts. "Democracy is not the opposite of order," the Soviet Communist Party chief has said. "It is order of a higher degree, based not on . . . the mindless carrying out of instructions, but on whole-hearted, active participation by the whole community in all of society's affairs."

Thus, *glasnost*, Reddaway suggests, represents a sincere effort to reform Soviet society, and one that will meet fierce resistance from Moscow's entrenched *nomenklatura*. That is why Gorbachev's revolution is not likely to succeed.

Unfortunately, Reddaway says, Soviet society is no more likely to change now than it was 30 years ago. "I suspect that the only likely remedies for this situation," he observes, "may be the ones that have been required in Russian history for nearly two centuries—either a serious breakdown in public order, or defeat in a war."

NATO Works

"NATO Defense: No Need for Basic Change"
by David C. Hendrickson, in *Parameters* (Summer 1987), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Penn. 17013.

Should the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) be preserved? Some strategists argue that Soviet military might and European neutralism have rendered NATO ineffective. American tax dollars, they say, would be better spent on the Strategic Defense Initiative and defending American frontiers than on maintaining an antiquated alliance.

Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, says that critics have not proved that NATO needs to be overhauled or abolished. Defects in NATO, he writes, "have been greatly exaggerated"; it is still capable of countering Soviet aggression.

A quick Soviet invasion of Western Europe would face formidable obstacles. In order to conquer West Germany, for example, Warsaw Pact commanders would have to reinforce 25 Soviet divisions with troops from the client states of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany whose "reliability under fire is doubtful." Should the initial invasion fail to produce a decisive victory, Soviet generals would have to rely on "short-term conscripts with inadequate training and no experience" in fighting a protracted war of attrition.

U.S. defenses in West Germany are becoming more reliable, Hendrickson writes. The U.S. Seventh Army is "a far more capable fighting force" than it was in the late 1970s. American air power is also better prepared to respond to Soviet aggression.

Moreover, the Soviet Union lacks any credible excuse for an invasion. The USSR does not have "standing grievances" similar to those which helped provoke the First and Second World Wars. Unlike Germany after the Versailles treaty of 1919, the Soviet Union is not a defeated nation thirsting for revenge. The current European balance of power was shaped and approved at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences of 1945, where the