

CHAPTER 3

Anatoli Cherniaev : *Gorbachev's Foreign Policy: The Concept*

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S APPROACH to foreign policy was based on his political philosophy, which became widely known as "new political thinking." He professed it throughout his tenure as the leader of the Soviet Union. However, Gorbachev used this term even before he became the head of the Communist Party and the country. During a visit of Soviet officials to Great Britain in December 1984, Politburo member Gorbachev had a private talk with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. In the course of that meeting, Gorbachev first announced that "the nuclear age made new political thinking an imperative." At the time, this denoted a need for a constructive dialogue, a quest for areas of agreement, and the ability to live together in accordance with the realities of a new, rapidly changing world. Although hardly an elaborate concept, this idea was still unusual for a high-ranking Soviet statesman. It shows that Gorbachev, not yet burdened with the brunt of responsibility for his country, was already aware of the abnormal situation in the world and saw the worrisome proximity to the dangerous brink, which was the result of decades of confrontation.

It took Gorbachev several more years to conceptualize his idea about this new political thinking and make it known to the world community. It was the dominant theme of his speech at the United Nations in December of 1988 and was a philosophical underpinning of his breakthrough policy proposals. Gorbachev's speech

signified the turning point, not only in the Soviet Union's changing attitude toward the West but also in the country's new understanding of its overarching purpose in the world. There was, however, nothing inevitable about the choice to which Gorbachev publicly committed himself during that speech. The road to the UN podium had taken four hard years, during which the last leader of the Soviet Union overcame the ideological truisms of the Brezhnev era, the initial distrust of his Western partners, the growing resistance of rigid conservatives in his inner circle, and his own dogmatic Communist heritage. This chapter outlines the central principles of new political thinking and contrasts Gorbachev's outlook with that of his predecessors. The events leading to this turning point helped Gorbachev shape his ideas and, by doing so, to transform the whole world. Gorbachev's new thinking in Soviet foreign policy made possible such historic events as the unification of Germany, the democratization of Eastern Europe, and the creation of a new transatlantic partnership.

New Political Thinking: Its Essence and Origins

The following principles constitute the basis of Gorbachev's new political thinking:

- The world is becoming more interdependent. As a result, relations among the states have a great impact on their policies and on the world's development.
- Nuclear weapons and an endless conflict between man and nature, exacerbated by the scientific and technological revolutions, have threatened mankind. Therefore, humanity must strive for survival.
- Under these conditions, sharp confrontation in the form of the cold war leads to catastrophe. To prevent it, the arms race should be halted and the number of nuclear weapons should be reduced and gradually eliminated.
- International security is indivisible and can be effective only

as a project in which all states participate. Therefore, no single state can achieve security at the expense of others.

- The class approach to national and international security is unacceptable because it presumes victory of one side over the other and creates permanent tension, which might result in war.
- In the new de-ideologized Soviet foreign policy, priority should be given to basic human values, democracy, and human rights.
- National interests should not be sought at the expense of the interests of other states. International relations of the new epoch should be based on the principle of the balance of interests. Their standard source is international law, and international organizations should be responsible for their regulation.
- The concept of new political thinking rejects reliance on force, or threats of using force, in achieving foreign policy goals. Priority in solving international problems and conflicts should be given to political methods, which enable the search for wise compromises.
- Dialogue should become the permanent means of communication among state leaders, as it promotes mutual understanding and trust among countries.
- All people should have freedom to choose their way of life and their political and socioeconomic system. Thus tolerance, nonintervention in other states' internal affairs, and respect for the world's diversity should become the guiding principles of international relations.
- The moral component in domestic and foreign policy should be acknowledged and respected. This morality, in the Christian understanding of the term, is different from the meaning of morality commonly accepted in the USSR, which corresponds to Marxist-Leninist ideology and benefits communism.

The introduction of these principles to the decision-making process signified the dismantling of everything that for decades had

formed the basis of the Soviet state and society. This dismantling was an attempt to include the country in the modern world as an honest partner and an equal participant. It also signaled the Soviet Union's desire to stop playing the role of an alternate system in the world community, an antagonist with the ambitions of an ideological superpower.

All of Gorbachev's predecessors after Joseph Stalin more or less understood the imperatives for a new approach to dealing with the West. However, they were not capable of advancing a new well-grounded concept that would make some of the traditional Communist postulates obsolete. Nikita Khrushchev, during the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, declared an era of peaceful coexistence and stated that world war, despite the predictions of Leninist-Stalinist theory, was avoidable. However, he is remembered with a shoe in his hand threatening capitalists in the United Nations. He also sent missiles to Cuba and promised to "bury American capitalism." This was not mere rhetoric but was an expression of his approach to world politics.

Some of the elements in Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin's foreign policy were based on common sense. Brezhnev readily hugged Richard Nixon and signed a treaty on the limitation of strategic arms. During his rule, the Soviet Union also initiated the all-European Helsinki Process in 1975, which led to the signing of an agreement on three groups of issues ("three baskets"), one of which required the USSR to respect human rights. In other words, there was a common understanding within the Soviet leadership that in the nuclear age one should be more cautious with the class struggle on the world scale.

Nevertheless, before Gorbachev came to power, peaceful coexistence remained just "a form of the class struggle on the world arena between socialism and capitalism," as described in the 1961 program of the CPSU. It aimed at increasing Soviet military power, subjecting the whole economy to the interests of the military-industrial complex, and militarizing the societal consciousness against the enemy of imperialism. The psychology of the "fortress

under siege” preserved in public memory the “complex of 1941” to persuade the people to tolerate enormous defense expenditures, which exhausted the material and intellectual resources of the nation. The policies of the Soviet Union toward its Socialist allies, the third world, the national-liberation movements, and the international Communist movement were also subject to the goal of victory in world struggle. Gorbachev put an end to this way of thinking.

There were two motives behind Gorbachev's initiative: pragmatism and morality. They were both linked to his understanding of the Soviet national interest. His pragmatic motive was the result of objective analysis of the situation in the country and in the world. This analysis showed that the previous policy was obsolete, was damaging the Soviet people, and had brought the world to the verge of nuclear disaster.

The moral motive was an essential component of Gorbachev's actions. Both Konstantin Chernenko and Yuri Andropov knew about the critical situation in their country and saw how the Soviet position in the world had deteriorated from year to year. Nevertheless, they followed the course set by Stalin and Brezhnev. They did not feel the pain of the people or understand the national interest. They were not ashamed of their people's poverty and suffering. Why did Gorbachev feel “pain and shame” for the people and follow the call of conscience, which would not allow him to ignore their pitiful existence? The answer lies in his human qualities, in his peasant upbringing, traditionally based on common sense and simple norms of morality, and in the education he received at Moscow State University. This education brought to his lively and talented mind the first doubts about the absolute goodness of the Soviet system. Gorbachev describes this realization in his memoirs.

In short, new thinking is not just a theory in the commonly accepted sense of the word, but is a combination of political will and humanitarian ideas that have been known since Kant, Montesquieu, Tolstoy, and Solov'ev, among others. In this respect, attempts to portray the Soviet *institutchiki* from academic centers like IMEMO or ISKAN as authors of Gorbachev's politics misrepresent the

driving force of the new thinking. This concept came about as a result of Gorbachev's understanding of the necessity to reject the traditional Soviet confrontational course coupled with a moral impulse. Some of the elements of the new thinking, such as indivisibility of security or interdependence of the world were suggested by academicians only later, when Soviet society was in the process of implementing Gorbachev's political will. At the same time, it would be wrong to suggest that new thinking had at some point been born whole in Gorbachev's mind and then applied in the foreign and domestic arenas, for his ideas developed as a result of his work as a leader of the Soviet state.

The Making of New Political Thinking

Immediately after Gorbachev acceded to supreme political power in March of 1985, he emphasized the urgent need for adopting new approaches in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy. He made this clear during the very first meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU held under his chairmanship. Gorbachev argued that it was impossible to initiate far-reaching internal transformations while preserving traditional foreign policy. Rejecting the idea that confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States was foreordained, he pointed to an opportunity for improved Soviet-U.S. relations. In Gorbachev's view, only through disarmament in nuclear and other areas could the Soviet Union secure sufficient resources to rebuild the economy.

Gorbachev's initial actions indicated that he was willing to act in accordance with his new principles. He enthusiastically accepted the offer to meet with President Reagan, which was conveyed to him by Vice President Bush and Secretary of State Shultz during their visit to Moscow for Chernenko's funeral. In various public statements that preceded the meeting, including his noteworthy interview for *Time* in September of 1985, Gorbachev demonstrated a positive attitude toward the prospects of Soviet-U.S. cooperation. It was clear that he wanted to create the most favorable atmosphere

for the forthcoming meeting with President Reagan. However, a Geneva meeting on November 19–21, 1985, between the two leaders failed to change Gorbachev's ideologically biased view about Reagan's "evil" intentions. He still saw Reagan as the leader of a "hostile imperialist world." Nevertheless, there was some sort of human rapport between the two leaders that gave hope for change. It was underscored by the famous formula from the final communiqué, which stated, "The parties, being aware of a particular responsibility of the USSR and the USA in maintaining peace, announced that a nuclear war must never be unleashed for it could not be won."

In keeping with the spirit of the Geneva meeting, Gorbachev made a statement on January 15, 1986, proposing the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. The draft of the document was thoroughly scrutinized by scientists and experts from the ministries of defense and foreign affairs. However, the final statement was not taken seriously in the West, which viewed it as one more political move on the Kremlin's part. Even many Soviet officials, including several of Gorbachev's colleagues, were skeptical or even cynical about it. The new general secretary, in their view, wanted to make a show of himself and stun the world with a smashing idea. Time proved that neither of them was right. It was an effective step toward preventing a nuclear showdown at a time when the arms race was already out of control, and it led to future agreements on arms control and disarmament.

Gorbachev's vision of a nuclear-free world was still, however, bound by traditional Communist dogma, reflected in his report to the Twenty-sixth Congress of the CPSU in February 1986. His analysis of the political situation in the world was based on class conflict and the opposition between capitalism and socialism. Nevertheless, striking a note of controversy, Gorbachev introduced the idea of kinship between all parts and the interdependence of processes in today's world, a new and unusual attitude for the Soviet mentality. Such interdependence, according to Gorbachev, enabled constructive interaction between opposing social systems. Among

its chief priorities was “to stop the material preparation for a nuclear war,” to put an end to the arms race, and to work toward “general security.” Thus, Gorbachev did not allow the ideological component, still evident in his views, to dominate his thinking about foreign policy. With this speech, he started the gradual de-ideologization of Soviet foreign policy, which corresponded to the vital interests of the country. The ambiguous foreign policy of the Communist Party congress made it easier for Gorbachev to implement his reformist ideas and, in fact, it even legitimized them. That is how the first brick was put into the foundation of the new political thinking.

De-ideologization of Soviet foreign policy meant denying the Marxist-Leninist postulate about the eventual withering away of the capitalist system. It necessitated admitting the absurdity of spending almost 80 percent of the nation’s material, scientific, political, and informational resources on confrontation with the West. Finally, it made ordinary common sense a fundamental source of policymaking. At the same time, however, reform was made under the cover of Communist rhetoric and in accordance with the proper ideological ritual. This explains the initial Western disbelief about the sincerity of Gorbachev’s foreign policy initiatives. Despite Western doubts and even explicit U.S. sabotage, Gorbachev was resolute in pursuing the line that he had adopted in his statement on the elimination of nuclear weapons. The following account, made privately by Gorbachev in the spring of 1986, helps to reveal his mind-set at the time:

We have gotten no response [from the U.S.] to our proposal on the elimination of nuclear weapons, although the things we are offering could be quite feasible. We do want to achieve disarmament and we are not deceiving anyone. But what do we hear in return? As it turns out, they [the United States] now want to have more Pershings. Moreover, they are explicitly provoking us. The U.S. naval vessels near the Crimean coast, the expulsion of the Soviet staff from the UN, and the new anti-Soviet propaganda campaigns. This is how

they want to provoke and embitter the USSR. But we remain hopeful, and we are waiting.

In another private conversation, Gorbachev shared his concerns about the obstacles that hindered the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations:

The question is whether or not we should go ahead with the Geneva process. It is not only in our interests, but also in everyone's interests. This is the right time for new thinking. It is imperative, it is knocking on the door, because we have reached a point beyond which—as we keep saying—the process will go out of hand. Naturally, we are concerned with SDI, but I considered this matter and discussed it with experts: perhaps, we should stop being afraid of SDI?! They count on the fact that the USSR is afraid of SDI morally, economically, politically, and militarily. They are going ahead with it in order to wear us out.

Gorbachev repeated his views about SDI publicly during his speech in Toliatti. The most effective Soviet response to this program, in his view, would be to start the development of a system similar to SDI on a much smaller scale: “Ten percent of the SDI cost would be sufficient to render SDI ineffective.” Nevertheless, Gorbachev recognized in his speech that the Soviet Union was “being tested as to the sincerity of its peaceful intentions.” Therefore, in his view, such a Soviet defense initiative would be counterproductive for the objective of easing tensions between the USSR and the United States.

In addition to tolerating foreign provocation, Gorbachev also had to show persistence and courage in overcoming internal resistance to his reformist ideas. Introduction of new thinking in Soviet foreign policy was seriously hampered by the well-established Gromyko tradition of confrontational diplomacy. Gorbachev once raised this problem at a Politburo session:

I can see a gap between our political declarations and the actions of our negotiating teams. Once political decision is there, we must act

accordingly. Our negotiators, however, are sluggish and tied up to old approaches. This undermines all our political statements. Why is there such a gap? Most likely, it is the result of inertia. If this, however, is due to conscious obstruction we cannot work with these comrades. The world is now scrutinizing us. Unless we really change our behavior, they will accuse us of bluffing. The news reports show nothing but deadlocks. Our stubbornness discredits everything. Any bargaining should be reasonable and priority in the negotiation process should be given to the political solution.

After Shevardnadze replaced Gromyko as the minister of foreign affairs and appointed new deputies, there was no resistance or sabotage of new thinking from diplomatic circles. This was not only because diplomats sincerely accepted the new course but also because within the diplomatic environment there was a strict discipline that made instances of sabotage very rare. However, some still preserved their old behavioral manners and job habits, which were inadequate for effective implementation of the new course. As a result, there were instances of dogmatism, aggressiveness, and lack of flexibility, which Gorbachev could not tolerate. As to the military, dissatisfaction among the generals and within the Soviet defense ministry coincided with the downsizing of the military budget in 1986. However, open resistance to Gorbachev's foreign policy and public criticism of his course occurred only in 1989, when withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe was being discussed. During the first four years of perestroika, the generals maintained strict discipline in the presence of the general secretary of the Central Committee and could complain only among themselves. Real attempts of sabotage occurred only at the end of Gorbachev's rule, when his authority was already challenged. The following example illustrates this point.

Secretary of State James Baker, in his conversation with Gorbachev on March 15, 1991, raised the issue of Soviet violation of the treaty on conventional arms in Europe, which was signed at the

Paris conference of the CSCE. The problem first erupted in late October 1990. Chief Soviet negotiator Oleg Grinevsky informed from Vienna that negotiations on conventional arms were on the verge of a breakdown, which meant that the signing of the document adopted at the Paris meeting of the CSCE was also doomed. Generals in Moscow gave special orders to their representatives in the Soviet delegation, and they tied Grinevsky's hands despite his position as the head of the delegation. Gorbachev asked Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to solve the problem in two days. However, there was no progress even after three months. Shevardnadze could do nothing since he resigned soon afterward. President George Bush sent a letter to Gorbachev in which he called this episode a "central problem of our relations." Then the embassies of the main countries of the CSCE joined in discussing this episode. The issue consisted of three components, and the main component dealt with "the naval infantry." The Soviet generals argued that naval infantry and coastal defense were not ground forces, and therefore Soviet military equipment should not be accounted for under the terms of the treaty. All other participants at the Paris meeting argued that it could not be excluded from the treaty. Although the amount of armaments at stake was relatively small, the important question was: If the Soviet delegation could, at its convenience, interpret certain articles of the treaty, even after it had been signed by the country's leader, then how could they be trusted?

The problem was solved only after eight months of protracted discussions. Chief of General Staff Mikhail Moiseev went to Washington, D.C., in May of 1991 and yielded to the U.S. demands while acting as if nothing could have been achieved without his personal involvement. In reality, the officials from the general staff together with Sergei Akhromeev tried to discredit Gorbachev. This example characterizes the atmosphere in which Gorbachev had to act. He could not discount experts from the defense ministry, and they used this situation to put bureaucratic sticks into the wheels of big

politics. Although they did not succeed in reversing the treaty (and not all of them were in favor of reversal), they managed to slow the process.

Gorbachev's own initial skepticism about the U.S. imperialists started eroding even before his decisive meeting with President Reagan in Reykjavik. Through conversations with various world leaders he developed a different perspective on the objectives of the United States and of its leader. His meetings with President François Mitterrand and former President Richard Nixon in the summer of 1986 were especially important in this regard. During a lengthy conversation, President Mitterrand emphasized several times that the intentions of the U.S. military-industrial complex should be dissociated from the policies of the Reagan administration and the objectives of President Reagan. The French leader told Gorbachev that "despite his political past, Reagan is among those leaders who intuitively want to put an end to the existing status quo and in contrast to other American politicians he is not a machine, but a human being." Nixon conveyed a similar message to Gorbachev about Reagan's intentions: "I [have] know[n] President Reagan for more than thirty years now. I am firmly convinced that he has a personal stake in Soviet-American relations. He was greatly impressed with the substance of your proposals and with your personal devotion to the cause of peace between our two countries. President Reagan shares this devotion with you." The words of these two statesmen not only changed Gorbachev's perception of Reagan but also strengthened his determination to stand behind a new foreign policy course. The Reykjavik meeting was its logical continuation.

Gorbachev wanted to make this meeting serve his principal aim: to start the process of nuclear disarmament and thus remove the threat of nuclear war. On September 22, 1986, he had a meeting with the Politburo members and his assistants. This is how he presented his approach: "The first draft of our response to Reagan's letter is good for nothing. It does not meet our objective of achieving a shift in relations with the U.S. That's why I disagreed. I want

it to be presented in more dramatic terms. Whether Reagan will reciprocate or not is quite another matter. But we cannot offer Americans something they are sure to reject.”

Two weeks later, during a meeting with his assistants who were responsible for preparing the summit documents, Gorbachev further deliberated about the objectives of the summit and the means to achieve them:

Our fundamental objective is to foil the arms race. Unless we do this, the threat will certainly grow. We will be drawn into an arms race we cannot afford, and we are sure to be defeated in it because we are exhausted to the very uttermost. Therefore, the prevalent approach must be political, not arithmetic. We should negotiate on the assumption that [n]either side is going to wage war on the other. All of us—myself, the Politburo, defense and foreign ministries—should understand that [even] if our proposals might lead to weakening of U.S. security, we are bound to fail. Americans will never agree to this. So we should follow the principle of greater security for all through equal reductions in armament levels. Our proposal is to have a 50 percent reduction in all types of nuclear weapons during the first stage. As for the INF, all intermediate nuclear forces will have to be withdrawn from Europe. The Soviet Union also wants to work toward an agreement on a nuclear test ban and to prevent militarization of outer space. If these proposals fail we would still be able to show what we were ready to accept!

The Reykjavik summit did not yield the results Gorbachev had hoped for. After he bid a sad farewell to President Reagan, the failure seemed obvious. In 20 minutes, however, he astonished reporters and even members of his delegation by saying, “This is not a failure, but a breakthrough!” His audience, expecting to hear the worst, burst into applause. Gorbachev’s words were not demagoguery or sheer propaganda but reflected his genuine feelings after his conversation with Reagan. The turning point of their meeting was Reagan’s reaction to the Soviet proposal for a 50 percent reduction of all types of strategic weapons. Gorbachev’s pro-

posal was the result of his political and ideological evolution during the time he occupied the office of general secretary. If accepted, the proposal would have led to a dramatic shift in politics as usual between the two superpowers. Reagan, for his part, intuitively sensed something natural and humane in Gorbachev's unexpected initiative. The president's immediate positive response to the Soviet offer revealed the great wisdom of this outstanding statesman. Although later in the talks the U.S. negotiating team convinced Reagan that the Soviet proposal required more detailed consideration, Gorbachev was impressed with Reagan's initial reaction. Moreover, that episode convinced the Soviet leader that he would be able to cooperate successfully with the U.S. president, who had a sincere and deep-seated conviction of the need to relieve the world of the nuclear threat. It was the first time that Gorbachev perceived Reagan not as a "representative of U.S. imperialism," but as a trustworthy partner who shared similar hopes and ideas. Mutual trust between the two leaders was another touchstone of the new political thinking that was crucial in bringing the cold war to an end.

One week after Gorbachev's return from Reykjavik, in a discussion with foreign policy advisers, he gave the following analysis of the significance and results of his second meeting with the U.S. president:

During the summit we had no major difficulty in coming to an agreement on strategic weapons and intermediate nuclear forces. We can understand the president's difficulties in making the final decision on these issues and one more attempt might be needed to get over things that still divide us. But the Reykjavik experience indicated that the need for a dialogue had increased. That is why I am even more optimistic after this summit.

Gorbachev's talks with President Reagan in Reykjavik also gave him impetus to add the issue of human rights to the new political thinking. He could feel the importance of this problem for global politics not only at the summit meetings; it also was often raised

during his numerous contacts with representatives of the Western scientific and cultural elite. Gorbachev was becoming increasingly convinced that unless changes took place in this area, it was hopeless to expect significant improvement in relations with the West and progress on the issue of disarmament. As a result, the problem of human rights soon appeared on the domestic agenda as an indispensable component of perestroika.

Thus the new level of strategic interaction between the Soviet Union and the United States initiated by Gorbachev not only led to considerable improvement of the international political climate but also brought about radical political changes within the Soviet system. As Gorbachev came to power, he comprehended the urgent need for reforming the failing Soviet economy, which was overburdened by military expenditures. His groundbreaking foreign policy proposals, designed to curb the arms race and stabilize relations with the West, especially the United States, also served his aim of taking the excessive military burden off the Soviet economy. However, after four bitter decades of the cold war, the spirit of distrust toward the Soviet Union was so deep among the U.S. political elite that a breakthrough in Soviet-U.S. relations could have been achieved only if the Soviet leadership adequately addressed internal political issues. The constant focus of Reagan administration officials on the issues of human rights and political freedoms in the USSR to a certain extent facilitated the growing understanding by Gorbachev (under the influence of the mounting difficulties of economic reform) that the success of this reform demanded the wider political liberalization of Soviet society.

Glasnost helped to build momentum for the success of the new Soviet foreign policy. The Politburo agreed to single out the issue of the SS-20 missiles from the general strategic nuclear weapons package and discuss it separately. On February 28, 1987, Gorbachev announced this decision on Soviet television and proposed to "conclude urgently a separate agreement on this issue." The groundwork for the agreement was prepared in the ensuing negotiations with Secretary of State Shultz, who visited Moscow twice in

1987. His second meeting with the Soviet leader, on October 23, 1987, became a breakthrough for the real disarmament process between the two countries. First, the agreement on intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe was finalized. Second, the two sides created an unofficial and practical negotiating mechanism on the issues of arms control and disarmament. Finally, on a personal level, Shultz played an outstanding, even historic, role in changing the character of Soviet-U.S. interaction. As a result of his meetings with Gorbachev in 1987, mutual trust became the centerpiece of their relationship. Although exchanges of sarcastic remarks during the negotiation sessions were commonplace, they only facilitated political and human interaction and increased the mutual understanding between the two statesmen. The resoluteness of Gorbachev and Shultz in serving a common cause was not limited to the defense of their national interests but was aimed at benefiting the interests of the whole world.

The Soviet-U.S. agreement on short-range and medium-range missiles (INF) was signed during Gorbachev's first official visit to the United States in December of 1987. This agreement included measures that would not just halt the arms race but would lead to the substantive reduction of Soviet missile arsenals. As Gorbachev emphasized at the Politburo meeting after his return from the United States: "The signing of [the] INF Treaty was a critical point in our relationship with the Americans. Progress on this issue opened the way toward other areas of disarmament—in nuclear, chemical, and conventional weapons. It set the background for equally businesslike approaches to solving regional problems and developing . . . our bilateral ties." The numerous unofficial contacts between Gorbachev and American students, intellectuals, newsmen, the business community, and the political and cultural elite were other high points of the visit. As he acknowledged during the same Politburo meeting:

In Washington we have for the first time clearly felt the importance of [the] human factor in international politics. Initially we viewed

Reagan just as a representative of the most conservative part of the American capitalist system. After our visit to Washington we understood that . . . responsible politicians also embody purely human qualities, as well as interests and hopes of millions of common people, who elected them. In our age this has a great significance for political decision-making. . . . My visit would not have yielded any results without the state wisdom exemplified by President Reagan and Secretary Shultz in their determination to prevent a nuclear war.

Gorbachev's successful visit to the United States and the signing of the INF treaty were the first real major achievements of new thinking, and Reagan's visit to Moscow in the summer of 1988 contributed to greater openness in Soviet society. Reagan welcomed the profound changes that were taking place in the Soviet Union and was moved by the sympathetic attitude of the Soviet people. Having declared that he no longer viewed the USSR as an evil empire, the U.S. president proved that the ideological wall around the Soviet Union was temporary.

The culmination of four years of Gorbachev's energetic activities in the world arena was his speech at the United Nations General Assembly on December 7, 1988. He asked his assistants in Moscow who were preparing a draft of the speech to make it "anti-Fulton" in substance with an emphasis on demilitarization and humanization of Soviet thinking. He said, "We have to acknowledge that the Soviet Union has more troops in the center of Europe than NATO. If we continue our military presence at that level it would be hard to get support for our policies from the Western public opinion. Therefore, having one [of] our soldier[s] against every NATO soldier is an unacceptable approach."

These instructions were reflected in the final text of the speech with a public commitment to reduce unilaterally Soviet armed forces by 500,000 men, to withdraw armored divisions from the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary by 1991, and to withdraw airborne assault units from those countries. This was impressive material proof of the Soviet Union's new ap-

proach to foreign policy, which was widely reported by the international media.

Few, however, took note of another aspect of Gorbachev's speech at the United Nations. In contrast to his earlier public addresses at the party congress or on other official occasions, his UN speech did not contain the slightest trace of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Gorbachev appraised current events realistically, objectively, and without any ideological clichés. Thus his speech signified an open break with the class approach to world politics. Such an honest and unprejudiced position devoid of Communist dogmatism was a result of the gradual transformation of Gorbachev's views and ideas, partially due to the influence of his numerous contacts on the other side of the iron curtain. The philosophical ground for such cooperation became Gorbachev's new political thinking, outlined by the Soviet leader during his speech at the UN. This was his public commitment to the international community symbolizing a point of no return for the bitter antagonisms of the preceding cold war period. Gorbachev stood resolutely behind this commitment, which led to the historical transformations in Europe in the following two years.

The Achievements of New Political Thinking

The first serious trial of Gorbachev's concept of new political thinking was the problem of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. When Gorbachev came to power, Soviet armed forces had been fighting in Afghanistan for five years. As soon as Gorbachev was elected general secretary, he defined the Afghanistan problem as his top priority. On May 5, 1986, he presented to the Politburo the following assessment of the situation:

It is clear that a military victory is impossible, no matter how many troops we have there. It is clear that we have not carried out a social revolution for the Afghans—this intention was doomed to failure from the very outset and “by definition.” It is also clear that instead

of building up our “southern underbelly,” we have gotten for ourselves a zone of instability and internal conflict. We have provoked a much larger U.S. presence in the region than before. We have incited the Muslim world against ourselves and pushed Pakistan into open hostility. In a word, this is a total defeat.

The Politburo members did not question the need to relieve Russia of the Afghan burden, but this proved to be a difficult task. According to my notes, from 1985 to 1988 the Politburo discussed this issue more than two dozen times.

The Soviet leadership wanted to avoid the kind of hasty and inglorious withdrawal the Americans had experienced in Vietnam. Many third world countries also voiced their concerns about the possibility of such an outcome since they were interested in preserving the image of the USSR as a great power. Moreover, the Soviet Union wanted to leave Afghanistan with a stable political arrangement that would be more or less acceptable to the rival parties. Military analysts predicted that withdrawing troops might turn out to be more dangerous and result in far more casualties than bringing them in. For all these reasons, the Soviet armies did not withdraw from Afghanistan until four years after the beginning of perestroika.

On May 5, 1986, the Politburo decided to start with the withdrawal of five regiments from Afghanistan. At that meeting, Gorbachev said: “We were demonstrating that the USSR did not intend to stay in Afghanistan and obtain ‘an access to the warm seas.’ This indicated that our words were followed by relevant actions. And the Afghan leaders, too, must understand we were serious about what we were doing. So let them take everything in their hands. Let them take care of their country themselves.”

In February 1987, Gorbachev said at a Politburo meeting: “Do not let us exclude America from agreements on Afghanistan until we have done something really serious. We have to establish contacts with Pakistan. Perhaps, we should invite President Zia-ul-Haq to meet me in Tashkent. And even do something to ‘pay’ him.

In short, we need flexibility and speed, otherwise there will be a massacre.”

At a March 3, 1988, Politburo meeting, Gorbachev said, “We have firmly decided that we will start the withdrawal in May: 50 percent we must withdraw now, while all the remaining troops at the second stage.” Then on April 18, 1988, Gorbachev said at a Politburo meeting:

It is our moral and political duty to our people, the international community, and the Afghans to do everything in our power to alleviate negative consequences of the decision, which had been made before us and had proven to run counter [to] the principles of perestroika and new thinking. In our view the Afghan problem stopped being just our problem and a problem in our bilateral relations long ago. It is an international issue of principle, which is directly linked to the topical problems arising at a new stage in the world’s development. . . . An important element was the beginning of our cooperation with the Americans in achieving the Geneva Accords and the involvement of the United Nations as well as our regular contacts with the Indian leadership, the governments of certain Muslim states and, later, a direct contact with mujahedeens.

Gorbachev met with newspaper editors, writers, and the ideological staff of the Central Committee on May 7, 1988, and said:

We are being told that we have lost Afghanistan as if we had conquered it before. They say we have suffered fewer losses in comparison with the Great Patriotic War. This is a disgraceful line of reasoning! Every human life is valuable. Is it really an insignificant loss to have 13,000 killed and 43,000 wounded? Over one million people have lived through a nightmare. Not to mention the economy: we spent 5 billion a year. We should get out of that country from any point of view, human or economic. Just think of whom we have been fighting. The people! The solution of the problem of Afghanistan is an important and, in some degree, a key point in bringing about the new thinking. We made no mistake in this. And

this has influenced not only the settlement of other regional conflicts, but also the entire international situation.

This is the way Gorbachev characterized his actions on February 15, 1989, the day the Soviet troops completely withdrew from Afghanistan. However, even before this day, a changing Soviet attitude toward Afghanistan was perceived in the world as the decisive proof of radical changes in the entire Soviet foreign policy. It also became a symbol of the new thinking and an important factor contributing to the success of Soviet foreign policy in other areas.

From the outset, Gorbachev's greatest expectations were associated with the progress of Soviet relations with Western Europe. On the one hand, he wanted to relieve Europe of the formidable arms arsenals accumulated on its territory. On the other hand, European economic potential could be helpful in transforming the Soviet economy and making it more effective. Finally, Russia remained part of Europe historically, anthropologically, and culturally. Gorbachev's perestroika was aimed at returning Russia to the mainstream of modern civilization by assimilating European political, economic, scientific, and technological values. It also meant opening Russia to humanitarian and cultural communication with Europe. The idea of a "common European home," which Gorbachev declared during his visit to Prague in April of 1987 and vigorously promoted in his numerous contacts with Europeans, helped him develop a democratic European mentality and initiate a sharp turn in Soviet relations with Europe. He advocated the new approach to Europe during a Politburo meeting on March 26, 1988:

I might be wrong, but I think we have badly studied Europe and our knowledge of it is insufficient. . . . It is clear that nowadays no issue can be settled without Europe. We should also remember that Europe is our major partner. We need it even for our internal transformations, for perestroika. On the foreign policy level, there is no replacement for Europe. We have major interests in Europe and therefore we should not be afraid of reducing military confrontation to a minimum.

To achieve this goal, Gorbachev asked to revise the military doctrine and consider reduction of the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe. He also called for a thorough plan of Soviet relations with Western European countries and proposed to set up the Institute of Europe, a center for European studies. In addition, he wanted the leading research institutions, headed by Evgeni Primakov and Yuri (Georgi) Arbatov, to provide an objective, candid, and detailed analysis of European affairs on a quarterly basis.

Out of the three largest countries in Europe, Great Britain was traditionally viewed as being of secondary importance to the Soviet Union. As a result, throughout the cold war period, Soviet-British relations were full of animosity and tension. Paradoxically, in the second half of the 1980s Britain became the chief promoter of the Soviet Union's positive image in Western Europe. Margaret Thatcher was impressed with Gorbachev's reformist views as early as 1984, even before he became the leader of the Soviet Union. Although she never spared sharp criticism of the Communist system and the Soviet military-industrial complex in later meetings, Thatcher trusted Gorbachev's commitment to transform the country internally as well as to change its role in the world. Advocating the credibility of the Soviet new thinking, she led the way to its recognition by the Western world and opened a new arena of European politics for the Soviet leader. Gorbachev did not let Thatcher down and proved his commitment to the new philosophy of international relations by his response to the two grand challenges of the time: the "velvet revolutions" in Eastern Europe and German unification.

The logic that Gorbachev decided to apply to the countries of Eastern Europe became known in 1985 during his predecessor's funeral. He summoned the leaders of the Socialist states who attended the ceremony and promised that Moscow would stop interfering in their affairs. He also urged them to resolve their domestic problems on their own without asking Moscow's advice. This statement signified the end of the Brezhnev doctrine. Afterward, he consistently pursued that political line despite the continual

pressure from some of the hard-liners in the Politburo. After the final disintegration of the Socialist camp in 1991, several conservatives questioned Gorbachev's reasons for "giving away" Eastern Europe, and he reasonably responded: "Gave away to whom? Bulgaria to the Bulgarians, Hungary to the Hungarians, Czechoslovakia to the Czechs and Slovaks? Do we have any right to regard them as our property?"

When Gorbachev came into power, Soviet relations with the Socialist countries were dominated by false stereotypes such as "eternal friendship," "the brotherhood of nations," and "Socialist internationalism." This "brotherhood" lasted for almost half a century, but events in 1953 in Berlin, in 1956 in Hungary and Poland, and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia revealed the truth. As the gap between Western and Eastern Europe was deepening, the dissatisfaction of Eastern Europe with its dependency on the Soviet Union increased. The party *nomenklatura* in Eastern Europe were greatly interested in preserving such dependent conditions, which only hindered Eastern Europe's socioeconomic and political development and damaged peoples' national dignity.

Gorbachev understood this, as did his predecessors. The primary motive behind his decision to change the policy course toward the Socialist states was moral. It made him speak out the way he did during Chernenko's funeral. However, a pragmatic motive was soon added. The Eastern European standard of living was higher than that in the USSR owing to Western aid and cheap natural resources from the Soviet Union. The discovery of abundant oil resources in western Siberia and high oil prices on the world market permitted the Soviet Union to sell oil and other natural resources to Eastern Europe at low prices. However, when oil prices fell in the 1970s and Eastern European demand for oil increased, the situation became intolerable. It was evident that the primary victims of such practices were the Soviet people. Soviet oil was often taken to Rotterdam and sold on the international market for hard currency. Moreover, financial aid to the Socialist countries amounted to 41 billion golden rubles each year (Cuba received 27

billion annually). In November of 1986, Gorbachev openly proposed to build economic relations with the Socialist allies on a mutually beneficial basis under real market conditions. Some Eastern European leaders, especially Nicolae Ceaușescu of Romania, Erich Honecker of the GDR, and Todor Zhivkov of Bulgaria, whose personal relationship with Gorbachev had significantly worsened, were opposed to changes in the Soviet approach toward the Socialist countries as well as internal transformations in the Soviet Union.

However, there was a broadening gap between the leaders of the Socialist states, the party elite, and the *nomenklatura* on the one hand and the people and the majority of ordinary party members on the other. The growing demand for reforms subsequently led to the “velvet revolutions” of 1989. They occurred peacefully everywhere with the exception of Romania. During a flight in 1989, Gorbachev spoke half-jokingly to a small circle of aides about “Socialist friends”: “They became bored with us and we with them. Let some time pass. We may look back, think and build new relations.” He was confident that, having been liberated from Soviet-style socialism, the countries of Eastern Europe would choose their own national version of socialism. He was mistaken. However, Gorbachev viewed that as a natural and unavoidable occurrence influenced by profound economic and political changes in the world. He remained true to the principle of noninterference, which he had pledged to follow from his first day in office as general secretary.

Gorbachev’s contribution to the reunification of Germany was another manifestation of his new thinking policy. He started to deal with the German issue at the initial stage of perestroika, primarily because of the importance of Soviet economic ties with the FRG. During his numerous contacts with German politicians, such as Kohl, Brandt, Bahr, Genscher, Weizsäcker, and Strauss, Gorbachev gradually came to understand that the reunification of Germany was inevitable and even desirable. His visit to Germany in the summer of 1989 left a deep and lasting impression on him as he saw a country that had nothing in common with the one described by Soviet propaganda. The final trigger for Gorbachev’s consent

for German reunification occurred when millions of Germans living on both sides of the Berlin Wall got involved in the process of solving their national problem. Once Gorbachev became convinced that the movement in support of reunification was truly popular and democratic, he made his decision, and he intended to have it realized by peaceful means. This indicated that the principles of new thinking were firmly entrenched in Soviet foreign policy.

Amid the spiritual discord reigning throughout Russia, there are many different appraisals of Gorbachev's German policy. Some believe reunification should have been resisted. There were ways and means to achieve that, including a 500,000-strong Soviet army equipped with the best armaments. Some consider Gorbachev's failure to use these means as a betrayal of the Soviet Union's interests and its GDR friends. Some accept reunification, but think Gorbachev should have received much more in return for his agreement. A certain public figure suggested "making the Germans pay through the nose." Others maintain that Germany should not have been allowed to join NATO. Blackmailing both the Germans and the Americans could have slowed down or perhaps even stopped the process.

These are just a few of the many points of view and nuances of thinking on reunification. Yet Gorbachev could choose none of these solutions. His position on this issue, which was an integral part of the historic cause he took up in 1985, was natural for a statesman such as Gorbachev who developed his views during the era of perestroika.

Gorbachev raised international politics to a new level where morality played a meaningful part. Even if his efforts were not completely successful, they were not in vain, despite the caustic criticism he received from certain traditional cynics of diplomacy.

Most Germans, even those who lost their material and social benefits as a result of reunification, have strong positive feelings of appreciation, respect, and, in many cases, admiration for Gorbachev. But some journalists and politicians, not only German, still

ask who, besides Kohl and Genscher, was the main hero of reunification. During the annual celebration of the event in Stuttgart on October 3, 1992, which was attended by George Bush, the Chancellor, and other figures who had taken part in the reunification process, the burgomaster said at the opening ceremony, "We are being told that we, Germans, owe America a lot for Germany's reunification. No. We owe America and President Bush everything, and only them!"

Gorbachev was in Leipzig, Germany, at the time of the event, which he had not been invited to attend, in all likelihood for fear of Yeltsin's anger. When journalists asked for his opinion of the burgomaster's statement, he answered, "I think that the German people are the main heroes of reunification."

Gorbachev's simple answer reflected once more the essence of his new thinking, the greatest historical achievement of which was putting an end to the Cold War.

The Soviet-U.S. summit in Malta in December of 1989 dealt a final blow to the four-decades-long confrontation between the two superpowers. As he prepared for the summit, Gorbachev was still uncertain about the possibility of establishing a relationship based on trust with the new U.S. administration. In his conversation with Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti of Italy, the Soviet leader remarked: "Americans are still undecided. This might be the biggest difficulty of [the] current transitional period." Therefore, even the most optimistic predictions about the result of this meeting were inaccurate. President Bush came to Malta with major proposals on the critical issues for both countries. His two arms control initiatives were to abandon the binary chemical-weapons program, subject to a bilateral agreement on major cutbacks in chemical-weapons arsenals, and to give up U.S. insistence on the prohibition of mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). He promised to take steps to suspend the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, thus paving the way toward granting the Soviet Union Most Favored Nation status in trade, and the Stevenson and Byrd Amendments, which limited loans to the Soviet Union. Finally, he added that the

United States would no longer object to Soviet membership in GATT. During a friendly breakfast, a momentous discussion on economic transformations in the USSR took place in which President Bush and Secretary Baker clearly demonstrated their interest in the final success of perestroika. This discussion strengthened Gorbachev's confidence that the U.S. administration, including George Bush, James Baker, and Brent Scowcroft, had chosen to foster a positive relationship with the Soviet Union. The most impressive moment of the meeting came when President Bush and General Secretary Gorbachev rose from the negotiating table, shook hands, and stated that from then on they would no longer consider their countries to be enemies. Thus, starting with the Malta summit, the world entered a new post-cold war era.

At the all-European conference of 34 states, including the United States and Canada, held in Paris in late November 1990, Gorbachev declared, "We enter the world of different dimensions, where the human values become of equal meaning for everyone, where freedom and the value of human life should become the basis of everyone's security and the highest criteria of progress." The Charter for Europe adopted by the summit included almost all the postulates of the new thinking. The euphoria expressed in this statement revealed a passionate desire for the realization of this goal. Yet the Charter reflected the reality of the great transformation that had already taken place. Moreover, Gorbachev also mentioned the dangers still confronting Europe, such as militant nationalism and separatism, the danger of "balkanization," and the temptation to use historical and other advantages at the expense of weaker nations, among other concerns. Therefore, he paid special attention to the institutionalization of the European process and the mechanisms of international interaction. It was during this period that the NATO and Warsaw Treaty states signed an agreement in Paris on conventional armaments and armed forces in Europe.

All of these innovations reveal the gradual shaping of a radically new system of international relations for the future.

Concerted actions taken by Moscow and Washington to curb

Saddam Hussein's aggression gave graphic proof that the cold war had sunk into oblivion. I would add a proviso: the approach to the problem was common but the means employed to achieve the ultimate goal were permeated by the old thinking.

A summary of the major achievements of the new political thinking includes the following:

- breakthrough in U.S.-Soviet relations, which paved the path to disarmament and decreased the threat of nuclear war;
- formation of non-confrontational international relations; the introduction of dialogue between the leaders of various countries as the most important means of resolving global problems;
- liberation of the Eastern European states from Soviet hegemony and deep socio-political transformations in these countries under peaceful conditions;
- unification of Germany, which put an end to Yalta's division of Europe;
- the international community's response to Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, which, according to Gorbachev, was the sign of radical changes in world politics; and
- prospects for transforming Gorbachev's idea of the "European house" Mitterrand's "European confederation," or Bush's "European world order" through a political effort that Gorbachev thought transcended DeGaulle's "geographical limits from Atlantic to the Urals." In Gorbachev's view, the project would include "the Soviet Union, the United States and Canada, which are linked to [the] Old Continent by a common historical fate."

Three weeks before the August coup, Bush and Gorbachev signed the START I treaty in Moscow and discussed major parameters for a comprehensive security system. A NATO session in London mapped out a way to reform that cold-war organization, the Warsaw Pact dissolved on its own, the settlement of the Middle

East issue began, and Bush and Gorbachev co-chaired the Madrid Conference.

As for the new thinking concept, only one element was added to it during 1990–1991: orientation toward economic integration with the West without an alternative; namely, coexistence between economic systems instead of confrontation based on the previous and largely autarkic principle of class. There followed the Soviet Union's application for membership in the IMF and the World Bank and its appeal to the G7. Gorbachev participated in the London G-7 meeting in the summer of 1991.

The presence of the new thinking was markedly expressed in the international policies in the last two and one-half years of Gorbachev's tenure in office. Of course, this would have been impossible unless Western leaders, primarily the U.S. administration, had met him halfway. Bush and Baker displayed nobleness and understanding. Later, after a strange pause, they were willing to support perestroika. Thus, the logic of confrontation was replaced by the logic of interaction and cooperation.

One should in no way underestimate the contribution made to this effect by Reagan, Bush, Shultz, Baker, and a number of outstanding European statesmen of that political generation. But it was Gorbachev who took the initiative and expended boundless energy to achieve the objective. Success was attained by his uniquely conceived reform activities that led to the elimination of the totalitarian system in a superpower that had dominated world politics.

Today we would have a safer and more secure world if not for the breakup of the USSR. Foreign policy is not to blame. I do not assume that the Bush administration deliberately worked to destroy the Soviet Union, but they and those who replaced them in the White House took advantage of the USSR's breakup, and not in the best possible way from the viewpoint of the international community's interests, for they were carried away by the idea of victory in the cold war. Bush and Baker were not obliged to save the USSR at any cost. But as one who knew them well and thought

highly of their personal and political merits, I still feel some bitterness.

As Gorbachev has said, \$100 billion was quickly found to quell Hussein while \$14 billion was barely scraped up for a partner in world affairs and notice was given only a week before the recipient vanished. It is now clear that neither 100 nor 200 nor even 500 billion dollars would have saved the USSR from its historically inevitable collapse. But perhaps that collapse would not have been so destructive and so disastrous to the Russian people. Moreover, it would have been easier for the international community to deal with the antagonisms, conflicts, and crimes of the new epoch if it had not lost a powerful buttress for a new world order in the land dividing Europe and Asia. Of course, the new Soviet Union would have been a different state, but it would have been strong and democratic. Under Yeltsin, Russia was unable to play that part.

I did not idealize Gorbachev as an international politician. Under his leadership, tactical moves were not always successful and cunning. Furthermore, he sometimes neglected the CPSU tradition. In addition, he made annoying mistakes in assessing partners, exhibited unwarranted optimism, exaggerated the effects of his personal charm, and made superficial forecasts, not to mention preposterous emotional outbursts.

Generally speaking, it was difficult for Gorbachev to scrape off the crust of a Soviet-type party boss, although he had less of it than others. His strong and healthy nature guided by principles that had been instilled in childhood gave him strength. This background formed the core of his philosophy toward life and his concepts of foreign policy.

Gorbachev's foreign policy was a precondition for a new era of peace and cooperation in the world. The only way to achieve it, however, is to follow the principles of "new political thinking," Gorbachev's greatest legacy to the world's future leaders.