

GORBACHEV AND THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN HISTORY*

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One of the tasks of Russian history seems to be to remind mankind again and again how important individuals are in history. Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and many others have all proved in different ways that the actions of political leaders can significantly influence the course of events. Mikhail Gorbachev's role in the current Soviet revolution certainly again offers material for speculation on this perennial topic.

The question of the role of personality in history is a philosophical one, it is a problem about subjective goals, free will, personal responsibility, success, and failure. It is also an issue of general causes and trends in society because every historical view "which recognizes that men can and do make their own history also concerns itself with the conditions under which it is made."¹

In what follows I do not attempt to tackle the question about the role of personality in history in any systematic way, nor do I attempt to give any brief and "conclusive" assessment to the role of Gorbachev in history. In fact, as I try to argue below, any general assessment of Gorbachev's role depends on the competing systems of political values, and there are lots of reasons to be highly skeptical about our ability to reach the truth. I shall focus my attention on some particular moments, arguing that: a leader like Gorbachev was probably necessary to unleash the Soviet revolution, but that since then his role has diminished. Gorbachev's role in the Soviet revolution was more essential in 1985 than in 1991; it is practically impossible to verify the claims about Gorbachev's subjective goals; there is a small probability that Gorbachev will politically survive being at the same time "Nicholas II" and "Lenin" of the current Soviet revolution, but such an outcome would be a very substantial deviation from the usual patterns of revolutions; it is not likely that there will ever be a consensus about how positive or negative was Gorbachev's general role in history.

* Originally published in *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 1992, XXV, 1, 47–56.

IS GORBACHEV NECESSARY?

Gorbachev was apparently necessary for the start of the Soviet revolution. To put it more precisely: a Gorbachev-type liberal and reform-minded leader seems to have been necessary to unleash the revolutionary process in the USSR. The USSR before 1985 was a totalitarian and strongly centralized state. It is true that the Soviet economy was having increasing difficulties, that the technological gap between the Western countries and the USSR was growing, that the environmental crisis was deepening, that the arms race was eating up scarce resources, and that dissatisfaction with the policy of the Kremlin leaders was rising among the Soviet people, etc. But the KGB, army, police, and other elements of the huge repressive and control apparatus made it possible for the CPSU leadership (at least for a considerable period of time) to suppress all the significant critical signals in the society and to maintain the status quo. Had Chernenko lived 5 years longer, *perestroika* would have probably not commenced before 1990. The start of the reform processes in 1985 was connected with the changes in the leadership, like the thaw in the 1950s was connected with the death of Stalin in 1953. There were no signs before 1985 of oppositional political activities outside the CPSU that would have significantly challenged the ruling *nomenklatura*. Dissidents and other protesters were marginal, the only serious division of political forces (that mattered in the short run) occurred within the groups of the ruling communist elite itself.

While Gorbachev's determination to reform the Soviet society was apparently necessary to start the current Soviet revolution, it is also clear that his causal role has diminished since 1985. Obviously the words "condition," "cause," "importance," "influence," and "impact" have so many meanings that every statement about the diminishing importance of Gorbachev for the Soviet revolution is subject to endless interpretations.² Let us clarify the concept of the diminishing causal role by envisaging two counterfactual situations. To begin with, suppose that Gorbachev suddenly, for some non-political reason, disappears irreversibly from the political arena, i.e. dies, gets extremely seriously ill, etc. This is of course just a theoretical model to assess causal relevance, but had this disappearance occurred in, say, May, 1985, it may have postponed the beginning of reform and the pattern of the reforms might have been different, following more, for example the cautious "Chinese model."³ However, had Gorbachev disappeared in the middle of 1991, this most likely would have just speeded up a conflict between the hardline and democratic forces in the Soviet society without altering the basic revolutionary model of the Soviet transition. In fact, the relative unimportance of Gorbachev was demonstrated during the unsuccessful coup in August, 1991: the fact that Gorbachev was isolated from the outside world did not influence considerably the outcome of the fight between the supporters of Boris Yeltsin and the Kremlin communist hardliners. There is no doubt that the actions of the Soviet president in the

autumn of 1991 still had some relevance for the Soviet transition, but the degree of this relevance had diminished since 1985.

The claim that had Gorbachev disappeared in 1985, the reforms may have been postponed for some 5 to 10 years, but that sooner or later they would have started although perhaps in a different form, relies of course first of all on intuition—it cannot be confirmed in any precise manner. The thesis that the Soviet reforms would have started sooner or later gets some support from the facts that the deteriorating Soviet economic situation would have made some changes necessary;⁴ that China and some other communist countries have started some kind of market-oriented reforms quite independently from the USSR; and that many members of the pre-1985 communist elite (Aleksandr Yakovlev, Edvard Shevardnadze, Boris Yeltsin, and others) turned out to be capable of non-dogmatic political thinking and at least theoretically would have been able to play the role of a liberal reformist leader. On the other hand, even a quick glance at the composition of the Soviet top leadership at the beginning of *perestroika* supports an impression that without Gorbachev (and other things being equal), the start of the reform process would have been most probably delayed. In March, 1985, the Politburo (i.e. the pool of possible candidates for the position of the Secretary General) consisted of Geidar Aliyev, Mikhail Gorbachev, Viktor Grishin, Andrei Gromyko, Dinmukhamed Kunayev, Grigorii Romanov, Nikolai Tikhonov, Vladimir Shcherbitskii, Mikhail Solomentsev, and Vitalii Vorotnikov.⁵ It is quite unlikely (although not entirely impossible) that any of them—except Gorbachev—would have been able to unleash a revolution. The post-1985 fate of all of them seems to confirm that point. I think that this applies also to Geidar Aliyev, who has made a political comeback as a nationalist Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet member.⁶ Correspondingly, it is quite likely that without Gorbachev, the commencement of the current Soviet revolution would have occurred at least some time later. The difference between Gorbachev and other members of the Soviet top leadership has been underlined by many specialists: "When Gorbachev was elected General Secretary he was, to say the least, an oddity in the central leadership, age and intellectual culture setting him apart from his gerontocratic and modestly educated colleagues."⁷ Boris Yeltsin has even said that had Gorbachev chosen Chernenko's way, "the country's natural resources and the people's patience would have outlasted his lifetime, long enough for him to have lived the well-fed and happy life of the leader of a totalitarian state."⁸

The claim about the diminishing role of Gorbachev in the course of the current Soviet revolution gets its primary justification from the fact that Gorbachev's power, his ability to influence processes has greatly diminished during the period 1985–1991. Let us accept a conventional intuitive notion of "power," according to which for example, Tsar Peter the Great (who ruled 1689–1725) or Alexander the Second (1855–1881) had more power over the historic Russian territories than Ivan the Terrible's son Fedor (1584–1598) or Alexander Nevski (who was the Prince of Novgorod and then of Vladimir in 1236–1263). There is no doubt that in this sense Gorbachev's power between 1985 and 1991 decreased. Already

before the August, 1991, coup he had reached a situation where the leaders of the Union republics could easily ignore his decrees even in financial, defense or foreign relations matters, and the commanders of the military districts openly criticized his policies without being fired. Already in the autumn of 1991 Gorbachev's power in relation to concrete Soviet republics was almost as limited as that of the General Secretary of the United Nations toward the UN member states.

To sum up this argument, let me stress again the main point: *a leader like Gorbachev was probably necessary to unleash the Soviet revolution, but since then his role has diminished. Gorbachev's role in the Soviet revolution was more essential in 1985 than in 1991.*⁹

GORBACHEV'S GOALS: A PROBLEM OF VERIFIABILITY

Much of "Gorbachological" literature is devoted to constructing various theories about Gorbachev's goals and motives: is he the last true-believer in Marxism-Leninism, who wants to put "communism to work"? Or is he an authoritarian modernizer, who believes in the strong state and market economy, but pays little attention to ideology? Or is he a weak and soft man, who does not know what to do and is just responding to various pressures and aimlessly moving from one direction to another?

I myself have a deeply skeptical, even agnostic view about our ability to understand Gorbachev's goals. Some of the reasons for being skeptical are of course simply philosophical: it is not possible to have any independent confirmation about another persons' thoughts.¹⁰ Our conceptions about the goals of other individuals are just constructions that are compatible with the actual pattern of their actions, it is not possible to verify or falsify them through the direct observation of other minds. The goals and intentions of the people may be contradictory and confused, they may change quickly in critical situations, and self-deception may make it impossible for somebody to judge objectively even his own goals. For example, it is quite plausible that in 1991 Gorbachev's own perception of his earlier ideas (that is, of what he himself considered to be the ultimate aim of *perestroika* in 1985) was already blurred with the elements of wishful thinking and self-deception.

In the periods of stable and balanced political development, we can rely more on the publicly stated goals of politicians, or at least develop a set of rules on how to interpret the publicly stated goals. Leonid Brezhnev may not have believed in the triumph of "developed socialism" in his private thinking, but it was possible to guess what political actions he envisaged, when he repeated again and again that the "advantages of the socialist system" should be combined with the "fruits of the scientific and technological progress," and the development of the Soviet economy should be "intensified." On the other hand, suppose that Mikhail Gorbachev really had in mind (at least in general form) his political actions of 1991 when he spoke in 1985-1986 about the aim of "accelerating the socio-economic development"¹¹ of Soviet society on the

basis of "scientific and technological progress" and "being guided by Marxism–Leninism," i.e. by the "truly scientific theory of social development."¹² Did he really foresee that in July, 1991, he would state that Marxism–Leninism was turned into a "collection of canonical texts" and that he would also advocate the inclusion into the CPSU "ideological arsenal" of ideas from non-Marxist "socialist and democratic thought"¹³ or that in August, 1991, he would leave the post of CPSU CC General Secretary? If we assume that Gorbachev already, at the early stages of the Soviet revolution, anticipated the sweeping changes that took place in 1991, then we should be even more skeptical about using Gorbachev's publicly stated goals as the basis for predicting his actions.

If we leave aside the attempts to peep into the intimate thinking of Gorbachev and concentrate on finding a coherent pattern of his goals on the basis of the objectively verifiable actions, then we are inevitably faced with the problem of the excessive abundance of competing interpretations, where all the interpretations seem to be not conclusively verifiable or falsifiable. For example, Gorbachev's decisions to agree with German unification or not to crack down during the East European revolutions in 1989 are compatible with an almost endless number of hypotheses: did he want to get rid of all the client states and concentrate on reforming the Soviet Union; did he want to dismantle the Soviet Union and focus on reforming Russia; was his long-term aim to retire when the democratic political regime had been created in Russia, and enjoy a life somewhere in the West, publishing his memoirs—so that therefore he did everything to preserve his positive image in Western public opinion, etc. etc.

The moral of this passage seems to be: *it is practically impossible to verify the claims about Gorbachev's subjective goals.* It is meaningful to attempt to identify slightly more tangible phenomena: what in each concrete situation were the policy options open to Gorbachev; did his power increase or decrease in the interval 1985–1991; in what sense was he different from other communist leaders; etc.

Having said that, I do not want to deny that speculation about Gorbachev's intentions is an interesting activity. Although I am skeptical about the results, I agree completely with Robert Kaiser that "generations of future historians will argue over the degree to which Gorbachev was a modern Machiavelli, who knew from the start what he hoped to achieve but never revealed a card in his hand until he absolutely had to."¹⁴

GORBACHEV AND THE PROBLEM OF SURVIVAL

Theoretically Gorbachev seems to belong to the broad historical category of "last kings" in revolutions, i.e. the last official heads of the political regimes that are defeated in times of great social changes. In other words, in some general sense he seems to be comparable to Louis XVI, Charles I, or Nicholas II who all perished in the turbulent changes that they themselves in one way or another helped to unleash. A possible set of options for Gorbachev is also illustrated by the quite different (but still in a

certain sense similar) fates of Erich Honecker, Milos Jakes, Wojciech Jaruzelski, Todor Zhivkov, and Nicolae Ceausescu.

There is no doubt that Gorbachev has been more intelligent, capable, energetic, charismatic, democratic, humanistic, skillful, etc. etc. than most of the above listed historical figures. *There is a small probability that Gorbachev will politically survive being at the same "Nicholas II" and "Lenin" of the current Soviet revolution, but such an outcome would be a very substantial deviation from the usual patterns of revolutions.* Peter Reddaway has very correctly pointed out that revolutions produce perhaps invariably a degree of turnover in the revolutionary leadership: "Thus, even if Gorbachev leaves the stage sometime soon, historians may be impressed by the *longevity* of his tenure..."¹⁵ Archie Brown stresses also that Gorbachev's political survival will be a great exception, although he takes the view that "if any politician anywhere can pull off the remarkable feat of presiding over such an entire transition, it will be Gorbachev."¹⁶

If post-Soviet Russia (as seems quite likely) goes through an authoritarian phase, then the political survival of Gorbachev is in doubt. The future Russian authoritarian rulers (be they nationalists, fascists, or monarchists) will almost certainly use Gorbachev as a scapegoat, blaming him for all the future economic hardships. In fact, the only possible way for Gorbachev to survive politically under the authoritarian scenario is to become the dictator himself.

I am also quite skeptical about Gorbachev's political survival should democracy flourish in Russia. Of course, a number of former communist top officials have done quite well during the democratic elections in the post-Soviet republics (Ukraine's Leonid Kravchuk or Estonia's Arnold Rüütel may be good examples here). But I doubt that Gorbachev (who became a member of the Politburo in 1979 and General Secretary in 1985) can play the nationalist card or distance himself from the unpopular political decisions of the past like the above mentioned leaders of the republics have done. The current revelations about the CPSU leadership's financial affairs is certainly only the beginning of the trend. There is no doubt that a lot of the Kremlin's past dirty secrets will be available for political opponents to destroy Gorbachev's image during any future democratic election campaign.

Let me again stress that nothing in history is determined with 100 per cent certainty. The miracle of Gorbachev's political survival is still at least logically possible, although (as I indicated above) it would be a very interesting deviation from the usual patterns of revolution.

GORBACHEV'S SUCCESS AND FAILURE: A PROBLEM OF JUSTIFICATION

General assessments of Gorbachev's policy are inevitably value-loaded and based on particular political worldviews. Any general statement like "Gorbachev policy in 1985–1991 has been a tremendous success," "the

quality of Gorbachev's leadership in 1985–1991 was high," or "Gorbachev has a remarkably positive role in history" is based on a certain implicit evaluative assumption about what is the "ideal leadership," "political success," "positive historical role," etc. Certainly there are quite a few political values that are shared by all the main political observers and so it is not likely that any consensus about the general evaluation of Gorbachev's role in history will emerge. There seems to be also little hope that time will settle things. For example, I do not think that mankind has by now reached definitive conclusions about the general quality of the policies of, say, Diocletian, Marcus Aurelius, Charles I, Cromwell, Louis XVI, Napoleon I, Nicholas II, or Kerensky. What seems to be happening is that these figures themselves become in the course of history less and less important for us. We know no better how to assess Napoleon's policies today than the people did 170 years ago, Napoleon is just less important to us than he was to the people in the past, and we (except the small group of historians) are not generally interested in evaluating his political behavior.

Therefore, it seems not too meaningful to try to find out how positive (or negative) is the role of Gorbachev in modern history generally. In this section of the present article I attempt to identify something which is usually considered to be one of Gorbachev's failures, and then to analyse briefly how this failure is described and justified. With focusing on a particular failure I do not want to deny that many others of Gorbachev's actions are almost universally estimated as successful—the Soviet human rights policy in 1985–1991 for example. I just think that the analysis of a negative example helps to clarify some methodological questions.

The economic policy of Gorbachev in 1985–1991 is labelled by the majority of analysts as a failure, at least in a sense that the actual Soviet economic performance considerably worsened during that period. While many specialists just condemn Gorbachev for that failure, the others attempt to find justifications for that failure, using (among others) the arguments of "political preparation," "multiple progress," and "radiant future."

It is possible to list a number of Gorbachev's actions that seem to have been economically counterproductive: the campaign of "acceleration" aggravated shortages and created new bottlenecks in the economy;¹⁷ the simplistic emphasis on machine-building brought about a diversion of "enormous resources without regard to economic or technologically rational proportions,"¹⁸ the fight against alcoholism (which was started in May, 1985) led to a sharp increase in the deficit of the state budget;¹⁹ the struggle against "unearned incomes" (launched in May, 1986) just enforced the Stalinist features of the Soviet command economy; the Law of State Enterprises (adopted by the Supreme Soviet in 1987) preserved essentially the old system of central planning under the new concept of "state orders" but opened the doors for inflation. One of the gravest issues of the current Soviet economic crisis is the budget deficit which has drastically increased since 1986 but which Gorbachev's government denied the very existence of until October, 1988.²⁰ Anders Aslund has very eloquently summarized the causes for the monetary and fiscal imbalances of the Soviet economy:

During the first three years of *perestroika* 1985–87, we have detected two major reasons for monetary and fiscal imbalances. First, the anti-alcohol campaign alone was sufficient cause of aggravated imbalances on consumer markets in this period. Second, the Gorbachev regime brought the state budget out of balance by raising investment and defence expenditures, disregarding the fall of revenues from alcohol sales...

In the second stage of *perestroika*, from 1988, the Soviet economy entered a really severe crisis. The outstanding cause of imbalance has been the reform embodied in the Law of State Enterprises. First of all, it made it possible for state enterprises to compete for scarce labor through excessive wage hikes, without allowing correspondence price increases. Second, social benefits rose even faster than wages, initially for social reasons and eventually because of political populism. Third, the government conserved the inflationary budget deficit by limiting enterprise taxes, without cutting expenditures. The worst scare on the expenditure side was the rising consumer subsidies. Fourth, an overflow of money from enterprise accounts worsened the imbalance on consumer markets and the growth of the money supply. By 1991, the Soviet economy suffered from such imbalances that it no longer seemed reparable but approached a breakdown.²¹

The above-described negative economic trends are characteristic of the Gorbachev era and it is only logical to condemn Gorbachev for these economic failures: "Thus, the blame falls upon the General Secretary himself,"²² and "Gorbachev can expect little mercy in his country or history,"²³ says Anders Aslund. "Gorbachev's shortcomings are not just the fault of the others," stressed Marshall Goldman already in 1987.²⁴ Seweryn Bialer has emphasized that Gorbachev's "inaction, indecisiveness, and lack of faith in the market economy have helped to bring his country to its present sorry state."²⁵ Robert Kaiser has a similar opinion: "Gorbachev's economic incompetence is also serious. It led to his failure to make early progress in reforming the economy."²⁶

But it is also possible to find excuses for Gorbachev. For example Archie Brown has stressed: "A more unambiguous commitment at an earlier stage of his leadership to the economic policies and political changes he espouses today would almost certainly have led to his overthrow and the restoration of an altogether more familiar type of communist system."²⁷ The whole variety of possible justifications is well outlined by George Breslauer:²⁸ it is entirely conceivable that Gorbachev did not push harder for economic reform in 1985–1986 because he was building his political base; the Soviet population might not have tolerated the economic deprivations in the absence of the safety valves Gorbachev has offered to them: truly competitive elections and opportunities for authentic political participation at all levels of the political system; it is entirely conceivable that, in exchange for greater radicalism in economic policy, Gorbachev would have had to "trade off" some of his radicalism in foreign policy, defense policy, or policy toward cultural and political reform; no consensus exists among the specialists about the necessary relationship between political, economic, and cultural change in the strategies of transition. Jerry Hough has expressed a view that 1991 is for Gorbachev a year like 1929 was for Stalin: "the year Stalin completed his consolidation of power and launched his great transformation of Soviet society."²⁹ Hough adds that "Gorbachev's position will be very strong in

the mid-1990s. The most rebellious republics may not formally recognize Soviet hegemony, but as they are compelled to take real decisions on economic reform and management of their republics, they will de facto remain part of the country. The agricultural and services reform that work in China and Hungary should work in the Soviet Union."³⁰

Perhaps there is a great number of other arguments that may be used to justify Gorbachev's economic failures, if somebody wants to write a history of *perestroika* from the position that is sympathetic to the Soviet leader. Obviously, it is also possible to analyse the above given arguments in many different ways. It seems to me that at least three different lines of reasoning can be traced in the above described justifications:

- (1) the "*political preparation argument*": it was politically impossible for Gorbachev to conduct successful economic policy in 1985–1991, he had to consolidate his power first;
- (2) the "*multiple progress argument*": *perestroika* has in 1985–1991 been a tremendous success in the non-economic spheres of Soviet society, and the economic failures may have even contributed to that success. In any case the achievements in politics, human rights, etc. compensate for the lack of progress in purely economic matters;
- (3) the "*radiant future argument*": Soviet economic performance will improve in the future.

If the Soviet economic situation will improve considerably over the next 5 to 10 years (which is of course a very big "if"), then the above-given justifications will get additional evidential support and more specialists will favor them. If, on the other hand, the post-Soviet system of states will go through a period of even deeper economic crisis, hunger, and civil war, then there will apparently be fewer specialists who will back the above-described justifications of Gorbachev's economic policy. But I do not think that any future development of events is able to refute *conclusively* these justifications. Whatever happens in the future, it is always possible to argue that Gorbachev was for objective reasons unable to launch economic reforms before consolidating his political power. As for the second argument—even if there will be fascist dictatorship in Russia in the future, that does not change the fact that in 1985–1991 there was considerable democratization and progress in human rights. Finally, sooner or later the Russian economic performance will get better anyway and it will therefore be possible to say that Gorbachev in one way or another created pre-conditions for the future upturn.

With that I do not want to say that I support the above justifications myself. My view about Gorbachev is basically neither critical nor supportive: it is essentially neutral and skeptical. While it is reasonable to expect that most specialists will agree on whether Gorbachev's economic (or any other particular) policy was a success or failure, *it is not likely that there will ever be a consensus about the wider justifications of*

Gorbachev's political behavior, or about how positive or negative was his general role in history. The question "Was Gorbachev's leadership a success or failure?" may be less meaningful in the social sciences than the question "What general types of arguments could be used to demonstrate that Gorbachev's leadership was a success or failure?"

- ¹ Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (New York: The John Day Company, 1943), p. XIII.
- ² The question about the historical role of Gorbachev is essentially a problem of the relative importance of competing causes in non-quantitative historical studies. The purpose of this article is not to develop an argument on the more sophisticated methodological level. I have tried to tackle the question of competing causes from the methodological point of view in a number of my publications. See for example my *Some Aspects of Relative Causal Importance in History* (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Sciences, 1986), pp. 1-22; "Assessing Relative Causal Importance in History", *History and Theory*, Vol. 24 (1985), pp. 62-69.
- ³ CPSU Politburo Member Yu. Prokofyev and some other leading communist officials many times before August, 1991 expressed their admiration for the Chinese example. For example, Prokofyev said at the CPSU Central Committee plenum on July 25, 1991, that "China is carrying out reform successfully" (*FBIS-SOV-91-145*, July 25, 1991, p. 50.)
- ⁴ The "inevitability" of *perestroika* has been stressed, among others, by such different experts as Andrei Sakharov and Mikhail Gorbachev himself. Cf.: Andrei Sakharov, "Neizbezhnost perestroiki" ("The Inevitability of Perestroika") in: Yurii Afanasyev, ed., *Inogo ne dano (There is no Alternative)* (Moscow: Progress, 1988), p. 126; *Pravda*, July 27, 1991, p. 1.
- ⁵ *Izvestia TsK KPSS*, No. 7 (1990), pp. 80-81.
- ⁶ In August, 1991, Aliyev for example stated that Azerbaijan should not sign the new Union Treaty (*RFE/RL Daily Report*, no 146, August 2, 1991, p. 7.)
- ⁷ John Gooding, "The XXVIII Congress of the CPSU in Perspective", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 43, No 2 (1991), p. 238.
- ⁸ Boris Yeltsin, *Against the Grain* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), p. 139.
- ⁹ Gorbachev's diminishing role can be interpreted also in the framework of the wider "law of diminishing dictators," formulated by some Sovietologists. About the above mentioned "law" see: Christopher Smart, "Gorbachev's Lenin: The Myth in Service to Perestroika," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XXIII, No 1 (Spring, 1990), p. 7.
- ¹⁰ I realize of course that the question of understanding the intentions and goals of an historical agent is quite complex, if approached on the more specific philosophical and methodological level. From the philosophical point of view I agree to a certain extent with Robin Collingwood who has said: "But how does the historian discern the thoughts which he is trying to discover? There is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind." (R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 215. I have tried myself to develop a theory about so-called "rational explanations" in history: see my *Istoricheskoye obyasneniye (Historical Explanation)* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1980). But these philosophical analyses are not particularly relevant for my argument in this article.
- ¹¹ Jerry Hough, for example, is strongly in favor of the hypothesis that the "acceleration" program did not represent Gorbachev's actual thinking: "There is no reason to assume that the program represented his actual economic thinking at the time." (Jerry Hough, "Understanding Gorbachev: The Importance of Politics," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 7, No 2 (April-June, 1991), p. 96.) From Hough's point of view, Gorbachev's main concern was the consolidation of his power.
- ¹² See for example Gorbachev's speech on the 27th CPSU Congress: M. S. Gorbachev, *Politicheskii doklad Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS XXVII s'ezdu Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza (Political Report of the Central Committee of the CPSU to the XXVII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), pp. 5, 27-69. *Pravda*, July 26, 1991, p. 1.
- ¹³ Robert G. Kaiser, "Gorbachev: Triumph and Failure," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer, 1991) p. 166.
- ¹⁴ Peter Reddaway, "The Quality of Gorbachev's Leadership," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 6, No 2 (April-June, 1990), p. 126.
- ¹⁵ Archie Brown, "Gorbachev's Leadership: Another View," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 6, No 2 (April-June, 1990), p. 142.
- ¹⁶ Anders Aslund, *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reforms*, updated edition (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 72.

- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- 19 James H. Noren, "The Soviet Economic Crisis: Another Perspective," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 6, No 1 (January–March, 1990), p. 24.
- 20 Aslund, *op. cit.*, note 17, p. 191.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 195–196.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 191. Compare also Aslund's earlier statement: "Mikhail Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership failed to make the radical decisions not only to implement, but even to structure, a reliable blueprint for economic reform" (Anders Aslund, "The Making of Economic policy in 1989 and 1990," *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 6, No 1 (January–March, 1990), p. 89).
- 23 Anders Aslund, "Gorbachev, Perestroika and the Economic Crisis", *Problems of Communism* (January–April, 1991), p. 40.
- 24 Marshall Goldman, *Gorbachev's Challenge: Economic Reform in the Age of High Technology* (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1987), p. 228.
- 25 Seweryn Bialer, "The Last Soviet Communist", *U.S. News & World Report*, October 8, 1990, p. 54.
- 26 Kaiser, *op. cit.*, note 14, p. 170.
- 27 Brown, *op. cit.*, note 16, p. 153.
- 28 Cf.: George W. Breslauer, "Evaluating Gorbachev as Leader", *Soviet Economy*, Vol. 5, No 4 (1989), pp. 307–313.
- 29 Hough, *op. cit.*, note 11, p. 105.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 106.