Soviet and East European Foreign Polices: A Revolution?

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"What was needed was not just a refinement of foreign policy, but its determined reshaping-...This has imparted a dynamism to Soviet foreign policy and made it possible to come forward with a whole series of major initiatives". (Gorbachev to the Special Party Conference, June 1988.)

I. Introduction

1. Previous Soviet foreign policy

At various times in the past the direction of Soviet foreign policy has been determined by five interacting factors more than any others. The 1917 idea of assisting and promoting world revolution was quickly pushed into second place by the need to defend and develop the Soviet revolutionary base, but it partly reasserted itself in the early days of the Comintern, then of the Cominform, and finally of the World Communist Conferences. The preoccupation with defence or security, greatly accentuated as a result of the Second World War, gradually took on an older Russian or even Tsarist character and merged, under Stalin and Brezhnev, into the third factor, the drive for world power or even empire. All along, the fourth factor has been the internal imperative, the pressures generated by the balance or imbalance of forces within the country. And the final factor has been the particular international situation and the threats or opportunities it has presented to the Soviet Union.

2. Gorbachev's foreign policy

To some extent Gorbachev cannot avoid being influenced by the first three factors. Certainly, however much he negotiates arms reduction and arms control with Reagan and in due course with his successor, he cannot put Soviet security at risk. On the other hand he has already stated that he is not in the business of exporting revolution and he has begun to withdraw from imperial positions. Afghanistan is the most conspicuous example so far of both trends.

Given that his accession to power changed the internal balance, some shift in external policy was probably inevitable. But this time the internal change has been dramatic. Gorbachev has revealed the near-bankruptcy of the economy

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and the accumulating malaise of politics and society. Far from being able to afford an expansive foreign policy, the Soviet Union cannot really bear the burden of its own defence. The necessary concomitant of internal *perestroika* is the reduction of military expenditure and the expansion of foreign trade, both of which demand improved relations with the West and in the Far East.

It so happens that an altering international situation has made a shift in Soviet foreign policy both possible and essential. The United States, too, has economic problems necessitating a lessening of its overseas commitments, particularly military. Western Europe would prefer to follow Japan's course of action, scaling down its confrontation with the WTO powers and concentrating on turning the EEC into a top-class technological and economic giant. So Gorbachev has an opportunity to talk peace with the West. Equally, however, if the Soviet Union is not to be dwarfed in a world in which national wealth counts for more than military strength, Gorbachev must rebuild the economy to the point where it can hold its own with the United States, the EEC, Japan—and, in due course, China—in the Atlantic, and in the Pacific.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that Gorbachev is also concerned about the future of the human race either in a nuclear was or in a so-called conventional but nonetheless destructive war. In this the Chernobyl disaster played a part. At the same time he appears to be aware that the world, including the Third World, is much less simple than his predecessors imagined. Conscious of its growing multi-polarity, he is much readier than they were to cultivate and respect others. He also appears to be genuinely anxious to find a new international structure to replace superpower hegemony and to give multi-polarity practical shape.

3. Issues covered

There is no room in a single paper to discuss Soviet foreign policy before Gorbachev. It is equally impossible to analyse the international situation at length, in particular how far Gorbachev has been influenced by changes, for example, in the United States or China.

The paper will also read as if there were no more to Soviet foreign policy than Mikhail Gorbachev himself. this is patently not the case. Gorbachev is the product and the symbol of an increasingly sophisticated society in which many individuals and interests combine and conflict in the formulation and execution of foreign as well as domestic policy. Indeed it is part of his mandate, so to speak, to destroy oligarchy in the Soviet Union by harnessing pressure groups and public opinion to counter-balance the Party elite. Many of the ideas he airs as well as of the specific proposals he puts forward have been germinating in the minds of others as well as of his own and have been the subject of many

drafts, discussions and redrafts. One of the areas most worth investigating is the change in the foreign policy-making process under Gorbachev—towards what he himself has called 'an effective constitutionally authorised mechanism for a businesslike and competent discussion of international issues'. On the other hand, apart from the restrictions of space on this occasion, the fact is that there is still a power structure in the Soviet Union and that, within it, Gorbachev is the main driving-force, for ideas and for action.

So what this paper does is explore some of his objectives as they have emerged in his own words, and some of his achievements as they have begun to make their mark. But even with these limited aims not everything can be covered. And just as Gorbachev's policies have been emerging piecemeal in a changing situation, so they will continue to develop.

II. Some Objectives

1. Gorbachev and Soviet economic recovery

Despite all his inflexibility and the resistance of those around him Brezhnev had already introduced a number of adjustments in the direction of Soviet foreign policy. In a speech at Tashkent in October 1982 he made what was the first overture to China on the path towards possible normalisation of Soviet-Chinese relations. Andropov, who succeeded him, started to take a fresh look at the tension between East and West. Yet his approach was not particularly radical; and neither he nor Chernenko, who took over from him, lived long enough to come up against the need for really far-reaching changes in foreign policy.

Gorbachev was more or less bound to continue a little way along the path of inovation and, as a younger man, he would probably have proceeded more quickly and taken greater risks than his older predecessors, irrespective of other pressures. In addition, the rapidity with which he assumed office and began to make changes in the personnel surrounding him demanded that alterations in policy should follow in order to justify his shaking up the regime. But the primary pressure on him was the almost desperate state of the Soviet economy.

It is unlikely that this came as a discovery to the new General Secretary. Even Brezhnev had shown some public inklings of concern, and Gorbachev had been a full member of the Politburo since 1980. At the recent Special Party Conference he claimed that he and his new colleagues in 1985 had not immediately realised the full gravity of the situation, although to say so in 1988 may in part be to offer an excuse for lack of progress in the past three years. But addressing the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev left his

audience in no doubt that the Soviet economy was in crisis and that everything depended on resolving it:

> "Today, the prime task of the party and the entire people is to reverse resolutely the unfavourable tendencies in the development of the economy, to impart to it due dynamism and to give scope to the initiative and creativity of the masses, to truly revolutionary change. There is no other way."

He also spelled out to his listeners that this was a matter to merely of domestic policy:

> "The acceleration of socio-economic development will enable us to contribute considerably to the consolidation of world socialism, and will raise to a higher level our co-operation with fraternal countries. It will considerably expand our capacity for economic ties with the peoples of developing countries, and with countries of the capitalist world. In other words, implementation of the policy of acceleration will have far-reaching consequences for the destiny of our Motherlnad."

This was to put it positively: to improve the economy was to strengthen the international position of the Soviet Union. But Gorbachev himself has also put it negatively. Looking back in his book *Perestroika* he recalled that

> "We first discovered a slowing economic growth. In the last fifteen years the national income growth rates had declined by more than a half and by te beginning of the eighties had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another".

In other words, what Gorbachev realised on his accession to power was that economic decline had already undermined the Soviet Union's international power, even if the reality was still obscured at home and abroad by a mixture of misinformation and propaganda. And the rot had spread beyond the Soviet frontier. As a recent article in the influential journal, *International Affairs,* put it,

> "The trend towards stagnation in socialist society necessarily had an adverse impact on the prestige of existing socialism in the eyes of working people and of progressives in capitalist and developing countries. This, in turn, created serious problems for the communist parties and other revolutionary and democratic forces of these countries and tended to reduce their prestige and influence."

What Gorbachev inherites was a CMEA and a WTO declining in substance and prestige alongside the USSR. The economic policy of the whole socialist bloc and the foreign policy based upon it could no more remain the same than in the

case of the Soviet Union itself.

2. Perestroika and Soviet foreign policy

Perestroika has become a slogan with different meanings at different times and in different contexts. Essentially it is to do with internal policy, aimed at regenerating the economy as quickly and fully as possible. The means to this end are many and are multiplying with time; the latest is a degree of political reform designed to remove official deadwood and to promote public confidence. But it is intimately connected wth external policy in several important respects. In the first place, too much is being spent on the military back-up foreign policy. Gorbachev explained it neatly in September 1986 when answering questions from the editor of the Czechoslovak Communist Party newspaper, *Rudé Pravo:*

> "As for our own economic concerns, we would like to cope with them as soon and as efficiently as possible. This is why we would welcome any opportunity to switch our funds and resources over from defence to the civilian industry, to improve the people's standard of livng."

Another recent contributor to *International Affairs* gave facts and figures for the United States to illustrate what he called the 'benefits of converting arms production'; but although he gave neither totals nor percentages for the Soviet Union, he did say that 'it would not be hard to decide on the nature and items of alternatives production, thanks to the vast scale of the *perestroika* launched in the country and the existence of a large market for many industrial goods and services needed by the population'. In his book Gorbahev himself has speculated about creating three jobs in civilian industry for every one disposed of in the military—industrial complex—not to mention saving what might be diverted the other way by a new range of space weapons.

There is a second important link between *perestroika* and foreign policy. It is a new or at least a more urgent objective of the latter to promote foreign trade in the interest of modernising the domestic economy. This has been set out in very workaday terms by a member of the Soviet Diplomatic Academy:

> "The main guidelines for the economic and social development of the USSR in the period from 1986-1990 and in the period until the year 2000 envisage significant extension of foreign economic ties which enhances the role of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its missions abroad in co-ordinating and maintaining such relations. Soviet embassies have always been engaged in such work but today general supervision on the part of ambassadors is no longer sufficient; now they are responsible for the efficiency of trade, economic, scientific and technical co-operation between the USSR and other countries and for raising its effectiveness."

This is a far cry from assisting revolutionary activities overseas or from defending military intervention in Czechoslovakia or Afghanistan. The point is simple; to wave a big stick abroad costs too much money to buy the stick, and waving it destroys the good relations that might otherwise help to earn money.

Gorbachev's own formulation goes further. "Think", he told the Central Committee on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution,

> "of the vast potential for peaceful co-existence inherent in just the Soviet Union's *perestroika*. By making it possible for us to obtain the world level in all major economic indicators, *perestroika* will enable our vast wealthy country to become involved in the world division of labour and resources in a way never known before. Its great scientific, technological and production potential will become a far more substantial component of world economic relations. This will decisively broaden and strengthen the material base of the all-embracing system of peace and international security."

Foreign policy can assist *perestroika*. But the converse is also true. The Soviet Union is in a position not merely to recover from stagnation. It can become once again a major economic power and in this way it can contribute to a new kind of security for itself and others, the security of an integrated international economy, replacing the old and unsatisfactory military balance of terror.

Inherent in this Gorbachev view is another new concept, that super-power status no longer derives from military strength but depends on the vigour of the economy. Evidence of awareness of this comes partly from references to falling behind other advanced countries. But as Gorbachev insisted to *Rudé Pravo*, if any state attempted to undermine the USSR,

> "We will act in several spheres at once, including the diplomatic, military and political spheres...But we will be working primarily in the realm of economics, by making our economy more efficient, by accelerating the speedup, and by streamlining management."

The other side of the same coin, of course, is that it is not only the Soviet Union that is lagging behind and needs to catch up but that recently the United States has also been in trouble. It was again in talking to the editor of *Rudé Pravo* that he pointed out how the US national debt had reached an 'astronomical figure'; and in his book on *Perestroika* last year he wrote of America's 'acute social and other problems'. The fact is, too, that but for the economic discomfiture of the United States, Gorbachev might not have been able to negotiate the first of his hoped-for series of arms reduction agreements advantageous to the Soviet economy.

3. Gorbachev, realism and peaceful co-existence

Addressing the 27th Party Congress Gorbachev directed his audience towards the long familiar theme of peaceful co-existence, but he have it a new urgency and a new direction:

> "In the present situation there is no alternative to co-operation and interaction between all countries. Thus, the objective—I emphasise, objective—conditions have taken shape in which confrontation between capitalism and socialism can proceed only and exclusively in forms of peaceful competition and peaceful contest."

So there was not alternative; and his policy would be to seek co-existence 'unswervingly'. But this did not mean the mixture as before. He would 'pursue a vigorous international policy', but 'stemming from the realities of the world we live in'. In other words, not only was co-existence more necessary than before; but the need for it derives from a changing international situation about which Gorbachev's Soviet Union was becoming increasingly aware and to which it would react in future in new and carefully calculated ways. As he went on,

> "What is needed is a high degree of accuracy in assessing one's own possibilities, restraint, and an exceptionally high sense of responsibilities, when decisions are made. What is wanted is firmness in upholding principles and stance, tactical flexibility, a readiness for mutually acceptable compromises, and an orientation on dialogue and mutual understanding rather than on confrontation".

Gorbachev described fairly extensively this new world upon which he had happened. Firstly, it was not one dominated by the two super-powers:

> "The world is in a process of swift changes, and it is not within anybody's power to maintain perpetual status quo in it. It consists of many dozens of countries, each having perfectly legitimate interests. All without exception face a task of fundamental significance: without neglecting social, political, and ideological differences all have to master the science and art of restraint and circumspection on the international scene, to live in a civilised manner, in other words, under conditions of civil international intercourse and co-operation".

Secondly, this realistic world was now 'much too small and fragile for wars and the policy of strength'. In short, the Soviet Union—and the United States—both had to recognise the rights of other states and the need to avoid war.

Since the Party Congress these two themes have become more insistent. this is clear from a reading of *Perestroika:*

> "What is the world we all live in like, this world of the present generation of human-kind? It is diverse, variegated, dynamic and permeated with opposing trends and acute contradictions. It is world of fundamental social shifts, of an all-embracing

> scientific and technological revolution, of worsening global problems—problems concerning ecology, national resources, etc—and of radical changes in information technology. It is a world in which unheared-of possibilties for development and progress lie side by side with abject poverty, backwardness and medievalism. It is a world in which there are vast "fields of tension"...Is there a hope for normal and just international relations, proceeding exclusively from the interests of, say, the Soviet Union or the United States, Britain or Japan? No! A balance of interest is needed".

This is no old-fashioned class analysis, no old-style Soviet self-deception. It is Gorbachev continuing to catch up with international reality. Equally,

> "Having entered the nuclear age when the energy of the atom is ued for military purposes, mankind has lost its immortality. ... If a nuclear war breaks out, every living thing will be wiped off the face of the Earth".

In the interval since the Party Congress, too, Chernobyl had made its mark. It 'mercilessly reminded us what all of us would suffer if a nuclear thunderstorm was unleashed'. What was merely plausible in 1986 was clearly demonstrable by 1987.

No politician is free of rhetoric, and most Soviet politicians in the past were propaganda-ridden. Gorbachev is a good performer in both the spoken and the written word, and he would do less than what is required of him if from time to time he did not play for effect, at home or abroad. But he has had to campaign too hard against the ill effects of deliberate deception in and by the Soviet Union to go in for excessive propaganda now, except in a tight corner. Many of his statements not only have a tangible truth to them, but they are so strong in their condemnation of previous policies that they carry immense conviction. "The time is right", Gorbachev wrote in *Perestroika,*

> "for abandoning views on foreign policy which are influenced by an imperial starting point. Neither the Soviet Union nor the United States is able to force its will on others. It is possible to suppress, compel, bribe, break or blast, but only for a certain period. From the point of view of long-term, big-time, politics, no one will be able to subordinate others".

And this was the man who then decided to withdraw from Afghanistan.

4. Cynical deceit or humane realism ?

However, it is sometimes argued that all Gorbachev says is a great deceit, that he is buying time to build up the economy and to re-arm at a higher level. Certainly he makes it quite clear that he has no intention of endangering the state. "We will never sacrifice our security interests", he told the editor of *Rudé Pravo,* "and will never agree to concessions at the expense of these

interests, even at talks". Equally, he remains a communist and uses the Marxist framework of thinking. "We have sought" he told the Special Party Confernece, "a deeper understanding of the inter-relationship between working-class interests and those of humanity as a whole, an idea built into Marxism from the outset". So far, so good; the hard-line communist image holds. But, he went on,

> "This has led us to the conclusion that common human values have a priority in our age...The new political thinking has enabled us to appreciate more fully how vitally important to international relations are the moral values that have over the centuries been evolved by nations and generalised and spelled out by humanity's great minds".

And it is this thinking that appears to be shaping his approach to several important foreign policy issues.

What might be called a humane realism characterises his attitude towards the Third World, usually analysed by his predecessors on quasi-Marxist principles though frequently dealt with on imperialist lines. "The problems facing our friends in the newly independent states", Gorbachev informed the Party Congress,

> "are not simple. The scientific and technological revolution is exercising a contradictory influence on the material conditions and consciousness of working people in the non-socialist world. All this requires the ability to do a lot of reappraising."

By the time *Perestroika* was published the reappraisal had expanded to a whole chapter which dealt with everything from disarmament and development to regional conflicts and specific countries—a 'huge and diverse world with vase interests and difficult problems', a world in which 'every nation is entitled to choose its own way of development, to dispose of its fate, its territory, and its human and natural resources'. In addtion, not only had Gorbachev moved well beyond the point where the Soviet Union claimed to be the only real friend and the natural leader of the peoples of the Third World; he was prepared to admit that 'even many capitalist states note the nonaligned movement as a major and positive factor in world politics'; and he went so far as to 'call on the US Administration to join hands with us in a search for solutions to the Third World's problems'.

Of course, it is comparatively easy for Gorbachev to philosophize about the Third World. Soviet involvement there is still relatively marginal. But in another area of particular interest it is more difficult for him to be dispassionate. The reality of Eastern Europe is that it has fallen behind Western Europe in its economic development and that it has as many social and political problems as the Soviet Union, a fact Gorbachev readily admitted at the Party

Congress:

> "Socialism sprang up and was built in countries which were far from being economically and socially advanced at that time and which differed greatly from one another in mode of life and their historical and national traditions. ... The way was neither smooth or simple. ... Nor were mistakes in politics and various subjectivist deviations avoided.... Socialism has everything it needs to place modern science and technology at the service of the people. But it would be wrong to think that the scientific and technological revolution is creating no problems for Socialist society".

But another reality has been the special relationship between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, with the latter frequently seeming to fall into the realm of Soviet domestic, not foreign policy. For this reason, Gorbachev's initial approach was cautious: 'A considerate and respectful attitude to each other's experience and the employment of this experience in practice are a huge potential of the socialist world'. In 1986, in short, Gorbachev was pressing for dramatic change in the Soviet Union, and for that reason, and for the sake of the rest of the CMEA, he had to carry te other CMEA countries with him. There might be somethings he could learn from them, for example from Hungary. But he could certainly not allow any of them, not even Hungary, to run too far ahead of his own reforms for fear of the effect inside the Soviet Union.

So Eastern Europe really had to await the publication of *Perestroika*. In this Gorbachev frankly admitted difficult Soviet-East European relations;

> "The initial phase of world socialism's rise and development is over, but the forms of relations which were established at that time have remained virtually unchanged. Furthermore, negative accretions in these relations were not examined with a sufficient degree of frankness. Meanwhile each socialist country, each socialist society, has accumulated considerable potential of its own in every field of life".

But there was to be a new beginning:

> "The entire framework of political relations between the socialist countries must be strictly based on absolute independence. This is the view held by the leaders of all fraternal countries. The independence of each Party, its sovereign right to decide the issues facing its country and its responsibilty to its nation are the unquestionable principles".

However, if this seemd to undermine the Brezhnev doctrine, the next paragraph virtually reaffirmed it;

> "We are also firmly convinced that the socialist community will be successful only if every Party and state cares for both its own and common interests, if it respects its friends and allies, heeds their interests and pays attention to the experience of

> others. Awareness of this relationship between domestic issues and the interests of world socialism is typical of the countries of the socialist community".

Of course, Soviet policy towards its East European neighbours is bound to have special characteristics. But in its revised Gorbachev version it showed fewer changes from previous practice than might have been expected. There were even signs of a tightening of the special relationship: 'What is intended is the harmonisation of the initiatives of each fraternal country with a common line in international affairs'. Yet to some extent Gorbachev softened this in a later sentence. 'A co-ordinated foreign policy of our states can be efficient only provided the contribution of each country to the common cause is duly taken into account'. This latter point was made in respect of the foreign policy discussions within the WTO. Moreover, in spite of strong references to accelerating integration in the CMEA, Gorbachev also soft-pedalled its role in Soviet-East European relations:

> "In no way does the CMEA infringe on the independence of any participating state and its sovereign right to be in charge of its own resources and capabilities and to do everything for the benefit of its people. The CMEA is not a supernational organisation. In decision-making it relies on the principle of consensus, rather than on the majority vote. The only important thing is that any country's lack of desire or interest to participate in a project should not serve as a restraint on others. Anyone who wants to participate is welcome to do so; if not, one can wait and see how the others are doing".

But perhaps the unspoken reality is the sheer difficulty in practice of allowing political freedom and achieving economic progress. In many ways the making of Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe may prove to be the real testing-ground for Gorbachev's new humane realism.

5. Gorbachev and the United Nations

It is one thing for Gorbachev to recognise that the world of the late eighties is not what it was or appeared to be to his predecessors, and in particular that it cannot be dominated by the superpowers. It is another to discover the secret of an alternative means of keeping the peace. In addition, war has been so prevalent in the twentieth century that schemes for maintaining international harmony tend to sound like cynical nonsense or, at best, pious idealism. That does not mean to say that their propagators are either cynics or idealists. In most of his political activities Gorbachev is clear-headed, even hard-headed. If he is cynical, he is obviously so only in private. But he exhibits at least a touch of idealism; if he did not, he would probably not be in the position he is now as General Secretary promoting *Perestroika*. His submission to the 27th Party

Congress had a resounding ring to it:

> "There has to be an all-embracing system of international economic security that would in equal measure protect every nation against discrimination, sanctions, and other attributes of imperialist, neo-colonialist policies. Alongside disarmament such a system can become a dependable pillar of international security in general".

In due course these sentiments came to be encapsulated in one form or another of the phrase 'a comprehensive system of international security'.

There is no law that Gorbachev must have in mind a specific form of international organisation. And it is true that his actions, as well as his words, demonstrate a rather general, inchoate interest in stimulating economic activity and reducing military establishments. But although he may be having difficulty in persuading others to follow suit, one of his rather more precise objectives appears to be to promote co-operation well beyond the circle of Eastern Europe and of friendly countries in the Third World, an intention distinguishing his foreign policy from much of his predecessors. This is illustrated by his attitude to the United Nations. In March 1986, in his address to the Party Congress, he did not mention it. A few days later, in a message to the UN Secretary General, he referred to the body as one among several 'international forums'—'a universal instrument for multilateral co-operation'. This was not altogether surprising since the UN General Assembly had regularly condemned the Soviet Union for its invasion and continuing occupation of Afghanistan. However, following Chernobyl, his attitude changed and he conceded that the UN should be 'more actively involved' in nuclear matters' and it was not long before the idea of 'a comprehensive system of international security' was being proposed to the General Assembly. By the time he came to formulate his thoughts in *Perestroika* he had moved even futher:

> "It is true that the efforts of the United Nations have not always been successful. But, in my view, this organisation is the most appropriate forum for seeking a balance of the interests of states, which is essential for the stability of the world".

In short, Gorbachev's approach to international affairs had moved so far from that, say, of Brezhnev that he was prepared to see virtue and value in the UN.

To do so may also be practical rather than idealistic—or idealistic in a practical way. Certainly the UN now has his imprimatur. To quote once more from a recent *International Affairs* article:

> "At the 42nd session of the General Assembly discussions were dominated, not by fruitless polemics and political confrontational rhetoric, but by the spirit of sober examination of arguments and positions and the search for common ground. At the same time, the forum was unequivocally striving for consensus, for unanimous

adoption of decisions....These favourable signs show that the history of both the United Nations and international relations seems to be entering a new stage about which many participants in the sessions spoke".

Of course, a critic might note that the article was enthusiastic because the Assembly voted by a majority in favour of a resolution arguing for comprehensive security: in short, the UN is fine when it goes the USSR's way. And a cynic might laugh at the expressed goal of 'ensuring *overall* security for *all* states through their joint actions in *all* spheres'. The fact remains that Gorbachev has chosen to try to build up the UN as one possible alternative to superpower dominance, as one means of giving expression to a perceived reality that the world is made up of many states all entitled to a stake in their own destiny and that of the universe.

III. Some Achievements

1. The economic balance-sheet

It is too early yet to say whether Gorbachev will be successful in regenerating the economy. He had some initial success through a combination of improved labour discipline and genuine enthusiasm, but in 1987 he achieved either nil growth or a very small percentage rise, depending on whether it is Soviet or American statistics that are accepted. Both the weather and world terms of trade have been against him, while resistance has built up among bureaucrats and managers. The population at large is uncertain and will believe in success when it sees it. On the other hand, Gorbachev undoubtedly won the seal of approval for *Perestroika* at the Special Party Conference and carried forward the process of political reform, essential if entrenched resistance to economic change is to be broken down; and he seems to have made further progress at the July plenum of the Party Central Committee. However, he has found no reservoir of energy and ambition among Soviet peasants and workers of the kind that Deng Xiaoping has been able to utilise in China to achieve dramatic increses in agricultural and industrial production. However, given a few more years, Gorbachev may work miracles.

Equally, it is not possible yet to point to a great switch of resources from military to civilian purposes. Certainly up to 5% of Soviet missile-borne nuclear weapons are to be destroyed. Equally another agreement with the United States, this time for a mutual reduction of 50% in strategic nuclear weapons, is likely to be signed within six to twelve months. There could be a breakthrough in the areas of conventional forces and of chemical weapons, and the need to match the American SDI programme is becoming less urgent as a result of technical difficulties and political controversy in the United States.

What can be said for certain is that Gorbachev's policy of negotiating arms reductions with the Americans rather than continuing the present arms race and encouraging a new one should pay increasing dividends as agreements are signed and military production lines are closed down. Or to put it another way, Gorbachev may get frustrated at the slow pace of coming to terms with the United States (though occasionally it is his own hard-liners who slow things up); but nothing has happened to discourage him from proceeding with this departure from the policy of his predecessors.

Nor has there been any dramatic up-turn in Soviet foreign trade. Every ambassador may be working overtime to persuade foreigners to buy Soviet raw materials in return for their own advanced technology or to establish joint ventures with Soviet enterprises. One third of the decisions about Soviet foreign trade have been devolved from ministries to enterprises; joint venture legislation has been passed; and preparations are being made to establish special economic zones. But there is as yet much more excitement than achievement. International trading is highly competitive. The export earning power of Soviet oil and gas has fallen, and even gold has lost its former magic. There is in additin the basic dilemma that the Soviet Union needs foreign technology to improve the quality of potential exports, but it needs actual exports to be able to buy technology in the first place. Nevertheless, Gorbachev's political survival and lively personality themselves make up for much in encouraging foreign interest. Even more the general thrust of his foreign policy is creating confidence in many parts of the world, enough to encourage him to persist in lowering tension all around the USSR.

2. The military balance-sheet

Gorbachev published *Perestroika* half-way through the summit programme, that is before he secured the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear missiles at the third summit but failed to achieve a 50% cut in long-range strategic missiles at the fourth. Writing about Soviet-American relations, he came to the conclusion that 'the change for the better, if any, has been extremely slow'. Addressing a press conference after the final summit he declared his belief that 'we stopped halfway...more could have been achieved at this meeting'. His disappointment in the middle and at the end of his series of meetings with Reagan is perfectly understandable. Yet on both occasions he recovered from his gloom. In his book he repeated an old observation that 'our countries simply cannot afford to allow matters to reach a confrontation'; and he went on to insist that 'we must learn to listen to one another, and to understand one another' since 'for all the contradictory nature of our relationships it is obvious that we can do nothing in terms of securing peace without the US, and without

us the US also will accomplish nothing'. When it came to the bit in June of this year he and the President were able to issue a communique that recorded vast areas of agreement.

Together they insisted that they now had 'the foundation for a realistic approach to the problems of strengthening stability and reducing the risk of conflict', and they reaffirmed 'their solemn conviction that a nuclear was cannot be won and must never be fought, their determination to prevent any war between the United States and the Soviet Union, whether nuclear or conventional, and their disavowal of any intentions to achieve military superiority'. They noted the many areas of agreement on strategic missiles and indicated their confidence that 'the extensive work done provides the basis for concluding the treaty on reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms which will promote strategic stability and strengthen security not only of the peoples of the USSR and the USA, but of all mankind'. They reaffirmed the importance of reaching agreement on chemical and conventional weapons. They expressed agreement on maximising human rights; and although they noted differences on regional issues, they maintained that these 'need not be an obstacle to constructive interaction'. Despite disagreement in practice concerning, for example, their approach to the Gulf War, they nevertheless emphasized 'the importance of enhancing the capacity of the United Nations and other international institutions to contribute to the resolution of regional conflicts'. And summing up the whole conference, Gorbachev was able to conclude that it 'is a great event ... the dialogue continues.'

No doubt specific agreements are better than general communiques; and understandably Gorbachev is anxious to make progress, not just to accelerate *Perestroika* but also to attain his objective within his own political lifetime. In his book he dismissed the idea of attaching importance to the political affiliation of the American government—it made 'no particular difference'. And who would have thought that he could ever have come to any terms with Reagan? So the outcome of next November's US election may not worry him. Before the Special Party Conference he may perhaps have spared a thought or two for his own future, and he must still have some concern, if not for himself, at least for his programme. So impatience at a slow international pace is to be expected. On the other hand his report to the Conference in June was quite confident. Looking forward to the turn of the century he gave it as his conviction that the world will be shaped by a 'gradual demilitarisation and humanisation of international relations' and that security will 'shift increasingly from the sphere of a correlation of military potentials into the sphere of political interaction and the strict fulfilment of international commitments'. Even allowing for the need to put on the best possible show in front of his critics, he has made

remarkable progress—and knows it.

3. Western Europe

Great problems lie ahead. Arms control talks are beset with all sorts of technical difficulties, quite apart from the asymmetry of the two sides and the vexed issue of verification. Exogenous factors can have an enormous impact, from the military application of new scientific discoveries all the way to independent Third World conflagrations. There is also the matter of Western Europe. In writing about it in *Perestroika,* Gorbachev felt he had to reassure the United States:

> "We are frequently accused of a desire to set Western Europe and the United States at loggerheads. We never had, and do not have now, any such intention whatsoever. We are far from ignoring or belittling the historic ties that exist between Western Europe and the United States. It is preposterous to interpret the Soviet Union's European line as some expression of "anti-Americanism".

Gorbachev's attitude to Western Europe was first spelt out in a speech in Prague in the spring of 1987, and then elaborated in his book in the late autumn. Despite his protestations and despite the subsequent INF agreement there is a strong military element in it, which is partly anit-American. The level of arms in Europe is too high; West Europeans must be encouraged to reduce their own forces—and to work for a reduction in the US commitment. Broadly interpreted, this is part of his policy of reducing tension in general and particularly around the Soviet perimeter. But his approach is more complex, and either strange or encouraging depending on the viewpoint:

> "We are Europeans. ... The history of Russia is an organic part of the great European history. ... Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals" is a cultural, historical entity."

What about the Soviet Union beyond the Urals? The post-war division of Europe was the fault of the West, though the economic failings of the East have hardly helped. But

> "It is high time everyone realised the simple truth that the existing barriers cannot be overcome by the West imposing its ways upon the East or vice versa. We must turn by joint efforts from confrontation and military rivalry towards peaceful co-existence and mutually beneficial co-operation. It is only via this understanding that our continent can be united."

Bygones must be bygones, and Europe is now to be united all the way to the Urals.

Making speeches and writing books can go to the head and replace reason

with passion. Gorbachev threw in references to the environment and made what he called the 'common European whole' sound like an idealist's pipe-dream. Yet he had already initiated a change of policy in offering to recognise the EEC and in proposing an EEC-CMEA agreement, which has now been concluded. This is essentially an enabling mechanism, and co-operation will develop gradually and on an EEC-to-country basis. But in enumerating various methods of intra-European co-operation there was little doubt in Gorbachev's mind about his ultimate aim:

> "The economic, scientific, and technical potential of Europe is tremendous. ... Without belittling the role and the importance of other contents and other peoples, we are talking about the unique role Europe has to play. The success of the European process could enable it to make an even bigger contribution to the progress of the rest of the world. ... No-one can replace Europe with its vast possibilities and experience either in world politics or in world development. Europe can and must play a constructive, innovative and positive role."

The idea is not original; but it is so when it is in the mind of a Soviet General Secretary. Of course, it can be interpreted as a clever means of easing out the Americans, or of rescuing the Soviet economy with West European technology and the East European economies with West European investments. But the ultimate impact on the domestic politics of the Soviet Union—not to mention on the future of its Asian territories and Far Eastern involvement—may be something that Gorbachev has not fully thought through. However, most far-seeing west Europeans have done their own thinking and majority EEC responses to his recent initiatives have been fairly positive.

4. China and the Pacific

Stalin's preoccupation was with Europe, even when America replaced Germany as the alleged threat. Khrushchev and Brezhnev showed more awareness of the importance of Asia; but Khrushchev bungled his dealings with China and Brezhnev seemed unable to think of anything more imaginative than military responses—the 1969 war with China, the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and the steady build-up of the Far Eastern command to the point where it had at its disposal one third of Soviet land forces and the largest single Soviet fleet. In one sense Gorbachev has not changed very much. He thinks of Europe before Asia, and much of his concern about Asia is really alarm at the United States position in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. His more important statements of policy concerning Asia have all been highly critical of the United States and have all advocated nuclear-free zones in the Pacific and a demilitarised Indian Ocean. This was the case not only with his book, but also with his Vladivostok speech in July 1986, his speeches and statements in India in

November of the same year, and his replies to questions put by the Indonesian newspaper *Merdeka* in July 1987. Yet there have been growing signs of a changing approach, one of them, oddly enough, the INF agreement with the United States when Gorbachev was persuaded to destory all intermediate missiles, including those positioned in the Far East.

'The Soviet Union is an Asian, as well as a European country', he wrote in *Perestroika,* 'and it wants to see that the huge Asia-Pacific region, the area where world politics will most likely focus next century, has everything it needs to improve the situation in it'. Asia is a concern of the Soviet Union, not simply Europe; and the issue in Asia is not just arms:

> "Our economy in its development is moving to Siberia and to the Far East. We are therefore genuinely interested in promoting Asia-Pacific co-operation".

To put it another way, Gorbachev's aim is to dispose of the perceived threat from the United States in Asia. But achieving this would undermine the existing Soviet position in the Far East, which is still based primarily on military strength. So a new Soviet role has to be found, an economic one; and this happens to accord in any case with the objectives of *Perestroika.* And what is reasonable for the United States is also natural for the Soviet Union:

> "We recognise clearly that the United States is a great Pacific power. Primarily because a considerable part of the country's population lives on the shores of this ocean, the Western part of America, gravitating towards this area, is playing a growing part in the country's development and is a dynamic force. Furthermore, the United States, undoubtedly has important and legitimate economic and political interests in the region."

What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander?

> "In line with the concept of our country's accelerated social and economic growth we pay special attention to the territories east of the Urals whose economic potential is several times that of the European part of the USSR. We believe that joint firms and ventures set up in collaboration with the business circles of Asia-Pacific countries could take part in tapping the wealth of these areas".

The Soviet Far East of the future will be, not a military base, but a commercial centre. Gorbachev has also been careful to indicate that:

> "We are against this region being somebody's domain. We want everybody to have genuine equality, co-operation, and security".

This could be interpreted, perhaps unkindly, to mean that, if America has a role in the Pacific, so has the Soviet Union. Rather more kindly, it can be taken as an illustration of Gorbachev's new realism. In all his pronouncements

he has enumerated most of those who have a right to a say in the future of Asia, from distant countries like Canada and Mexico to the more obvious claimants such as Japan and the powers of ASEAN. But although his whole approach is a major step forward, his thinking on individual claimants has frequently been flawed. Much of what he said in his interview with *Merdeka*, for example, was platitudinous or naive:

> "The Soviet Union and Japan could develop a serious and solid partnership which, I am convinced, would also become a significant factor of stability for the overall situation in Asia and the Pacific. Not so long ago a gleam of hope appeared in our relations...However, certain forces in Japan managed again to bring clouds which obscured the horizon".

Disagreements are seldom one-sided; but Gorbachev made no reference to the Kurile Islands. More unrealistic still was his reference to the question of the two Koreas:

> "We support the policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea aimed at a peaceful reunification of the country, and at the elimination of military tension. We also understand the desire of the people of South Korea to rid themselves of foreign troops and military bases along with nuclear weapons".

This simply represented a total unwillingness to more from an established position, an indication that, while Gorbachev has decided in principle to take a new attitude towards Asia and the Pacific, he has not yet been able to think it right through or, alternatively, he has not yet been able to overcome opposition to change.

However, since he wrote his book, he has put one piece of realistic thinking into action. he was clear that he wished to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and the withdrawal is now under way. But the reasons for this were not simply his reappraisal of international opinion and of reactions in Asia. The Soviet Union could not win the war; it was militarily expensive and increasingly unpopular at home. Gorbachev could put his generals in place and win public support by bringing to an end what he had called a bleeding wound. But there were foreign policy reasons as well, particularly his emerging wish to normalise relations with China. In his Vladivostok speech Gorbachev did not mention the three conditions for normalisation laid down by China—Soviet withdrawal from Afganistan, the reduction of Soviet forces on the Chinese frontier, and Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia—and he has maintained this silence. On the other hand, he did indicate his willingness to see movement on all three issues; and there are currently signs of a genuine shift in position even over Cambodia where his influence is least direct.

It is probably quite sensible not to mention conditions, although negotiating

about them. Equally, Gorbachev's declarations of policy concerning the United States and Western Europe have often followed, not preceded his diplomatic moves; so this may be partly true in the case of China as well. Yet Gorbachev has been slow to recognise the need for a complete re-think about China. This is not merely a matter of improving economic and cultural relations; it is a question of status. At Vladivostok his reference to China were mainly couched in terms of the two countries being neighbours, though he did refer to their being 'two major socialist nations'. By the time he published his book, China was 'a great socialist power', though his approach was still low-key: 'We invite our Chinese comrades to work together with us to develop good relations between our two countries and peoples'. This was arguably still a little patronising, not quite up to the standard of the realism Gorbachev has shown elsewhere. But maybe it is a matter of time. Practical negotiations continue. The Soviet Union needs to cut its military spending and its overseas commitments. Meanwhile, China is pressing ahead with a successful reform programme calculated to make it in due course a massive economic and political power on the Soviet Union's eastern border and virtually blocking its Pacific outlet. And although Gorbachev may not yet have made a policy-changing speech, it is undoubtedly significant that he as steadily raised the level at which discussions take place and has now put in two requests for a summit with Deng Xiaoping. He may at last recognise the necessity of treating China as at least an equal partner. A recent article in *International Affairs* gave a sympatheitc account of the Chinsese Communist Party's 13th Congress of a kind that would not have appeared a few years ago and that seems to suggest more than a touch of envy. Realism may occasionally be slow to penetrate, but Gorbachev is not the man to run away from it.

5. India, Asia and beyond

If Gorbachev inherited a difficult legacy in the case of China, it was quite the opposite in the case of India. Since the Second World War there have been moments when the Soviet Union has had occasion to be cross with India or has experienced Indian displeasure. But on balance it has been able to take comfort in Indian non-alignment and in mutually satisfactory trade, including the Indian purchase of Soviet arms. The 1971 treaty with India symbolised a very real friendship, even if it was followed by Indian criticsm of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. So whereas Gorbachev has had to recognise and deal with a serious embarrassment in China, in India he has found an opportunity which he has exploited to the full. In *Perestroika* he summed up his view that India 'enjoys major influence in the non-aligned movement and the entire world, and is a crucial factor for Asian and global peace'. But during his visit to India the

previous year he spelled out te details in a series of speeches and interviews.

In what was styled the 'Delhi declaratin on principles for a nuclear-weapon free and non-violent world' he obtained general support for the Soviet position on arms control and disarmament. But elsewhere he also managed to make the point that 'relations with India are a priority in our foreign policy' and, by way of partial explanation, that 'important sea lanes linking the East and the West of our country stretch across the Indian Ocean'. But probably the most seminal theme he developed was related to Soviet policy in Asia as a whole. Quoting the 1971 treaty, he went on to say:

> "At a time when we are discussing a search for ways of improving the international situation and strengthening the principles of peaceful co-existence of countries with different social systems, this example of co-operation in relations between states is a great asset for all of mankind. We have been co-operating beneficially for many years and we have not lost our independence nor has India lost her independence or any part of it. We have, however, gained a great deal."

And a little later he went on to cite the treaty as 'an example of how relations could be built in the entire Asian-Pacific region'. At another point, he elaborated on the principles invovled:

> "We recognise that every country has the right independently to choose and decide its destiny, political system and state structure.... And we reject any attempts to interfere in a country's affairs or internal processes....Our foreign policy in Asia relies on these principles".

This was a line of thinking that was aimed at the whole of Asia: 'We have now put life into the political dialogue with many Asian countries, with small and medium-sized countries as well'. In addition, India was not simply to act as an example: 'In this, we naturally rely on India' great contribution and on our co-operation'. In a sense, this was the whole point of Gorbachev's meeting with Rajiv Gandhi, one of the 'regular Soviet-Indian summit meetings'. Also, the Indian model and Indian support had China as a target:

> "Asia is India, China, the Soviet Union, billions of people, many nations and states... We are also making our ideas of the Asian process known to China".

It remains to be seen, however, whether Gorbachev will be able to apply the lesson of Soviet relations with India to Soviet relations with China, in short, to treat China as a true equal. If he does, then as well as Indian 'summits' there may be Chinese 'summits'. The possibility is certainly there.

While in India Gorbachev showed considerable talent in parrying difficult questions concerning Pakistan. His decision to withdraw from Afghanistan may eventually improve Soviet relations with a hitherto suspicious Pakistan. But

one of the problems of using what might be called the Indian approach to Asian affairs is that a policy of respecting everyone's independence is frequently foiled by disputes between neighbours. The ASEAN powers may like the new policy of non-interference, but they are watching closely to see how Gorbachev plays his cards in the controversy over Cambodia. Equally, most Middle East governments may welcome what amounts to a Soviet willingness to leave them to their own devices. At the same time Gorbachev has not found it easy to deal even-handedly with both Iraq and Iran, and he is currently running into difficulties in his endeavour to reopen diplomatic relations with Israel while continuing to advocate the Palestinian case. However, there is just a suggestion that the Soviet Union is beginning to gain acceptance as the honest broker in South Asia and the Middle East. And Gorbachev is being skilful enough to emphasise the importance of regional negotiations, international conference and UN peace-keeping forces in putting an end to disputes and safeguarding national identities.

Of course, Gorbachev is not superman. He may be searching for ways to withdraw from African entanglements and too distance himself from false Latin American expectations. But these are involvements further from home and of lesser importance, and they have not yet got near the top of his agenda for speeches or actions. In the interim, attacks on Western creditors and appeals for economic aid to replace arms expenditure must suffice. Much nearer home there is the more urgent issue of Eastern Europe.

IV. Eastern Europe

1. Yugoslavia and Poland

Gorbachev visited Yugoslavia in March of this year and made his first major statement on Eastern Europe since the publication of *Perestroika*. It was not a particularly difficult speech to make. Stalin had in effect forced Yugoslavia into independence some forty years before. It is a member neither of the WTO nor of the CMEA, although it is directly associated with the latter. At one stage virtually independent of the Soviet economy it has latterly developed a close commercial relationship. So it was not hard for Gorbachev to acknowledge the distinctiveness of Yugoslavia while anticipating greater co-operation:

> "The socialist system everywhere has common features....But common features do not rule out diversity. The strength of socialism lies in its variety and in its rich international experience. This is why we set great store by, and regard as a sign of maturity in relations between socialist countries, the organic blend of the independence of every party and state and a respect for one another's interests, views and experience... But to maintain the dimension and dynamics of trade, we should not

> only look for more raw material and commodity resources. The main thing is to reshape the pattern of economic relations by developing specialisation and co-operation on a wide scale, forming direct ties between enterprieses, setting up mixed-capital firms and amalgamations, and ensuring joint operations in the markets of other countries".

Here was a mutually acceptable relationship, a possible model for the rest of Eastern Europe.

However, last month, Gorbachev made a tour of Poland where his task was not so easy. Poland is a member of both the WTO and the CMEA and, whether the history considered is recent or more distant, its experience of the Soviet Unions has frequently been a rather sad one. Add to that its crucial strategic role, its parlous economic state, and its internal disunity, and the difficulty of Gorbachev approaching it realistically and humanely is all too obvious. In additon, fresh from the strains as well as the achievements of the Special Party Conference, Gorbachev could not lean too closely towards the Poles in confessing past Soviet misdeeds; so he contented himsefl and disappointed some Poles by referring only to a continued study of the 'black spots' on the past.

Yet he spoke of the need to avoid repeating previous mistakes, and advocated genuine co-operation:

> "Each party is independently searching for ways of transition to the new quality of socialism and there can be no common recipes or mechanical copying in this. On the other hand, there is an obvious similarity in what is paramount—in the very understnading of the need to renovate socilaist society".

And he went on to reject collaboration only 'at the level of parties, government and regions', and advocated instead co-operation between 'our working people'. There was a *cri de coeur* in his exposition of the new socialism as a philosophy fit for the young of both countries. And although some critics have pointed to the selected audiences applauding him, he seems to have won some degree of support, however cautious or guarded. But like the Soviet people, the Poles may eventually judge Gorbachev by his achievements rather than by his warm-hearted speeches. At the same time Soviet self-interest was never far away. 'Equality, sovereignty and concerted solution of common problems', he said, 'are becoming an indispensible norm of our relations'. But 'there is still much in Soviet-Polish relations that does not meet the needs of both sides, does not correspond to their potentialities'. At which point he went on to underscore the importance of 'the development of economic integration and the deepening of the international division of labour', mentioning in particular the CMEA efforts to establish a common market and enterprise-to-enterprise co-

operation. In short, humane sentiments are excellent, but an economic return is essential. Realism can have a very hard edge.

It is arguable that the structure and the traditions of the CMEA are inimical to integration, and that the prospects are poor for a common market on the EEC model. There is perhaps more future in joint ventures and enterprise-to-enterprise activities generally. Either way, Poland has a vital role as the largest CMEA economy outside the Soviet Union. But in considering the pros and cons of the CMEA Gorbachev seems to be calculating in more than East European terms:

> "Developing pan-European economic co-operation nowadays can give a boost not only to the individual key intersections of trading groups. The whole of Europe will stand to gain from it. We see in the future a Europe whose West and East no longer bristle with weapons trained on each other but, on the contrary, draw unprecedented benefits from exchanges of goods and values".

In other words, the Soviet link with Poland and with Eastern Europe as a whole is of value not only in itself but also as a means towards closer links with Western Europe. Gorbachev expressed the same idea politically:

> "We are for a strong socialist Poland. And not only because we want to have on our western borders a flourishing Polish state friendily disposed to us. But also because a stable development of the Polish People's Republic is of much importance both for our common security and for the whole of European politics."

One day Gorbachev might let Eastern Europe in fact go independent—if it costs too much and is no longer essential for Soviet defence. But in the meantime he values it for its own economic potential and for its economic and political advantages in a CMEA-EEC link in the wake of their recently concluded agreement.

2. The WTO and the CMEA and East European foreign policies

One of the suggestions that Gorbachev put to the Polish parliament neatly encapsulated his thinking about Europe: 'Perhaps we ought to convene a kind of Pan-European Reykjavik summit, a meeting of the leaders of all the European nations'. What he had particularly in mind was a conference on conventional disarmament. His fresh thoughts on conventional weapons and his general approach to East-West arms control talks were unanimously approved at the subsequent meeting of the WTO Political Consultative Committee. The PCC also added its stamp to the latest version of the 'common European home':

> "The states represented at the meeting proceed from the idea of jointly building an indivisible Europe of peace and co-operation, a "common European home" in which

> an atmosphere of good neighbourliness and trust would be asserted. Serving as the foundation of this process are the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act ... Also serving this aim is the establishment of official relations between the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the European Economic Community. The unchanged positions of the Warsaw Treaty members states in favour of a simultaneous disolution of military alliances were confirmed".

So what emerged at the end of Gorbachev's Polish trip was total agreement on the part of the East European states with his vision, already outlined, of the Europe of the future.

This in itself implied something of a change in East European foreign policies. The smaller WTO and CMEA members are proceeding in step with Gorbachev; and since he has changed tack, so have they. But the initiative is not one-sided. When Gorbachev mentioned to the Polish parliament 'our foreign policy ideas', he inlcuded 'other socialist countries'. The PCC communique intimated that 'note was taken at the meeting of the socialist countries' role in international development and the significance of the contribution made by each of them to the common cause of progress, stronger peace, security and cooperation'. It is not simply a matter of words. When East-West tension was at its height in the early 80s, it was a number of East European powers who tried to maintain a link, however tenuous, with their West European counterparts. Since Gorbachev took over much of the pressure for specific forms of disarmament has come from those most affected in Eastern Europe; those most likely to suffer from short-range missiles and those least able to bear the financial burden of conventional forces lie to the west of the Soviet Union itself.

Technically and practically the WTO is a military organisation. But its military effectiveness has frequently been called in question; and since its inception it has had an avowed political function, particularly to do with foreign policy. Through the PCC general secretaries and senior ministers have been able to consult together and to issue communiques in support of a common line. In the changing circumstances of the Gorbachev era this consensus can now incorporate a modicum of East European thought; and equally the East European states have authority to act on their own in pursuit of the common aim. But Romania has been a reluctant participant in WTO activities for more than two decades, and East Germany, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have all had serious disputes with the Soviet Union in their time. The Warsaw communique also recognised that the East European states, individually and collectively, have made independent peace proposals: 'Member countries...reaffirm the great importance of the implementation of their joint and individual proposals relating to Central Europe, Northern Europe, the Balkans and the zone along

the line of contact between the two alliances on the continent'.

The CMEA is also not a political body, and it has in any case three non-European members. But it was founded by Stalin largely as a means of keeping Eastern Europe apart from Western Europe and attaching it politically to the Soviet Union. It still plays this role; two-thirds of East Europe's trade is with the Soviet Union, and most of its energy comes from the same source. Yet, as already suggested, economic integration has remained a notion on paper. Romania in this case, too, gave up co-operating with its supposed partners; the Hungarians have long advocated more trade with the West in general and with the EEC in particular; and the East Germans have found themselves a discreet road into the EEC through the Federal Republic. There is still genuine interest in improving economic collaboration with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the push towards a specific agreement with the EEC came from the East European members of the CMEA, and not in the first place from the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, Gorbachev wishes closer economic collaboration with Western Europe. But mutual CMEA-EEC recognition permits individual East European countries to reach private accommodations with the EEC that may conceivably outrun Gorbachev's aims.

A paper of this length cannot deal with all the individual East European states. It would also be premature to suggest that there will be separate foreign policies on the part of any or all of these countries. It is frankly doubtful whether they will ever seriously get out of step with their Soviet neighbour. But under new Gorbachev-style management, Hungary is making a bid for greater economic freedom; Grosz has recently travelled to both the United Kingdom and the United States to look for sympathy. In diplomatic terms, Jaruzelski put his name to one international peace plan last year and could well do so to another this year or next. And the rate of official visits between East and West European statesmen has more than doubled in the past two years. There may never be an independent revolution in East European foreign policies, but there are certainly a number of changes and signs of more than a little bit of free-thinking.

Note

This paper is mainly an analysis of what Gorbachev has written or said. Where or when he wrote it or said it is for the most part obvious from the text. It therefore seems unnecessary to burden the text with detailed footnotes. The sources are as listed below. The versions chosen are in English as published or approved in Moscow. On the present occasion this makes for convenience, although the originals are available in Russian and invariably cor-

respond.

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