

On either side of his centrist position Gorbachev still faces passive resistance, sharp criticism or outright opposition to the pace or content of his policy of *perestroika*. Yet he demonstrated his growing strength during 1989 and earlier by making important personnel changes in the Politburo, the Party Central Committee, the Government, the economic bureaucracy, the military and the KGB. In spite of rumours beforehand of his weakening position, he seems to have triumphed over his opponents in the controversial and extended proceedings of the February Plenum, both with respect to most of his policies and to the consolidation of his own position. The conservative opposition could argue that his victory, still to be confirmed at the Party Congress, has been achieved at the heavy cost of future Party unity, its leading role and its control over Soviet society. His innovative stance at the Plenum has, however, drawn the support of the radical wing of the Party, and has, if Ligachev can be regarded as their main representative in the Politburo, reduced the conservatives for the time being to acquiescence. Apart from indications of continuing differences within the Politburo on Lithuania, agriculture, private property relations and the maintenance of Communist Party traditions, Ligachev declared at the conclusion of the Plenum that the Politburo stood united behind Gorbachev and *perestroika*.

In the coming months, Gorbachev will have to grapple with a multitude of politically sensitive problems in defining, instituting and implementing the complex and radical changes of relationships, responsibilities and functions, between Party, government and representative institutions at all levels -- particularly in the light of the increasingly sensitive nationalities question. If he does not now face the threat of an effectively organized political opposition at the centre, the revolution from above that he initiated is now producing all over the USSR popular movements from below. The disparate aims and growing assertiveness of these movements, particularly in their potentially erosive impact on the power and authority of the central government and of the Soviet Party itself, may well prove to be a greater threat to his political position and to his control of the agenda of *perestroika* in all its dimensions.