

democratization, must become the vital catalytic agent on which the success of *perestroika* will depend. On this basis, he has declared, the Party can best establish its leading position in the life and development of Soviet society. As he made clear at Vilnius during his impressively frank and free-ranging discussions with the Lithuanian Communists in mid-January, the Party must be under the democratic control of the people, and the principle of democratic centralism must be revised accordingly. The Party could no longer enjoy a political monopoly and, in its ideological outlook and activity, must adapt itself to the inevitably approaching pluralism of a multi-party system. Such a system, he admitted, already existed in Lithuania. Later in the February Plenum, however, he indicated that multi-party organizations would take longer to develop in other parts of the Soviet Union. These views, articulated in more detail as firm programmatic prescriptions, and supplemented by the indication that Article 6, the constitutional provision for the leading role of the Party, would be correspondingly modified, provided much of the substance of discussion at the February Plenum.

Apart from his insistence on fully democratic elections to all Party positions, Gorbachev's recommendations call for drastic reforms in all Party organizations, including far-ranging changes in leading personnel, a complete turnover of cadres and the transformation of their training programmes in line with his conception of the demanding functions they will have to perform in the forthcoming era of participatory democracy. The relevance and importance of such reforms to the future role of the Party can be seen in notes circulated privately by Gorbachev's collaborators and published in *Le Monde* on 31 January. These notes suggest that, influenced by the pace of political change in the Baltic Republics and in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and his advisors envisage the adoption of the essential features of that experience in ways that could enable a revitalized Soviet Party to become the leading edge in an accelerated development of a pluralistic political culture in the Soviet Union.

In general, the strategy would follow the example of the tacit alliance Gorbachev established with popular democratic movements and reformers in Eastern Europe. But in the Soviet Union that alliance would be explicitly pursued as an invitation to a burgeoning civil society to share power with a regenerated Communist Party and to agree