Among the many problems troubling the Soviet Union as it attempts reform is a problem of vision or, more precisely, the absence of a new inspiring vision of the future and of the just society that can mobilize the population. Moreover, having such a vision of the future plays a key role in the entire reform tradition in Russia and the Soviet Union. The ways a society attempts to reform itself and the difficulties it encounters in doing so are as much shaped by its past as are its current strengths, weaknesses and the very problems which need solution. Past experiences help create current assumptions about reform: how to do it, what should be done, where to look for inspiration. This certainly is true of Russia and the Soviet Union (for this discussion the two terms are nearly but not exact synonyms). Taking a brief look at the reform tradition helps us understand the current situation and is a useful corrective to the all too common tendency to analyze events as if the country were a tabula rasa on which any reforms and any path to them might be inscribed. At the same time, it is important to avoid slavish historical determinism. Rather, what we can do is look at the traditions as a broad set of values and attitudes (a political culture perhaps), which influences current reform efforts and their prospects for success. In doing so we will give special attention to the question of the role which a vision of the future and the just society plays in that tradition and in current reform efforts.

The modern Russian tradition of profound, radical reform emerged in the eighteenth century and then evolved and developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its roots are found in the efforts of Peter the Great to transform Russia, and to a remarkable degree his efforts also set many of the fundamental characteristics of a Russian radical reform tradition. This tradition was elaborated during the rest of the imperial era of Russian history (to 1917), with remarkable continuity and some new additions. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 brought to power
a group of people dedicated to a thorough-going revolution in every part of Russian life and who saw their revolution as ushering in a new era of human existence. Yet, despite important changes in society, they operated very much within Russian political culture, and their approach to radical reform had more in common with the past than they would have dreamed it could, especially after the first few years. What, then, are the main features of the Russian radical reform tradition from the time of Peter to Gorbachev, and how do they affect current reforms?

First, that the fundamental stimulus to radical reform has been the need to build the strength necessary to project Russian/Soviet military and political influence, whether as a direct result of defeat or as a result of a more general determination to remain militarily competitive in order to sustain or expand the political or military pretensions of the state. Second, the primary focus of these reforms has been economic: to create the economic base necessary to maintain the military power necessary to sustain the international ambitions and pretensions of the Russian state; for the most part other reforms flowed from and were intended to support the economic.

Third, usually it quickly became apparent that the economic-military power craved by the state required fundamental social and cultural reform as well; it was necessary to change the way the population behaved and thought. Fourth, reforms were initiated from above, by command, based on an assumption that reforming society was the right of an enlightened few, an attitude the imperial autocrats bequeathed to the revolutionary intelligentsia and thence to the Bolsheviks. A subsidiary feature of this tradition has been that the authoritarian reformer usually has sought to find or develop a constituency to support his efforts, often, however, as a way to focus criticism on his opponents and help bring them down, thereby strengthening the power of the leader rather than as a step toward opening up the system. Fifth, along with its role as an agent of change in the social and economic spheres, the government remained adamantly opposed to any political reforms that would limit its own authoritarian power or fundamentally change the political system. Sixth, throughout there was a tendency to equate reform with Westernization and to look to the West for models and direction; Westernization and modernization became synonyms to a remarkable degree, even under the Bolsheviks (although an anti-Western undercurrent has always been present as well). Seventh, a deeply rooted Russian cultural value has traditionally