

**#237**

**Transition to Democracy in the USSR:  
Ending the Monopoly of Power and  
The Evolution of New Political Forces  
By  
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## Democratization and the Congress of People's Deputies

My research work on the democratization of Soviet society is a non-ideological attempt to look inside the processes of reform by studying the Congress of People's Deputies. I consider this body to be -- albeit with many reservations -- the first democratic parliament in Soviet history. The parliament, in my view, reflects the trends in Soviet society, even if not all of them, and only at an embryonic stage. From the very beginning, the Soviet reformers have worked on the basis of the following set of assumptions (which I have defined as the *first democratization model*):

- a) the preservation of the one-party system for the foreseeable future;
- b) the idea of democratization as an all-Soviet *homogeneous process*; that is, as a process to be *carried out in the same manner and at the same pace in all areas of the Soviet Union*;
- c) the hypothesis that the country's social and political diversification (recognized as both inevitable and necessary) could be carried out by a network of "social organizations" relatively independent from the Party, but still influenced by it; and
- d) a *gradual* separation of state powers from those of the party, through the revitalization of the soviets.

Actually, the months between October 1988 and the spring of 1989 go beyond this model. Soviet society has already crossed these borders, though this does not necessarily imply a step forward. Along which guidelines? Fundamentally two: a "European" one, represented by the birth of tens of

thousands of *informal organizations*, the first political life-forms independent of the party. This is the first actual form of a multiparty system, still in embryonic stage, which is produced by the establishment of social interests, great cultural currents and the emergence of a new "public opinion." In this form it is similar to the Western system. The other -- which lacks analogous examples -- is that of the *popular fronts*, established on ethnic or republic-wide bases. This is the second form of an actual multiparty system: that of *national parties*. Thus, the multiparty system essentially began in 1988.

The Congress elected March 26, 1989, already reflects these situations, even if 86% of the deputies are members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It must be noted that in a poll taken in December 1988 in Moscow, only 6% of the people surveyed favored a multiparty system. Only two months later, the percentage of those in favor had already reached 46%. And a poll taken in June 1989 among 600 deputies in the new Congress shows that a discrete 42% were hostile to the maintenance of a single party. The difficulty of describing the different positions in the Congress derives from the fact that everything was formally taking place under the cover of the single party. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account that hundreds of deputies are "new men," cast on the political scene by a completely unprecedented electoral campaign. For the first time they have to respond to their voters, and for the first time millions of citizens are directly informed by exceptional television coverage of the sessions of the Congress and Supreme Soviet. Even their level of self-consciousness remains undetermined,

fluid, and subject to sudden changes, reflecting the unpredictability of the situations.

The first attempt to describe the political geography of the Congress has been difficult, indeed. For now I will use the definitions of "left" and "right" under the following convention: I consider to be on the right those conservative positions, including the neo-Stalinist, and the dogmatic positions, which in different periods of Soviet history were considered to be on the extreme left. On the left I put all the pro-reform positions, including those supporting "market" against "planning" (historically these positions were on the right).

This outline is still too rough to furnish indications as to the present factions within the Congress. I have therefore proceeded to analyze the debate, carefully scanning the 682 speeches of the first Congress of People's Deputies held in the summer of 1989. (The analysis of the second Congress, which took place in December 1989, soon will be completed. It will be of extreme interest because we now have at our disposal detailed information on individual voting, from which it is possible to infer the political position of every deputy on the more important issues.)

I will now define the main characteristics, and the shortcomings, of the sample of deputies being analyzed. It involves 464 deputies (taking into account that many have spoken more than once). Furthermore, they are the most active deputies, that is, those who have asked to speak. The speeches have been examined on the basis of positions taken on such issues as

economic and political reform, the role of the Party, *glasnost*' and human rights, nationalities, etc. It is obvious that this methodology contains a high degree of subjectivity and of error. Despite these limitations, however, it seems to me that the main outlines are clearly visible.

## The Linear Analysis

I have had to resist the temptation of overabundant classification, although the surprisingly vast spectrum of positions encouraged it. In fact, the greater the number of categories, the less accurately could a deputy be put in one of them. Finally, I opted for an intermediate position, the most functional one, defining seven main groups:

**The Radicals (R).** The easiest group to identify, they have the highest degree of consciousness and express openly their reformist views. Examples: Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Afanasiev, Gavriil Popov, Ales Adamovic, etc.

**Left-wing Independents (S).** Though reformers, they are not as radical as the first group. Nevertheless, they are beyond the *apparatus's* control, have a significant level of autonomy, and express great criticism of the leadership. A significant component within this group consists of "national reformers," who defend democratic positions inextricably linked to national claims.

**The Intermediates (Mediators) (M).** The most faithful allies of Gorbachev, they actively support his policies and seek to help him defeat the pressure exerted by the conservatives. They are reformers, united in the attempt to establish the middle ground, to repair the lacerations that repeatedly occurred during the Congress. Illustrious examples, yet very different among themselves, are Fedor Burlatskii and Roy Medvedev. Mikhail Gorbachev himself would be included in this group.

**The Centrists (C).** They represent, in Italian terms, the "marsh" of those who either do not want or are unable to take sides. Conscious



opportunists, they adapt their views to the dominant line. Generally speaking they are aware of the tactical position to take in order to defend a particular interest. They are allied with Gorbachev in the sense that they vote as the Presidium of the Congress indicates, not in the sense that they are ready to fight for *perestroika*. Examples: Anatolii Luk'ianov, Gennadii Kolbin.

**The *Apparatchiki* (A).** They are not only men of the *apparat* but all those who defend (and speak like) the *apparat*. This is the true right-wing, but still cleverly masked in the traditional language of the Party. They are hostile to democratization, *glasnost'*, radical measures, etc. But they rarely attack Gorbachev and cover themselves with his authority. Examples: Vitalii Vorotnikov, V. Polianichko.

**The right-wing Independents (D).** This group voices the harshest positions against *perestroika*. They are also beyond control: they attack the leaders of the Party, even Gorbachev, for failing adequately to defend the "values of socialism." This group includes the extreme right, anti-Semites, Slavophiles, anti-cosmopolitans, and anti-Westerners. Nina Andreeva, if she were elected a deputy, would appear in this group. Examples: Vladimir Iarin, V.Martirosian.

**The *Pre-perestroika* (P).** Another type of "marsh," this group consists of deputies (all from the periphery, many from Central Asia, many women) who have been placed in the Parliament by the local Party apparatus. Their political-cultural level of consciousness is near zero. They do not understand the context in which they now find themselves. It is clear that they vote as the

Presidium suggests, but they are also ready to do what the head of the republic delegation suggests.

Three of these groups (Radicals, Left-wing Independents, and Mediators) form the reformist bloc, with all its nuances, and four groups (Centrists, *Apparatchiki*, Right-wing Independents, and *Pre-perestroika*) represent conservative and reactionary forces. But the degree of stability among the seven groups varies. Three groups are particularly unstable (Independents on the right and the left, and the *Pre-perestroika*), while the groups that converge on the center (Mediators and Centrists) are relatively more stable. It is logical to foresee that there will be sizeable migrations from and among these groups in the future (indeed, this process has already begun). For now it is impossible to predict the outcome of these shifts. In political terms, it will depend on whether the forces of polarization or those of consolidation prevail. In nationality terms, it will depend on whether centrifugal or centripetal forces prevail. This compels us to assess critically the linear analysis expounded thus far.

### **The Three-Dimensional Analysis: Nationalities**

What has just been described is only a first approach. It categorizes political forces along a left-right continuum, the classical one used to represent the formation processes of Western liberal democracies in the past two centuries. But this does not suffice to delineate the trends and political strategies in the USSR today. Actually, these groups fit neither on a line nor on a plane: They have a *depth* represented by the issue of *nationality*. Indeed, real life is showing how this represents a pivotal point on which the whole structure of analysis turns.

The need for a three-dimensional representation emerges even from the two-dimensional analysis undertaken by the Soviet sociologists Gordon and Nazimova. The object of their work is not the Congress, but Soviet society as a whole. Nevertheless, for the Congress I have used their model of a two-dimensional graph with X- and Y- axes. (Please see Graph One.) On the ends of the X-axis lie two economic alternatives: planning and market. On the ends of the Y-axis lie the two political alternatives: the rule-of-law state and neo-Stalinist restoration. Thus we see four sectors:

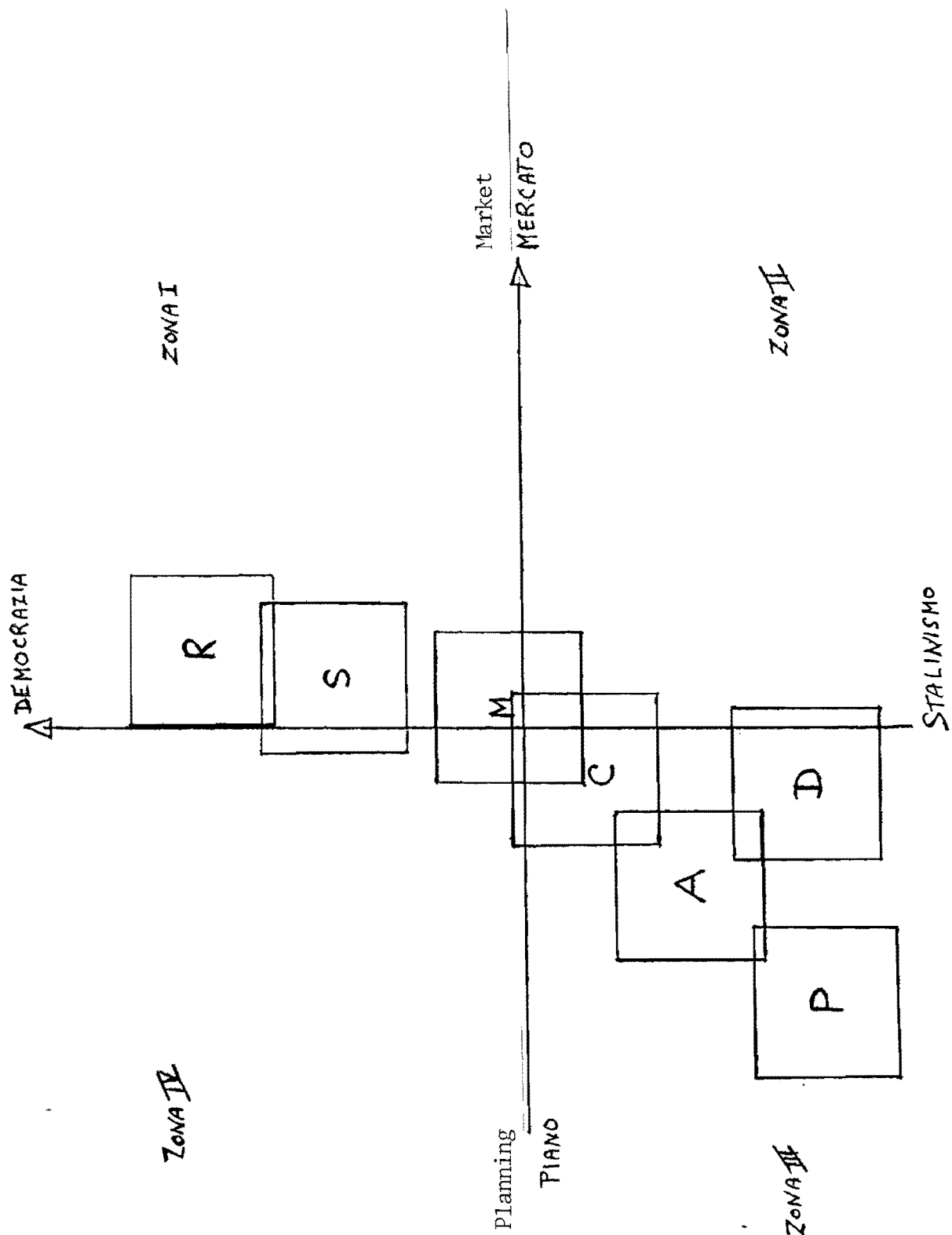
Sector I: complete *perestroika*

Sector II: technocratic option

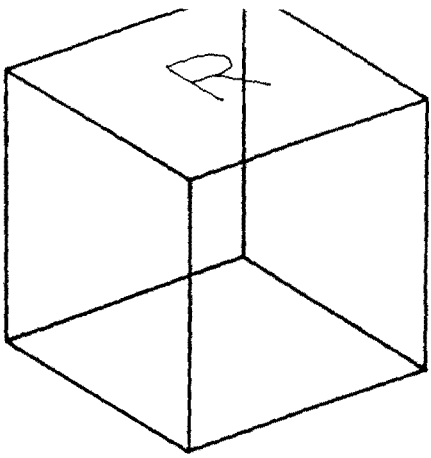
Sector III: reactionary option

Sector IV: reform, maintaining the so-called values of Socialism.

Graph One



Only three groups lie entirely within one of the four sectors -- *Apparatchiki* and *Pre-perestroika*, both located in Sector III, and Radicals in Sector I -- while the remaining four all cross over the lines of demarcation. The four sectors or strategies do not in the least exhaust all the possible variations. In fact, each of them should be sub-divided into two parts, depending on support for greater or lesser autonomy of the republics relative to the center. Thus we need a third dimension, that of the *nationality depth*, whose ends define the conflicting options "national democratic autonomy" and "nationalistic xenophobic separatism." The *political space* is thus split into eight sectors which now represent all the possible strategies (please see Graph Two). For example, it now appears clear that a complete reforming strategy should entail, besides a market economy, and a pluralized political system, also a new Constitution of the confederative type. We are not dealing here with an exercise in abstract political geometry. In reality, these considerations unveil why the reformist groups have failed promptly to understand the exceptional importance of the nationality issue. Here also lies, probably, the explanation for the hesitation in Gorbachev's behavior on the question of nationality -- perhaps the only point on which his leadership has shown evident, and grave, shortcomings. His masterful tactical capacities were revealed to be inadequate when faced with this exceptional diversity. He has constantly sought the center, aware of how indispensable a condition this is to governing his ship in this stormy sea. But it is one thing to seek the center on a plane surface, and another to seek it in space. If the third



### Graph Two

X = Democracy

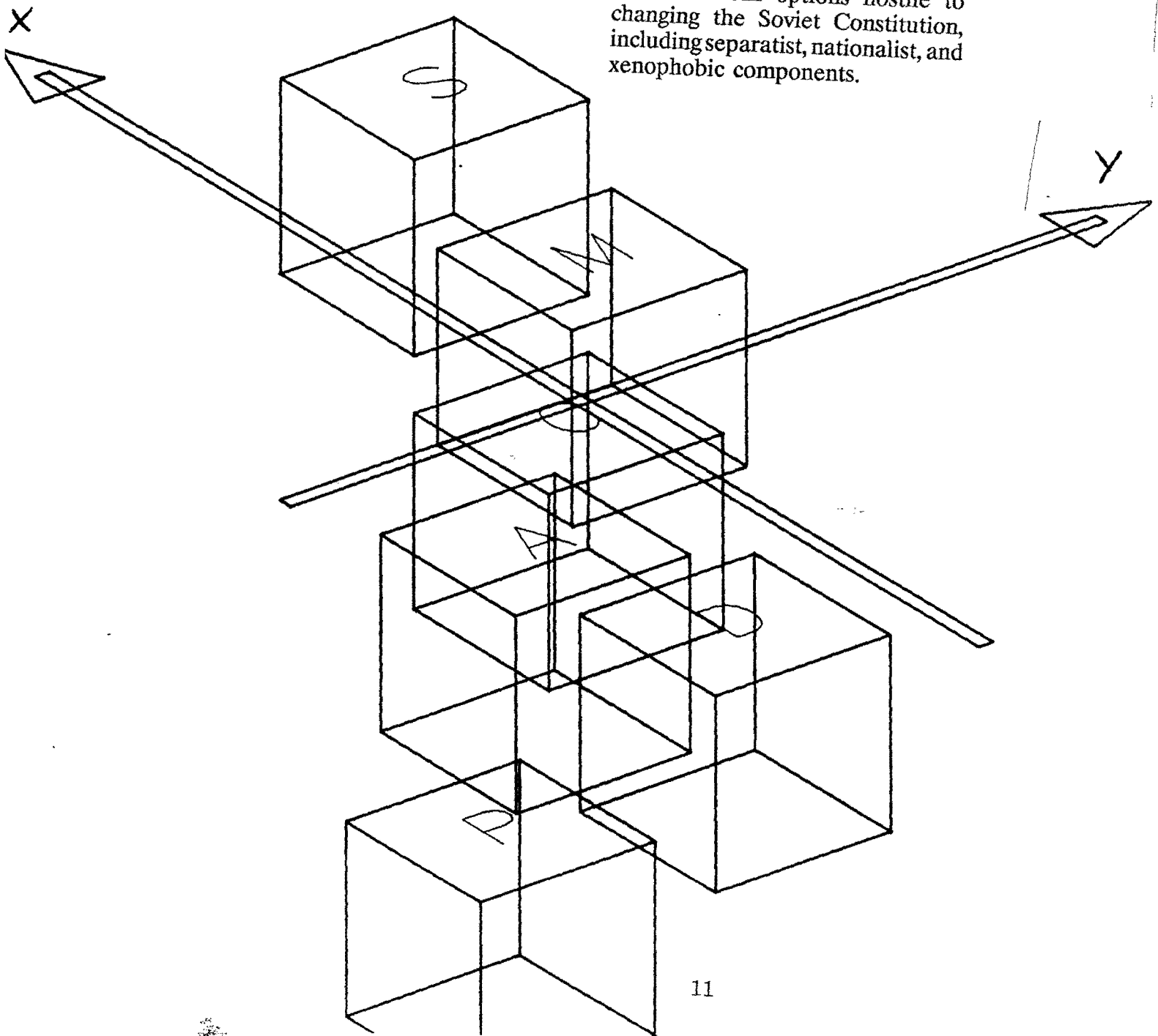
Y = Market

The vertical axis is not shown to avoid complications in understanding the graph.

The Z-axis (height) represents two opposite positions concerning national autonomy:

Up -- Constitutional reform toward a confederation of the Soviet republics.

Down -- All options hostile to changing the Soviet Constitution, including separatist, nationalist, and xenophobic components.



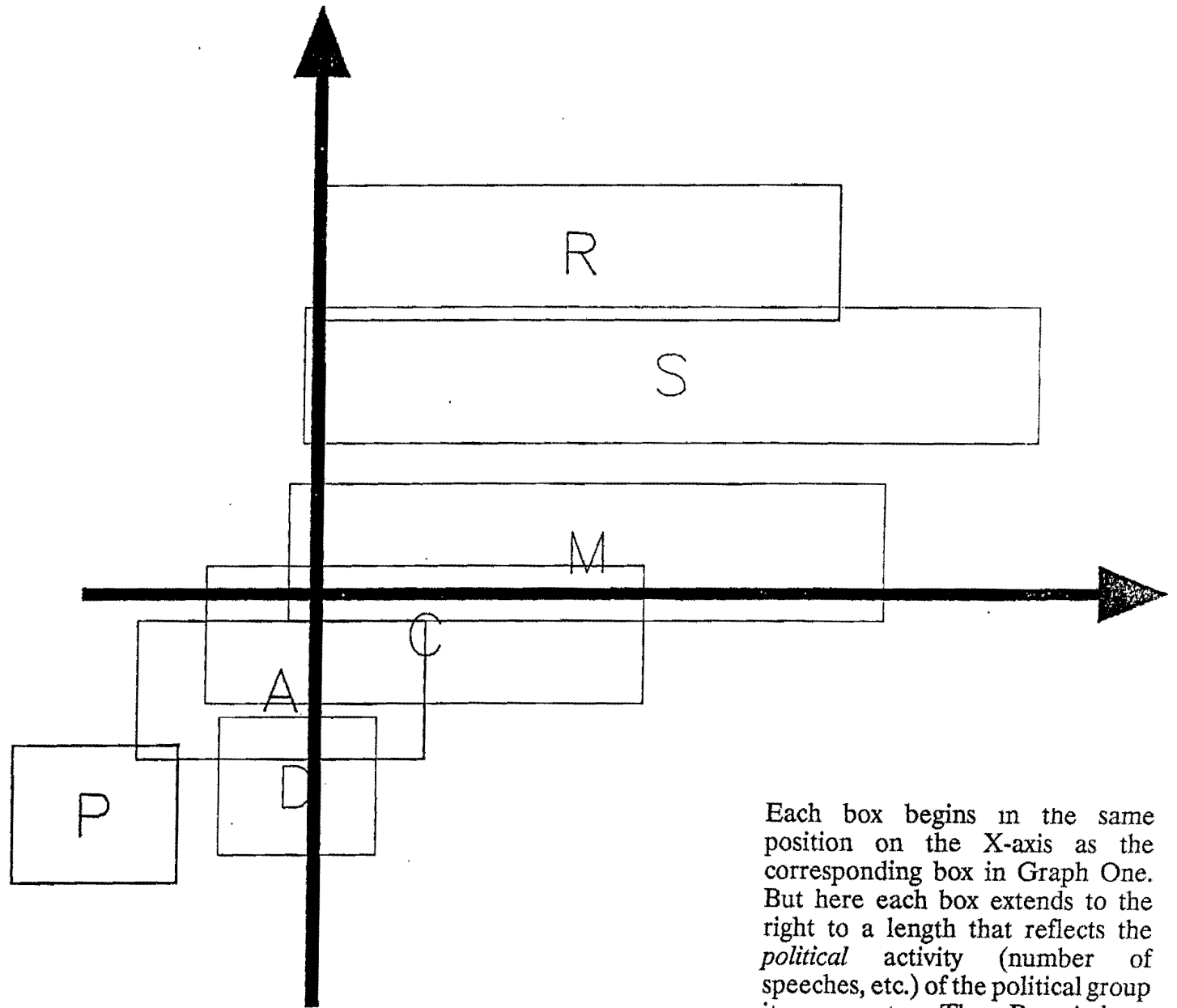
dimension is missing, the most probable outcome will be forever to be either above or below the right point. Gorbachev has not avoided this danger.

Graphs Three and Four show the *qualitative* representation of the seven political groups: on the *plane*, as seen from above; and in *space* (the three-dimensional figure). The two graphs are weighted to reflect such figures as the number of speeches made and number of delegates who took the floor. Thus they represent (with the same qualitative criteria) the *political activity* of the seven groups in the First Congress.

It is evident that the reformer groups act more dynamically than do the conservatives. The three reformer groups dominate the discussion with 67% of the speeches: a clear sign that they have taken the initiative, they have more to say, they are more motivated. But this shows also that Gorbachev's direction of the Congress has allowed the left to exercise its influence and political and cultural supremacy.

Grouping the fifteen republics into four regions (Northern Caucasus, Slavic Republics, the Baltics plus Moldavia, and Central Asia), it is immediately evident that the Baltics are the most active (with 213 deputies in the Congress [9,5%], they had 47 deputies speaking in the discussion [10.1% of the total number of delegates who spoke] ). The Slavic republics (Moscow, Russian Federation, the Ukraine and Belorussia) have had 295 deputies speaking in the Congress, i.e. 63.6%, a little less than their share in the Congress (1,455 deputies, i.e. 65.3%). Last place belongs to Central Asia, which has 365 deputies in the Congress (16.2%), but only 47 speeches (9.3%).

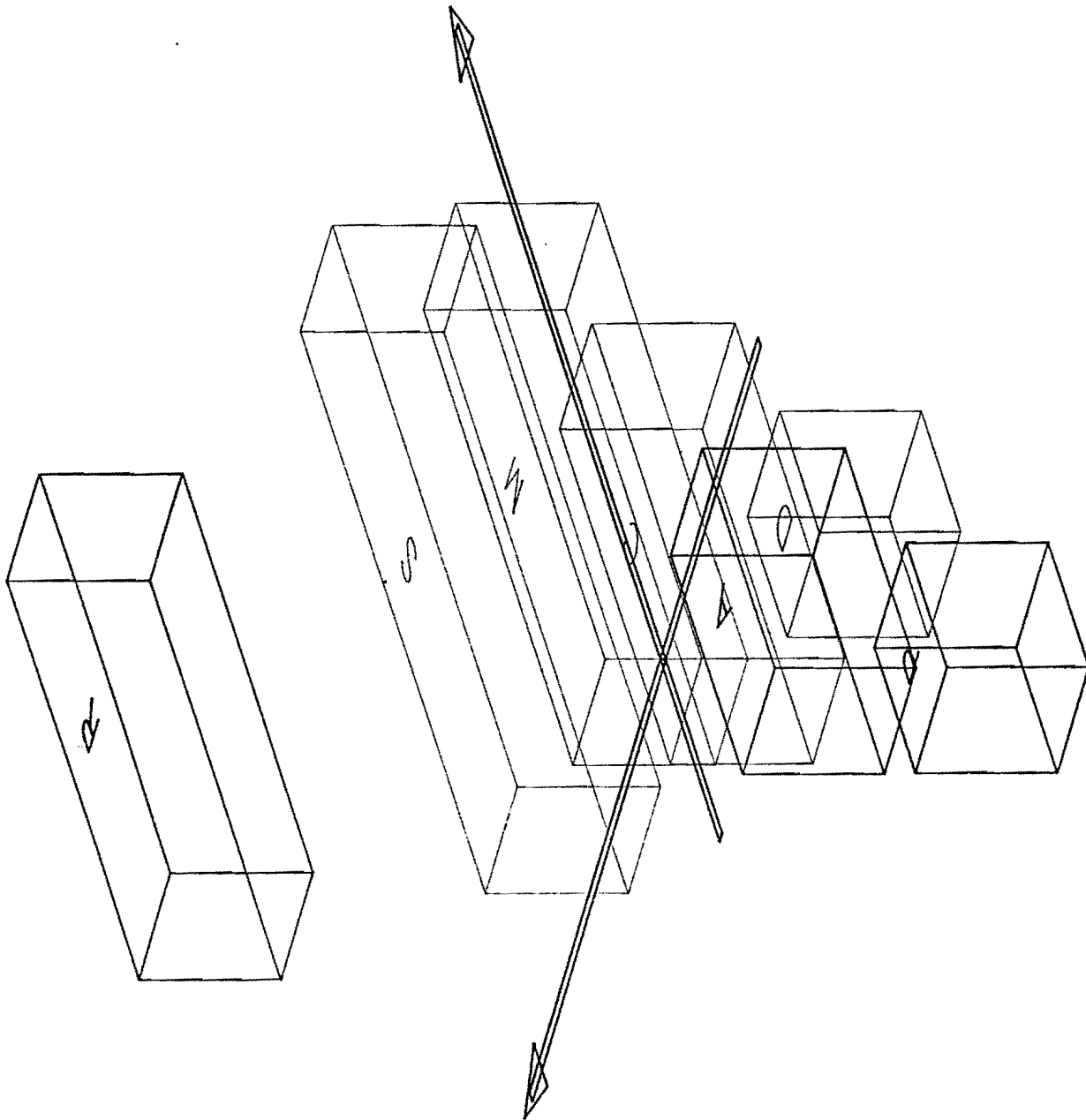
Graph Three



Each box begins in the same position on the X-axis as the corresponding box in Graph One. But here each box extends to the right to a length that reflects the *political* activity (number of speeches, etc.) of the political group it represents. Thus Box A here crosses the Y-axis, even though the political views of Group A are entirely within Sector III (as shown in Graph One).



Graph Four



As I have shown in my book *Transizione Alla Democrazia*,<sup>1</sup> this is a clear effect of the electoral campaign and of the quality of the deputies elected in these republics. This is confirmed by the overall political position expressed by the 5 Central Asian republics: 60.8% of the deputies who took the floor are of one of the three extreme groups *Pre-Perestroika*, *Right-wing Independents*, or *Apparatchiki*.

The situation of the deputies from the Baltics, particularly those from Lithuania, is the complete reverse. All of the Lithuanian deputies who took the floor belong either to the Radicals (17.6%), Left-wing Independents (52.9%) or Mediators (29.4%). Estonia and Latvia show similar patterns, although these delegations include a significant number of Right-wing Independents. This indicates the significant activity of deputies of non-Baltic origin, who in large part are conservatives. Turkmenia is the most reactionary republic and politically the most backward: its delegates gave only four speeches in the Congress, of which two are *Pre-Perestroika*; one, Centrist; and one, *Apparatchik*.

The Radicals are the most numerous group in the Moscow, Georgian, Estonian, and Latvian delegations. The Left-wing Independents predominate in Armenia, the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, and Tadzhikistan. The Mediators are first in Estonia and Uzbekistan. The

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<sup>1</sup> Lucarini, Rome, June 1990

Centrists are most numerous in Belorussia, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, and Tadjikistan. The *Apparatchiki* dominate Azerbaijan, Kirgizia and Turkmenia. The Pre-*perestroika* are first only in Turkmenia.

## The Socio-Professional Groups

Another interesting point is the behavior of the social groups. I have adopted a *functional classification* of eight fundamental groups, permitting the maximum of political deductions.

1) **Superior *Nomenklatura* (*Nomenklatura*)**. Includes high ranking leaders of the Party and state apparatus, in the center and in the republics. In a generally accepted sense, the term pertains to all those people who are the "object of appointment" by the most important hierarchies of the Party (Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee) and, at the lower levels, republic and regional secretaries. But here I have adopted a more functional criterion. Some deputies who, on the basis of the previous definition, would be considered *Nomenklatura*, are instead placed in other categories. For example, the rector of an important university would be, as a rule, a member of the Secretariat *Nomenklatura*, likewise in the case of the editor of a central newspaper or a major periodical. Nevertheless I put those deputies in the category of *Intelligentsia*, insofar as their behavior appears to be based not so much on appointment as on new duties and new situations.

2) **Inferior *Nomenklatura* (Cadres)**. Leaders of the Party, social organizations and civil servants from the lower levels. Includes secretaries of Party factory organizations, members of the executive committees of local soviets, members of citizen secretariats, etc.

3) **Military**. Includes all the deputies currently serving in the army and the KGB (including the military *Nomenklatura*).

4) **Managers.** Business leaders of factories and enterprises, directors of *sovkhozes*, presidents of *kolkhozes*, other functionaries of the ministries. In general, those who are part of the so-called "technocracy."

5) **Intelligentsia.** Includes the entire "creative" intelligentsia: writers, artists, men of theater and cinema, architects, academicians, university professors, journalists, editors, and so on.

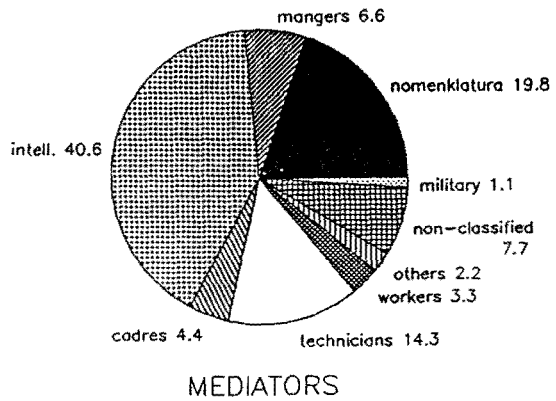
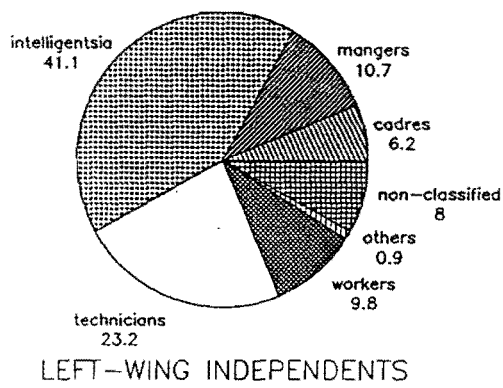
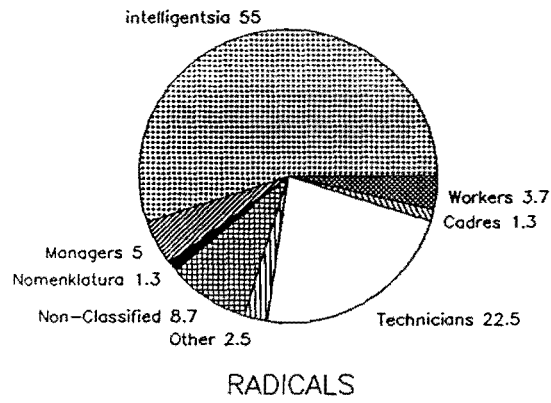
6) **Diffuse Intelligentsia (Technicians).** This is a matter of a particularly complex and heterogeneous group: engineers, specialists, school teachers, prosecutors, lawyers, physicians, etc. In other words, all the producers and disseminators of culture at the intermediate and lower levels; professions with highly intellectual content but clearly low social prestige in Soviet society.

7) **Material production (Workers).** Includes all those who are employed in material production of goods and services at the lower levels of professional skills: workers, employees, farmers.

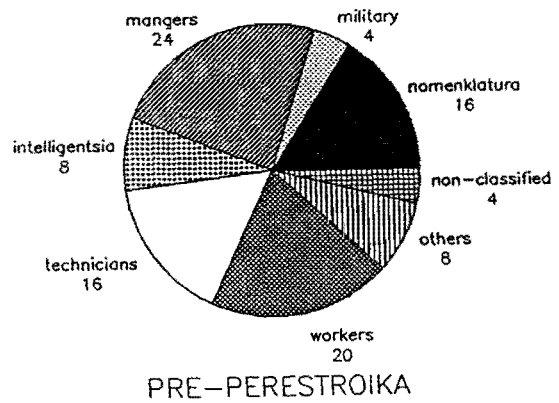
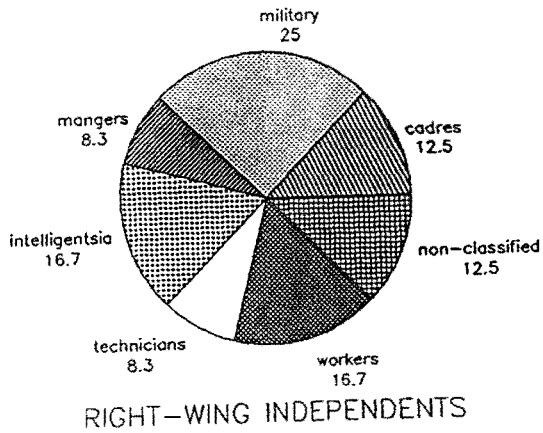
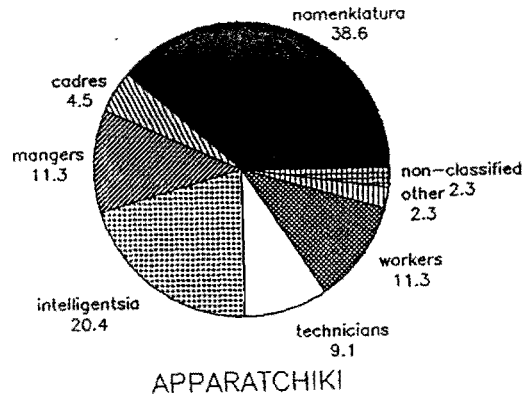
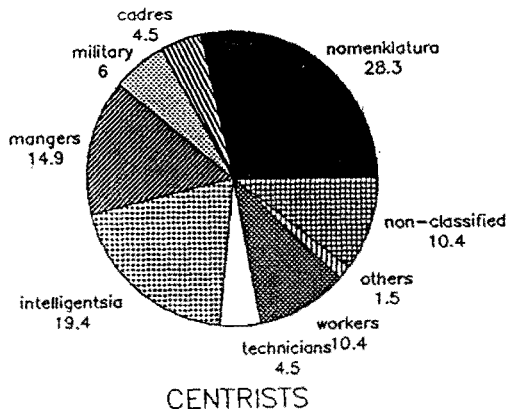
8) **Others.** Retired persons and other professionals who clearly do not belong in any of the preceding categories.

Here we note immediately that, while 509 deputies (22.6%) in the Congress fall within the category of Workers, only 38 of them made speeches (or 8.2% of the deputies who made speeches). On the contrary, 156 deputies of the Intelligentsia group (400 deputies in the Congress, i.e. 17.8%) took the floor. Examined from another perspective, 33.6% of the entire debate has been dominated by Intelligentsia. More precisely, analyzing the social

# THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF POLITICAL GROUPS (in percentages)



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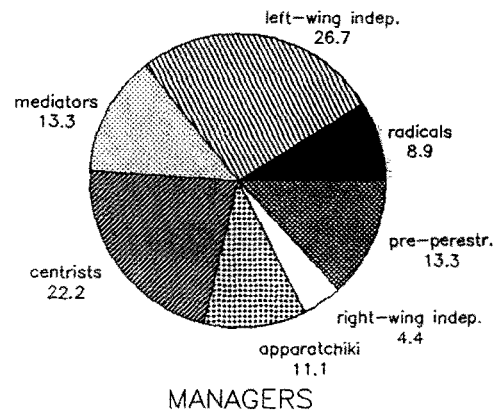
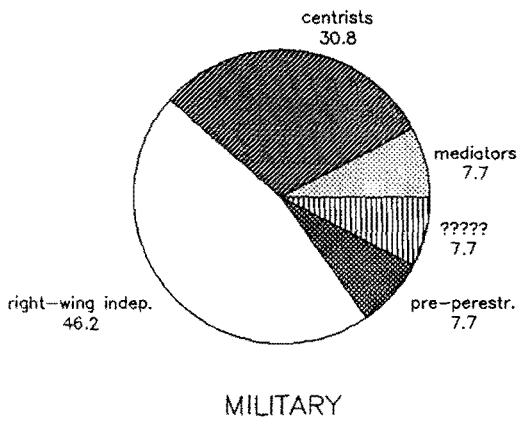
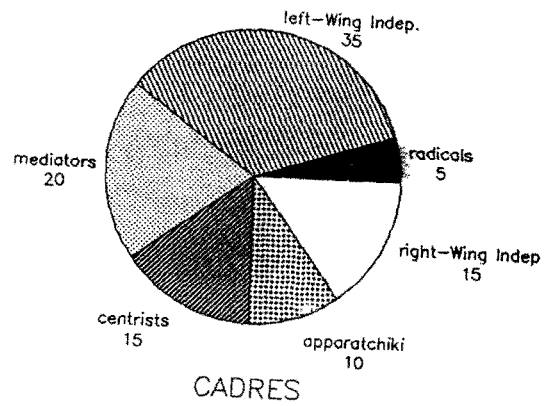
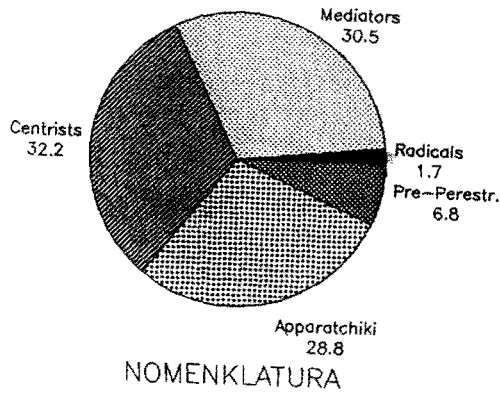
composition of the seven political groups (see Graph Five), we see that the Intelligentsia constitutes more than half of the Radicals (55%), where the Workers comprise only 3.7% of this group. Another interesting example: the social composition of the Mediators shows that the Intelligentsia is still in first place (40.6%), but in second place appears the *Nomenklatura* (19.8%). This confirms that Gorbachev has the support of a minority (but a significant one) of the *apparat*.

The Intelligentsia in aggregate is the most numerous social group among the three reformer political groups of Radicals, Left-wing Independents, and Mediators. Not surprisingly, the *Nomenklatura* makes up a significant plurality of the Centrists and the *Apparatchiki* (Graph Six). The Military forms the largest plurality among social groups within the Right-wing Independent group (25%). Moreover, within the Military social group, the largest plurality are Right-wing Independents (46.2%) (Graph Seven). This is interesting data, indeed, because it shows a high level of unpredictability in this social group. Finally Managers, Workers, Technicians and *Nomenklatura* are the most numerous in the Pre-*perestroika* political group.

A survey of the political composition of the social groups suggests some important conclusions. (Please see graphs Seven and Eight). For instance, the *Nomenklatura* does prove to be largely conservative: the aggregate of the right-wing political groups Centrists, *Apparatchiki*, and Pre-

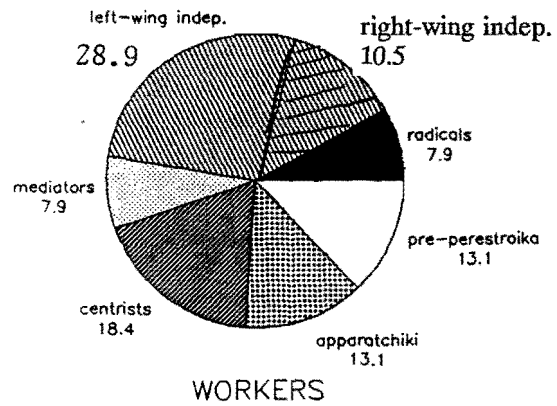
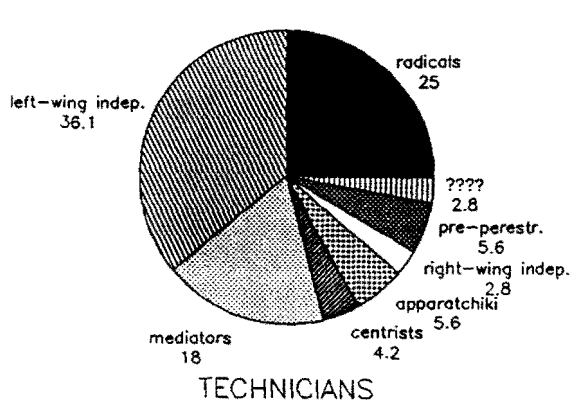
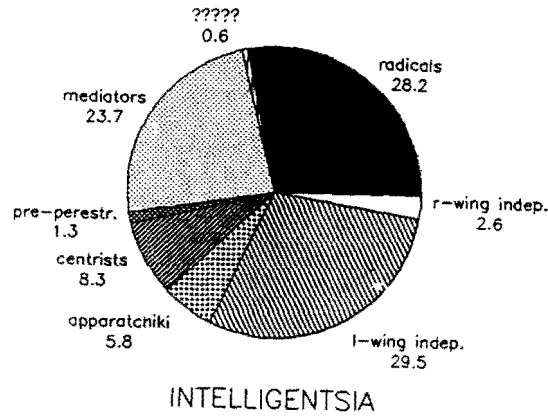


# THE POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL GROUPS (in percentages)



Graph Eight

# THE POLITICAL COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL GROUPS (in percentages)



*perestroika*)<sup>2</sup> contains 67.8% of the *Nomenklatura*. A sizable one-third (32.2%) of the *Nomenklatura*, however, belongs to one or the other of the two reformer groups Radicals and Mediators. Very fitting is the situation in the cadres (or lower *Nomenklatura*), where the three reformer groups Radicals, Left-wing Independents, and Mediators make up 60%. This seems to confirm that significant sectors of the lower apparatus levels are supporting *perestroika*.

As we have already seen, the Intelligentsia overwhelmingly favors reform (81.4%), and the same thing we can see among the Technicians (79%). If this data from the Congress holds true for Soviet society as a whole, then these two social categories form the core support for *perestroika*. And it seems to me that, to a certain extent, this representation gives concrete indications of the social situation in the country. The Workers, on the contrary, hold more conservative positions: 55.1% of their deputies express themselves as Centrists, or *Apparatchiki*, or Right-wing independent, or Pre-*perestroika*. But recapping all of these considerations we can conclude that the division between reformers and conservatives cuts *vertically through all the social groups*. A traditional class analysis of Soviet society fails to explain the real situation. The building of a system of social alliances, in the Soviet Union of *perestroika*, must be made with criteria quite completely different

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<sup>2</sup> 0.0% of the *Nomenklatura* belong to the fourth right-wing group, the Right-wing Independents. This empirical finding confirms the validity of the criteria used to define the seven political groups: the Right-wing Independent group is independent of the Party and the *Nomenklatura*.

from those of classic Marxism.

Till now, recall that the analysis concerns the sample of 682 speeches and 464 deputies. But we have the possibility to obtain a *quantitative evaluation* of the behavior of all 2,249 deputies analyzing the voting patterns of the First Congress. The results:

- a) The extreme right wing consisted of 950 votes.
- b) The four conservative political groups (Pre-perestroika, *Apparatchiki*, Right-wing Independents, and Centrists) collected on average nearly 1,300 votes.
- c) The approximate force of the three reformer groups amounts to nearly 950 deputies.
- d) The two groups Radicals and Left-wing Independents oscillate between 380 and 500 votes.

So, out of a total of 2,249 deputies, it is clear that 950 always voted with the conservative forces, and an average of 440 always voted with the reformers. That leaves a group, varying in size from 400-1,000 deputies, in the political center. This group, composed for the most part of Centrists and Mediators, divides itself in different ways between support for the conservatives and the reformers, depending on the issue being voted on, and the extent to which the discussion has been radicalized.

### More Recent Developments

In the interval between the first and second sessions of the Congress, important developments have occurred, many of which fit perfectly in our scheme. The most important of these has been the radicalization of the Supreme Soviet, which Yuri Afanasiev in May had called a "Stalinist-Brezhnevite" organism. Moreover, the February 1990 Plenum of the CPSU has formally accepted the idea of the end of the communist monopoly of power in the Soviet Union.

Another decisive development has been the formation of parliamentary groups. The first to be constituted, in July 1989, was the Interregional Group, which initially numbered around 385 deputies (including many Baltic deputies, and many Left-wing Independents). But by December the Interregional Group (by now identified with the radicals) was reduced to 164 deputies. The Baltics have already decided to rally around a republic base and simply to demand independence. Furthermore, many Left-wing Independents have detached themselves from the group, since they did not share its radical positions.

October 1989 saw the formation of another parliamentary group called *Rossia*, a right-wing, Russian nationalist group. Even though the early founders number only 28, the parliamentary power of this group is surely greater, as they are supported by the United Workers' Fronts, by the magazines *Nash Sovremennik*, *Molodaia Gvardia*, *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, by the Writers' Union of the Russian Federation, and by the daily *Sovetskaia Rossiia*.

In January we observed the creation of another political group in the Congress, *Soiuz*, which numbers nearly 100 deputies (mainly Russian) and has the aim of fighting against separatism.

Another important event was the formal schism within the CPSU, with the creation in December of the Lithuanian Communist Party, independent from Moscow (and the immediate breaking away of the Lithuanian Communists, with the by-product of a minority faction loyal to Moscow). An analogous but more cautious decision has already been taken by the Estonian Communist Party. Till now it has not split, opening a "transitional period" in which independence of the Republic and of the Party will be negotiated with Moscow. Thus, in a largely unforeseen way, the Communist multiparty system has formally preceded any other multiparty system.

Multiparty elections in the Lithuanian and Estonian Republics produced big political victories for the local Popular Fronts. The immediate declaration of independence approved March 11th by the Lithuanian Parliament opened a serious political crisis, still going on without a solution.

The republic and local elections have shown a very complicated situation: the reformers have obtained good results in Moscow and Leningrad, where the Party apparatuses have lost the majority of municipal seats. But at the republic level the results have been in general not so bad for the local Party apparatuses. A certain disappointment has reduced voter participation (in respect to the 1989 elections). Apparently the new parliaments of Russian

Federation, the Ukraine, and Belorussia finally will take on the same proportions now existing in the all-Soviet Congress of People's Deputies. In the Central Asian republics, control from above has generally played the traditional role of favoring the Party machine. At the lower levels, in the local ballots, the number of candidates has been very low (two candidates, on the average, for each seat in the regional councils, while only one candidate was available in almost 50% of the city and local councils).

But the centrifugal tendencies are growing very steadily. In the Ukraine, the *RUKH* Popular Front, with an independent-minded platform, has gained almost one third of the seats. The Georgian, Moldavian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani independent movements are strong. The unsolved crisis in the northern Caucasus could re-explode at any moment. The Soviet leader has to manage a situation rapidly evolving, while deprived of the only unifying instrument of the country, one which he had at his disposal at the very beginning of *perestroika*: the Communist Party.

## Conclusion

The Congress of People's Deputies becomes thus even more important, as a possible centerpiece in the mediation among the different social, national, and political groups. But for this to be accomplished, it would be necessary that it acquire all real power. The new democratic institutions, which the Soviet Union is generating at an extraordinary speed, run the risk of having arrived too late on the scene to succeed in mastering an already explosive situation.

This explains why Gorbachev has decided to become President and immediately obtain extraordinary powers: to free himself of the danger of being removed by the extraordinary congress of the Party to be held in late June, and to manage personally the further institutional changes now on the agenda. His moves are prompted by the danger of a vast destabilization, while the national crisis seems to exemplify the exhaustion of all possible compromise *within perestroika*. What seems already clear to me is that the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies are now the most important cards left in the hands of Gorbachev, and the reformers.