Jonathan Charley talks to Andrei Gozak, one of the editors and chief designer of Arkhitektura SSSR, and Viacheslav Glazychev, vice-president of the architects union.

Gozak (left) and Glazychev.

architectural schools that hope lies.

But without a more broad based support, there is a limit to the extent that even the next generation of architects can effect change. Critical here is the question of quality. If we are to restructure the building industry complex so it has as its primary objective the needs of the consumer rather than mere fulfillment of the quantitative targets in the five-year plan.

A parliamentary architectural lobby will only be effective if public opinion outside organises against the government and that they can be mobilised towards issues of quality. Firstly to the quality of life in general, closely followed by the quality of the environment.

This includes ecological as well as architectural beauty. If this is accomplished, then progress can be made towards reform, and real pressure can be put on the local soviets, who are slowly breaking away from the big ministry stranglehold.

Moscow may continue to give guidelines as to how and where to invest in the protection of the natural environment, and production of the built environment, but it has become clear that the power to make decisions and to practically implement them should increasingly be shifted to local soviets and other local social organisations.

Similarly, the ability of architects and the construction industry to meet the cultural and climatic needs of ethnic groups is dependent on the development of real autonomy in the different republics. One of the most important things glasnost has so far given is this platform for criticism and self expression. Without it, both personal and national tensions would have continued to boil until they exploded in far worse ways than we have seen recently.

All this is taking place against a background of continuing impatience at the marginal results so far achieved by perestroika. Between 1971 and 1985, the growth in national income fell by a factor of 3.5. What has become known as the "obsolete structure of production" is now being overhauled. Nevertheless in Moscow ration cards for sugar have been introduced.

The Soviet consumer's patience wears thin when such basic commodities are unavailable. The situation becomes even more acute now that the people have the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction. For Gorbatchev this makes the slogan "people speak louder than words" increasingly poignant.