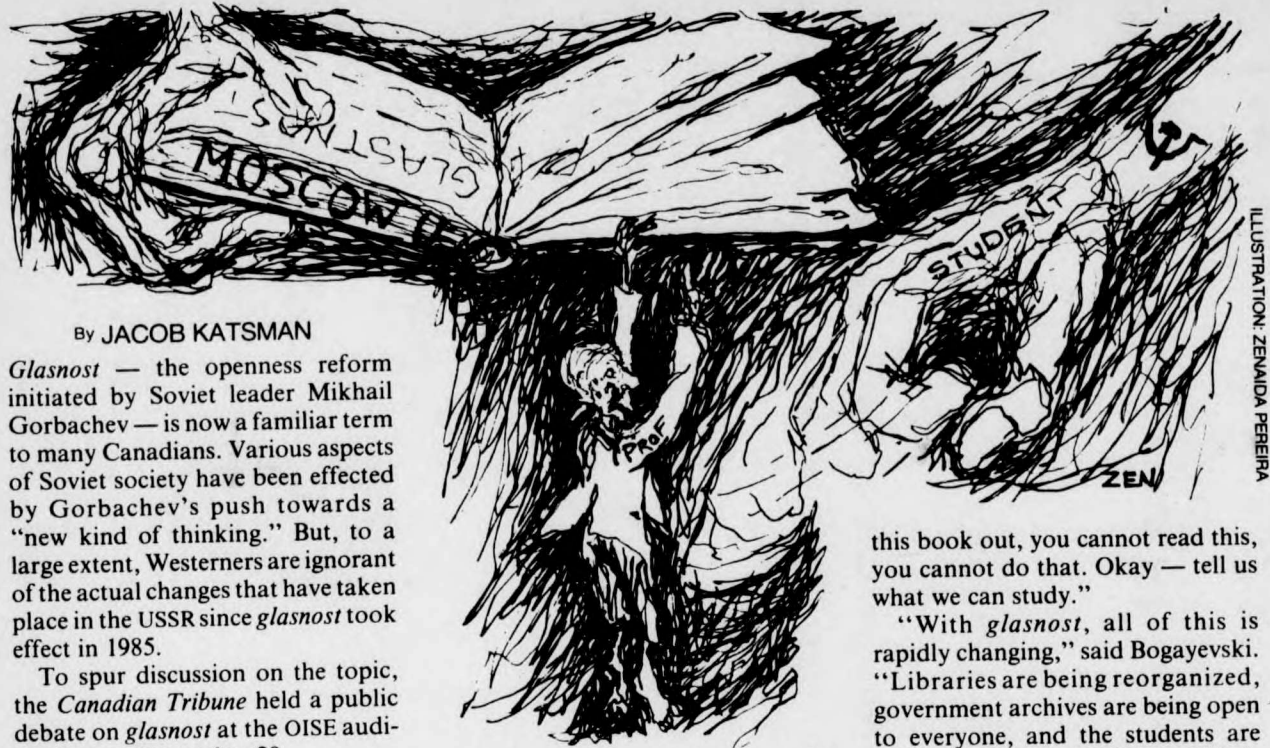


# Glasnost Opens Books



By JACOB KATSMAN

*Glasnost* — the openness reform initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev — is now a familiar term to many Canadians. Various aspects of Soviet society have been effected by Gorbachev's push towards a "new kind of thinking." But, to a large extent, Westerners are ignorant of the actual changes that have taken place in the USSR since *glasnost* took effect in 1985.

To spur discussion on the topic, the *Canadian Tribune* held a public debate on *glasnost* at the OISE auditorium on September 29.

Among the panelists were Yuri Bogayevski, a Cultural Attache from the Soviet Embassy, and Kerry McCuaig, the Canadian affairs editor of the *Canadian Tribune*. Among the many questions and comments addressed, the panel primarily dealt with the effects of *glasnost* on Soviet university students.

Bogayevski announced that the Soviets have enacted a new law which would give students the right to demonstrate, hold open debates, and to criticize the government, in addition to other rights prohibited before *glasnost*.

"I think that the old Soviet officials were afraid not to lose their high ranking positions to a younger, more enthusiastic, and better educated individuals," said Bogayevski. "In words, the Soviet leaders said: 'Youth is our future.'

"But these were only words. In deeds there was nothing done to put these statements into practice. Now, however, we have new times, and we feel that if we manage to involve our young people, we can succeed very greatly."

McCuaig, who has recently arrived from the Soviet Union, explained the significance of these changes. During her visit she spoke to many students, asking their opinions about Gorbachev and *glasnost*.

"*Glasnost* had its greatest effect on History and Sociology students," said McCuaig. "Before *glasnost*, library archives were restricted to special personnel only (an approved member of the young Communist youth organization Komsomol). And even if you were given permission, the notes you would take were subject to censorship. Usually from about 10 pages of handwritten notes before censorship, the student was able to use only one or two pages. The rest was crossed out."

She added that in the United States there are around 90,000 Sociologists, whereas in the Soviet Union, with a roughly equal population, there are only 5,000 Sociologists. This statistic was best explained by a Soviet Sociology student who McCuaig interviewed.

"We are so used to hearing No." said the student. "You cannot take

this book out, you cannot read this, you cannot do that. Okay — tell us what we can study."

"With *glasnost*, all of this is rapidly changing," said Bogayevski. "Libraries are being reorganized, government archives are being open to everyone, and the students are given their liberties." He added, this is by no means an easy process as books have to be rewritten, especially history, sociology, political science, and economic texts.

"Meanwhile, teachers have to make their own course outlines and prepare course materials. And this is a problem in itself," Bogayevski said. "The teachers have to be retrained as well; and all of them cannot be retrained at once." He added that Soviet teachers must adapt to the changes or face the possibility of losing their positions.

"If a teacher is not fulfilling a course curriculum or is not fully informed on the material that he or she is teaching, students can launch an appeal which obligates a review board to overlook the professor's qualifications," explained Bogayevski. "This process could lead to the dismissal of the professor."

Both McCuaig and Bogayevski agreed that *glasnost* has opened new doors for Soviet students, and put the future of the Soviet Union into the hands of the new generation.

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