

## *Part One*

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### THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION: ITS SENSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

More than eighty years have passed since the event which in our country, until recently, was generally called the Great October Socialist Revolution. Today debates about its character, content, and consequences are intensifying and often sound just as irreconcilable as the positions taken by the participants in the revolution who found themselves in opposing camps.

But then, what is surprising about that? More than two hundred years have passed since the great French revolution of the eighteenth century, but to this day that revolution inspires sharply conflicting judgments and opinions. This is all the more true of the October revolution—not only because it is closer to us in time but because, just as the French revolution shaped the entire course of the nineteenth century, the Russian revolution, whatever one might say about it, largely determined the course of the twentieth century. *And this century has proven to be a turning point for all humanity.*

A contemporary of the revolution, the celebrated American journalist and writer John Reed, called his eyewitness account of the revolution *Ten Days That Shook the World*. A contemporary of ours, the Englishman Eric Hobsbawm, a historian and sociologist whose name is no less well known than John Reed's, considers the October revolution to have been a "global constant in the [twentieth] century's history."

Both these men were right.

Today we know much more about the October revolution than did its participants, and more than the heirs of the revolution in our country were allowed to know. Glasnost and perestroika have given us the opportunity to learn many fundamental facts about the revolution which had been classified or falsified—and about the decades after it. The disclosure of the truth that was begun under glasnost—even though it caused shock and aroused protest on the part of many people, and for many different reasons—became a stimulus toward reviving the moral health of our society.

Today, incidentally, a system of secrecy is being revived—not in relation to October but toward many subsequent events, including quite recent ones. Lies and half-truths have again become an essential part of politics. As in the past, this is a symptom of the unhealthy moral character of the regime.

The policy of glasnost in the perestroika era and its continuing, unstoppable momentum allow us to look at ourselves with open eyes, providing us with new knowledge about the many-sided nature of October and its consequences, and enabling us to reflect on various aspects of post-October developments in their true dimensions and significance.

How, then, does the October revolution present itself to our view today, more than eighty years later?