

The developments in China are instructions about how change has been introduced in the USSR. President Gorbachev recognized early a reality which has not penetrated the leadership of China -- economic reform cannot occur without political reform. You cannot ask people to accept the sacrifices of economic reform without also giving them a say in how it will occur. President Gorbachev knew from the outset that the command system had failed. He identified the main cause of its failure -- all the levers of power were being pulled by individuals protected from public scrutiny by a veil of secrecy, reinforced by repressive laws and police practices. It was impossible for all but the bravest to challenge the system.

There were brave challenges.

We know the names of many of those heroes -- Father Svarinskas (SVAR-IN-SKAS), Father Tamkevicius (TAM-KA-VI-CHUS), Mart Niklus, Petras Grazulis, Enn Tarto, Anatoly Shcharansky (SHAR-AN-SKI), Josef Begun, Yuri Shukheyvich (SHOO-KAY-VITCH), Josep Terelya, Stepan Stepeliak, to name only a few. We worked together -- you, other Canadians, and concerned people around the world -- to secure their release from prison, from exile and even from the USSR. You kept them in the public eye before there was glasnost. Their courage contributed to the progress we are now observing as glasnost and perestroika because they showed their compatriots how to retain hope, gave them the courage to resist erosion of their cultural identity. Now Soviet authorities are acknowledging that they need the cooperation, not the passivity, of their population. To gain that cooperation, they are prepared to make concessions.

How far is the Soviet leadership prepared to go? I do not know. Perhaps they do not either. But they have already permitted, and even encouraged, expressions of sentiment which no one would have dared to hope for a couple of years ago. Fundamental change has already occurred. More can - and should - be expected.

But change should not be so rapid as to provoke a reaction undermining all the successes of the past year. The leaders of the Popular Fronts in the Baltics have demonstrated wisdom in a volatile situation, seeking a peaceful transition to independence. We hope their efforts will be crowned with success, so that Soviet authorities will gradually accept that their best interests are served by granting maximum freedoms to the people of the Baltic States. They have to be encouraged to understand this.