

# ious optimism towards the future

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tangible benefits. The miners' strike is evidence of this. The people want results now.

Yet if he moves too fast he takes the chance of antagonizing the conservatives, who could still reclaim power as happened to Khrushchev, or as happened so tragically and violently in China.

If he does nothing, much of what he stands for has been in vain, and he will have accomplished little for the people who matter most to him — the Soviet people. These people have persevered under often tyrannic rule for over 70 years, and they deserve better.

Despite the danger of reform, there is room for optimism for its success. Of the people we saw and of the people we talked to, there was an underlying happiness which transcended all the difficulties of their lives. Things could be much better, they said, but they could be much, much worse. This fact was exemplified by a Soviet lady and her granddaughter one day in a Leningrad park. Sitting next to them, I saw the great spirit of the Soviet people on display. Though both were visibly poor, dressed in torn dresses and stockings, the grandmother's teeth in ill repair, we all sat together on a long bench, laughing and smiling at one another as the little girl threw small pieces of bread to tiny birds, who competed with each other and larger pigeons for the prize.

The smaller birds, quicker and more agile, easily won. It was such a simple act, feeding those birds, but the joy it brought was so visibly pleasing to that little girl and her grandmother, that everyone in their vicinity was easily caught up in their joy. As we sat there, warm thoughts filled our minds, and any problems we had, as Soviets or Canadians, faded away.

Soon that little girl and her grandmother departed, smiling, hand in hand, and as I looked around the Soviet reality again enforced itself. I realized that while these people will persevere, they will only truly succeed if Gorbachev and the latent conservative rank exhibit some of the spirit that little girl possessed. Without it, the possibility for failure increases as conservatives may find certain processes of reform too painful and unacceptable. The possibility of a return to totalitarian socialism still exists in the Soviet Union, since the state still has a monopoly on weapons of violence and an army to enforce its wishes. Open democracy is far from won.

