

## The Gorbachev revolution and the end of the Cold War

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'The Gorbachev revolution' was of decisive importance in relation to the end of the Cold War. The wording itself, though, requires some elaboration. The profound changes that occurred in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1980s were not, it goes without saying, simply the work of one man. However, reform from below, not to speak of revolution in a more conventional sense of the term, was infeasible. Not only was the system rigidly hierarchical, but it also embodied a sophisticated array of rewards for conformist behaviour and calibrated punishments for political deviance. The Communist Party was, moreover, able to devote vast resources to propagating its version of reality, especially successfully in the realm of foreign policy. Average Soviet citizens did not have the kind of personal experience which would have enabled them to call into question the story of the Soviet Union's struggle for peace in the face of provocative acts by hostile imperialist forces.

The term 'Gorbachev revolution' is apt inasmuch as changes of revolutionary dimensions – especially pluralisation of the political system – occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership and with the full weight of his authority and the power of the office of Communist Party leader behind them. The notion of revolution from above is also, though, paradoxical, for Gorbachev was by temperament a reformer rather than a revolutionary. The resolution of the paradox is to be found in Gorbachev's pursuit of revolutionary goals by evolutionary means, phraseology he frequently used himself. Indeed, his realisation that means were no less important in politics than ends marked one of his sharpest breaks with the Bolshevik legacy and decades of Communist practice. Within his first five years in power, Gorbachev evolved from Communist reformer to democratic socialist of a social democratic type. He found himself very much on the same wavelength as former German chancellor (and president of the Socialist International) Willy Brandt and Spanish prime minister Felipe González, the latter his favourite interlocutor

among all the foreign heads of government whom he met.<sup>1</sup> Although Gorbachev could hardly announce publicly that he had become a social democrat while he was still general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), he told his aide, Georgii Shakhnazarov, as early as 1989 that he felt close to social democracy.<sup>2</sup> His public pronouncements and policies increasingly reflected that personal political evolution. The programmatic statement presented to, and adopted by, the XXVIII<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU, 'Towards a Humane, Democratic Socialism' in the summer of 1990 was essentially a social democratic document.<sup>3</sup> This was even more true of the draft party programme compiled the following year.<sup>4</sup>

### The early development of Gorbachev's new thinking

However, the Cold War was over by then – over, indeed, by the end of 1989, by which time the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had become independent and non-Communist. Thus, it is Gorbachev's outlook and the change in Soviet policy up to 1989 that is the major focus of this chapter. Although Gorbachev's views both on the scale of the transformation needed by the Soviet system and on international policy became more radical over time – with 1988 the year in which he moved from being a reformer of the Soviet system to a systemic transformer – the month of December 1984, three months before he succeeded Konstantin Chernenko as Soviet leader, deserves more attention than it has received. It was then that Gorbachev began to provide solid evidence that fresh thinking might be about to emerge at the top of the Soviet system. His speech of 10 December to a conference on ideology in Moscow was a mixture of the old and the new.<sup>5</sup> It was, however, sufficiently innovative, as well as scathing, in its attack on hidebound Soviet thinking that

1 See Andrei S. Grachev, *Final Days: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), 74; and Mikhail Gorbachev, *Poniat' perestroiku ... pochemu eto vazhno seichas* [Remembering Perestroika: Why It Is Important Now] (Moscow: Alpina Biznes Buks, 2006), 103.

2 As Shakhnazarov revealed in an article in *Izvestiia*, 18 November 1991, 4.

3 See *Pravda*, 15 July 1990; and BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) SU/0821 C2/1–C2/8.

4 *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 23 July 1991; and BBC SWB, 27 July 91, C/1–C/9, esp. C/1 and C1/5–C1/6.

5 M. S. Gorbachev, *Izbrannnye rechi i stat'i* [Collected Speeches and Articles], 5 vols. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987), vol. II, 75–198. For an early discussion of this speech, see Archie Brown, 'Gorbachev: New Man in the Kremlin', *Problems of Communism*, 34, 3 (May–June 1985), 1–23.

Chernenko – on the prompting of his aides and of the editor of the Communist Party's principal theoretical journal (*Kommunist*), Richard Kosolapov, who had read with disapproval the text circulated to them in advance – telephoned Gorbachev late in the afternoon on the day before the conference was to take place, urging him to postpone the event or at least to change his speech.<sup>6</sup> Gorbachev demonstrated his growing boldness as the second secretary of the party by flatly rejecting both requests.<sup>7</sup>

Just over a week later, Gorbachev made another speech, this time to British parliamentarians, the significance of which is clear in retrospect. It was delivered on 18 December, towards the end of his first visit to Britain, during which he famously made a good impression on Margaret Thatcher. The speech itself received far less attention than the difference in style of Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, as compared with any previous high-ranking Soviet visitors. British ministers commented favourably on Gorbachev's willingness to engage in real argument, rather than simply repeat Soviet dogma, and on his pleasant manner, while observing that this was not accompanied by actual policy change. Indeed, so long as Chernenko was general secretary and, still more important, Andrei Gromyko remained foreign minister, Gorbachev was not in a position to make new foreign-policy proposals. His speech, however, was devoted to the imperative necessity of ending the Cold War, and it embodied a freshness of language and of tone.

It had become evident, Gorbachev said, that 'Cold War' was not a normal condition of international relations, since it constantly carried within itself a military threat. While calling for a return to 'détente, productive discussions and co-operation', he added: 'For that not only words are needed (although in politics they are also important).'<sup>8</sup> It was insufficient, he said, to regard war as a great misfortune. What needed to be realised was that it now threatened to destroy the human race. The most acute and urgent contemporary problem, 'now worrying all people on earth', Gorbachev said, 'is the prevention of nuclear war'. The nuclear age, he observed, 'inescapably dictates new political thinking [*novoe politicheskoe myshlenie*]'.<sup>9</sup> Among the phrases Gorbachev introduced in that speech, which were to acquire greater resonance over time, were not only 'new political thinking', but also Europe as 'our common

6 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy* [Life and Reforms], 2 vols. (Moscow: Novosti, 1995), vol. I, 254; Aleksandr Iakovlev, *Sumerki* [Twilight] (Moscow: Materik, 2003), 369; and Vadim Medvedev, *V kommande Gorbacheva: vzgliad iznutri* [In Gorbachev's Team: An Inside Look] (Moscow: Bylina, 1994), 22–23.

7 Iakovlev, *Sumerki*, 369; and Medvedev, *V Kommande Gorbacheva*, 22–23.

8 Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, II, III. 9 *Ibid.*, II.



16. Future Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev meets British prime minister Margaret Thatcher outside London in December 1984, less than three months before he became the leader of the Soviet Union. Thatcher commented that this was a man with whom she could do business.

home'.<sup>10</sup> He argued that 'the foreign policy of every state is inseparable from its internal life' and 'the basic goal' is 'to raise the material and spiritual level of the life of our people'. For that to be achieved, the Soviet Union needed peace. This, he added, 'is our principled line, not dependent on political conjuncture'.<sup>11</sup>

Gorbachev became general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on 11 March 1985, one day after the death of Chernenko. He was elected unanimously by the Politburo and the Central Committee, whose members had no notion of how radical a shift in Soviet policy they were inaugurating. Neither, for that matter, had Gorbachev. He knew he was much more of a reformer and 'new thinker' on foreign policy than were the Politburo members who had chosen him, but events were to move in unexpected directions and some of his actions and

<sup>10</sup> 'Europe', said Gorbachev, 'is our common home. A home, and not a "theatre of military operations"' (*ibid.*, 114).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

inactions (such as eschewing the use of force in Eastern Europe) had major unintended as well as intended consequences. The greatest unintended outcome of all was the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, by 1988, had consciously set about dismantling the Soviet *system*. At no time did he wish to see the disappearance of the Soviet *state*. Among the many factors that contributed to the latter's collapse was the achievement of independence, with Soviet acquiescence, by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. That raised the expectations of the most disaffected nationalities within the USSR.

### Institutional factors in policy innovation

There should be no doubt that one of Gorbachev's principal aims from the outset of his leadership was to end the Cold War. Economic reform – to raise the standard of living of citizens and to renew the dynamism of the Soviet economy – was also a major initial goal. The Soviet Union had experienced a long-term decline in the rate of economic growth from the 1950s to the early 1980s, and the need to improve economic performance was one of the main stimuli to perestroika. There were, however, institutional reasons why it was easier to alter foreign than economic policy. The number of key office holders who needed to be replaced in order to effect a major shift in foreign policy was no more than half a dozen, whereas there were scores of ministers with economic responsibilities. Half of the twenty or so departments of the Central Committee were overseeing the economy (only two were concerned with foreign policy), and there were tens of thousands of party officials and factory managers throughout the country with stakes in the existing system. Their institutional inertia could be relied upon to make the task of economic reform difficult, even if Gorbachev had begun with a clear blueprint of what was required.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the person in day-to-day charge of economic management within the Soviet-style dual executive was the chairman of the Council of Ministers rather than the party general secretary. From the autumn of 1985, that person was a Gorbachev appointee, Nikolai Ryzhkov, but it soon became plain that the scope of his reformism was essentially technocratic and nothing like as wide-ranging as was Gorbachev's.

<sup>12</sup> He lacked that, but he encouraged debate on economic reform and he was attracted both to measures of decentralisation of the Soviet economy and to making concessions to market forces.

In sharp contrast with the gargantuan task of replacing those responsible for the management of the economy, it took less than a year from the time he became Soviet leader for Gorbachev to change the entire top foreign policy-making team. This had profound consequences for the content of policy. The most important foreign policy-maker in the Soviet Union had traditionally been the general secretary, and so the fact that Gorbachev himself was playing that role was of prime significance. However, in day-to-day policy terms, Gromyko, who had been foreign minister since 1957, had gained vast authority, enhanced after he acquired Politburo membership in 1973, and still further augmented by the health problems of three successive general secretaries – Leonid Brezhnev in his later years as well as Iurii Andropov and Chernenko. Thus, Gorbachev's replacement of Gromyko by Eduard Shevardnadze in the summer of 1985 was a momentous appointment. Gromyko had been content to move to the honorific post of chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet – the formal headship of the Soviet state, which meant that he would retain his position as a senior member of the Politburo. He had assumed, however, that he would be succeeded by one of 'his' people in the Foreign Ministry. His reaction when Gorbachev first mooted the name of Eduard Shevardnadze as his successor 'was close to shock'.<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev had selected someone who owed nothing to Gromyko and who had no foreign-policy experience. Compared with Shevardnadze, Gorbachev – with his visits as the head of Soviet delegations to Canada in 1983 and Italy (for Enrico Berlinguer's funeral) and Britain in 1984 – was almost an experienced internationalist. Shevardnadze was, moreover, someone Gorbachev knew well and whom he had good reason to regard as a like-minded ally. Thus, for five years they were able to work constructively in tandem, although Gorbachev was always the senior partner.

The two other foreign-policy institutions whose heads were changed were the International Department and the Socialist Countries Department of the Central Committee. The International Department had been led by Boris Ponomarev for even longer than Gromyko had been foreign minister. He was replaced in March 1986 by Anatolii Dobrynin who had spent twenty-four years as Soviet ambassador to Washington. Dobrynin was a foreign-policy professional with none of Ponomarev's pretension to play the role of Marxist-Leninist theoretician and little or no interest in non-ruling Communist Parties or in supporting revolutionaries in the Third World, traditional preoccupations of the International Department. At the same time, Gorbachev replaced the

<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, I, 288.

Brezhnevite head of the Socialist Countries Department of the Central Committee, Konstantin Rusakov, with an ally, Vadim Medvedev. Of lesser formal rank but even more important in terms of everyday access and influence on foreign policy than Dobrynin and Medvedev was Gorbachev's new foreign-policy aide, Anatolii Cherniaev. It was in February 1986 that the open-minded and enlightened Cherniaev was appointed by Gorbachev to be his principal foreign-policy *pomoshchnik*, in succession to Aleksei Aleksandrov-Agentov who had performed that role for Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko. Cherniaev epitomised new thinking in foreign policy and was to play a significant part in the drafting of Gorbachev's speeches and books. The relationship between these two men – Cherniaev, who had fought through the Second World War, the older of them by a decade – was a close one. Gorbachev on one occasion introduced Cherniaev to Felipe González as his 'alter ego'.<sup>14</sup>

Over and above these changes, Gorbachev gave spectacularly quick promotion to Aleksandr Iakovlev. At Iakovlev's request, Gorbachev had interceded with Andropov to end his ten-year spell as Soviet ambassador to Canada, enabling him to return to Moscow as director of the major international relations institute, IMEMO. Gorbachev and Iakovlev had established a close rapport during Gorbachev's 1983 visit to Canada and had spoken frankly about what they thought had gone wrong in the Soviet Union. In the two years Iakovlev held the IMEMO directorship, 1983–85, he was an informal adviser of Gorbachev (drawing, naturally, on the expertise of his institute) and was a member of the group that accompanied him to Britain in 1984. Although Iakovlev was not even a candidate member of the Central Committee in 1985 – and thus, in formal terms barely in the top five hundred people in the Soviet pecking order – by the summer of 1987, he was one of the five most powerful Soviet politicians, a full member of the Politburo, and a secretary of the Central Committee. That accelerated promotion he owed entirely to Gorbachev. In the earliest years of perestroika, Iakovlev's main responsibility was not for foreign policy, but he was a staunch 'new thinker'. From 1988, his foreign-policy role was institutionalised; he became the secretary of the Central Committee overseeing international affairs.

Gorbachev also made changes at the top of the Ministry of Defence which strengthened his role, and that of Shevardnadze, in arms-control negotiations. When a young West German, Matthias Rust, succeeded in breaching Soviet air defences by flying his light aircraft into Moscow and landing just off Red

<sup>14</sup> Grachev, *Final Days*, 185.



17. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev with two of his closest colleagues, Politburo member Aleksandr Iakovlev, the key ideological defender of reform (left), and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (right). Gorbachev made effective use of his power of appointment in the foreign-policy sphere.

Square, Gorbachev used the opportunity to berate the military leadership and to dismiss, among others, Minister of Defence Sergei Sokolov. He appointed in his place General Dmitrii Iazov, who, eventually, at the time of the August 1991 coup, turned against Gorbachev, but until then was relatively deferential. As Dobrynin noted: 'Gorbachev made perfect use of the military's state of confusion and its badly damaged prestige . . . Yazov was far more obedient to Gorbachev than Sokolov, and thus Gorbachev accomplished a quiet coup. The new defense minister knew little about disarmament talks, and had nothing to do with them. With Yazov as defense minister, Shevardnadze felt much more at ease during the talks. Opposition by the military became more moderate.'<sup>15</sup>

### Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War

There were good reasons for change in Soviet foreign policy by the mid-1980s. The Soviet Union had seriously strained relations with the United States,

<sup>15</sup> Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York: Random House, 1995), 625–26.



China, and Western Europe. Its relations with Japan continued to be icy-cool, and though East European party leaderships and governments were generally friendly and obedient, goodwill towards the Soviet Union was conspicuously lacking among the populations of several of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, most notably Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. In addition, on the eve of perestroika, slow economic growth meant that Soviet living standards had virtually ceased to improve. Yet the country was remarkably stable in 1985. The dissident movement, which had never amounted to a tide of discontent, had been reduced to a trickle. There were no riots, large-scale strikes, or other manifestations of popular discontent. Nor was there any hint of disagreement within the Politburo (not even from Gorbachev, who had no desire to fall from the ladder he had climbed to the penultimate rung) when Gromyko and Minister of Defence Dmitrii Ustinov responded to what they perceived as a heightened Western threat in traditional ways. These included advocacy of greater ideological vigilance, still more military spending, and a 'peace offensive' aimed at winning sympathy in the West without making any significant change in Soviet policy. At a Politburo meeting on 31 May 1983 – not long after President Ronald Reagan's launch of his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and his use of the phrase 'evil empire' with reference to the Soviet bloc – the only additional responses which the Soviet leadership could add to the usual list were to propose holding a joint meeting with the Soviet Union's East European allies to co-ordinate their response to greater American bellicosity, to seek further rapprochement with China, and to engage Japan in joint economic development, possibly including a new flexibility on the issue of the disputed Kurile islands.<sup>16</sup> Little progress was, in fact, made at that time with either of the Asian countries, especially the latter. Minister of Defence Ustinov, at the same meeting, said that everything should continue as before in the Soviet defence field and that all the missiles that had been planned should be delivered. It was agreed that the Soviet Union should intensify its propaganda both internationally and domestically to counter 'anti-Soviet fabrications' emanating from the Reagan administration.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to Gorbachev's general secretaryship, Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe had remained unquestioned, as had the wisdom of the Soviet military

16 'Zasedanie Politbiuro TsK KPSS, 31 maia 1983 goda', Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), *fond* 89, Reel L.1003, *opis* 42, File 53, esp. 3–4 and 6. Japan and the Soviet Union disputed the sovereignty of the southernmost Kurile Islands, islands Soviet forces had occupied at the end of the Second World War.

17 *Ibid.*

intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. That Gorbachev's attitude on both these questions was different emerged from the moment he succeeded Chernenko. He was less interested in Eastern than in Western Europe, and was determined that there should be no more Soviet invasions – as of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 – which, among other undesirable consequences, would sully his efforts to secure a qualitative improvement in East–West relations. As early as his meetings with the East European Communist leaders at Chernenko's funeral, Gorbachev told them that in the future their relations should be based on equality and that, in effect the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty was at an end.<sup>18</sup> The leaders of the other European Communist states, Gorbachev observes, 'did not understand this very well and even did not believe it'.<sup>19</sup> Some of them, apart from doubting Gorbachev's sincerity, had no interest in giving credence to his assurance, for Soviet armed might was the ultimate guarantee of their retaining power. In particular, they did not wish to sow any doubts in the minds of their own citizenry regarding Soviet willingness, as a last resort, to intervene to defend 'socialism'. It was, after all, the belief that limited sovereignty was a fact of life, as had been amply demonstrated to the Hungarians and Czechs, which moderated the political aspirations of citizens in Central and Eastern Europe. Gorbachev, however, followed up his informal remarks to his East European counterparts in March 1985 with a memorandum to the Politburo in June 1986 and statements at a meeting with the leaders of other European Communist states a few months later which more formally established the need for the relationships among 'socialist' countries to be voluntary and based on equality.<sup>20</sup>

Three years after he came to power, Gorbachev appeared to go further on the issue of Soviet hegemony over other states. In his major speech to the Nineteenth Conference of the CPSU in the summer of 1988, he emphasised each country's right to choose its political and economic system. That point attracted somewhat more attention when he repeated it in his UN speech in December of the same year. Even then, as US secretary of state George Shultz

18 For a detailed analysis of the subsequent dramatic change in Eastern Europe, see Jacques Lévesque's chapter in this volume.

19 Gorbachev, *Poniat' perestroiku*, 70. 'In essence', said Gorbachev in a 1999 interview, what he told the East European leaders on 12 March 1985 was 'the establishment of the end of the "Brezhnev doctrine"'. See Hoover Institution and Gorbachev Foundation Interview Project on Cold War, interview of 22 March 1999 with Mikhail Gorbachev.

20 For Gorbachev's memorandum to the Politburo, see 'O nekotorykh aktual'nykh voprosakh sotrudnichestva s sotstranami, 26 iunია 1986 g.', Volkogonov Collection, National Security Archive (NSA), R10049. The meeting of leaders of the member states of Comecon was held in Moscow on 10–11 November 1986.

later observed, the press was captivated by the 'hard news' of the Soviet armed forces being cut by half a million men, including substantial troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe. The media, he noted, largely missed the 'philosophical' content of Gorbachev's speech, 'and if anybody declared the end of the Cold War, he did in that speech'.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Gorbachev had endorsed many of these points of principle, including 'the right of every state to political and economic independence', as long ago as the Delhi Declaration which he had co-signed with Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi (a like-minded leader, with whom he enjoyed cordial relations and frank discussions) in December 1986.<sup>22</sup> That, however, came at a time when there was still Western scepticism about the correlation between Gorbachev's words and deeds, and the document had nothing like as much impact in North America, Western Europe, or, most pertinently, Eastern Europe as had his December 1988 UN speech. Within the twelve months that followed the latter, the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe put this statement of principle to the test and found that Soviet actions or, more precisely, inaction – restraint and eschewal of coercive action in response to demands for independence – corresponded with Gorbachev's words.

### Afghanistan and the end of the Cold War

While Gorbachev's report to the Nineteenth Party Conference reflected the further development of his views and those of his allies in the Soviet leadership, he showed willingness from the outset to break with previous Soviet foreign policy, even though some of the changes were revealed only to the Soviet leadership and not, initially, to the outside world. In addition to the changing relationship with Eastern Europe, it is worth noting that as early as 1985 Gorbachev was determined to get Soviet troops out of Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup> Accompanied by Gromyko, Gorbachev met the general secretary of the ruling party and president of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan, Babrak Karmal, who was in Moscow for Chernenko's funeral, just three days after

21 George Shultz, speaking at a Princeton University conference in February 1993, quoted by Pavel Palachenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997), 370.

22 See Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, II, 107–16.

23 In his 1999 interview for the Hoover Institution/Gorbachev Foundation Interview Project on the Cold War, Gorbachev said: 'Already in the first days [of his general secretaryship] there was recognition of the necessity of ending the war in Afghanistan.' See also Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991), 26.

he became general secretary. Gorbachev began the Kremlin meeting by thanking Karmal for the respect the Afghan leadership had shown for the memory of Chernenko, and went on to say that 'in the future the Afghan comrades may fully count on our support and solidarity'.<sup>24</sup> Scarcely any sooner, however, than Karmal had expressed his thanks for that assurance, Gorbachev went on: 'You remember, of course, Lenin's idea that the criterion of the vitality of any revolution is its ability to defend itself. You, Comrade Karmal, naturally, understand . . . that Soviet forces are not able to remain in Afghanistan for ever.'<sup>25</sup>

Gorbachev took only half a year before going beyond the *not* 'for ever' to putting a provisional timetable for Soviet withdrawal to Karmal, telling him that the Afghans had better learn how to defend themselves by the following summer (that of 1986). Persisting with a theme he had broached in March, Gorbachev also advised the Afghan leadership to lean on the 'traditional authorities' and to broaden the base of the regime. Karmal, Gorbachev told the Soviet Politburo, had been 'dumbfounded' to learn that the end of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan was imminent. However, Gorbachev concluded this October 1985 Politburo discussion by saying: 'With or without Karmal we will follow this line firmly, which must in a minimally short amount of time lead to our withdrawal from Afghanistan.'<sup>26</sup>

Getting Soviet troops out of Afghanistan took substantially longer than Gorbachev wanted. There were a number of reasons for that. The Soviet military were reluctant to give the appearance of having lost the war, with a concomitant loss of face. Shevardnadze at times also dragged his feet, being reluctant to abandon the Soviet Union's Afghan allies, whereas Gorbachev was more concerned with the death toll among Soviet conscripts and with removing the obstacle which Afghanistan represented to better East–West relations. Another reason why it was as late as February 1989 when the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan is that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze found the United States nowhere near as accommodating as they wished when they tried to secure American help in establishing a regime in Kabul which would not be dominated by Islamist extremists. Additionally, the Soviet withdrawal

24 'Zapis' besedy tov. Gorbacheva M.S.s General'nym sekretarem TsK NDPA, Predsedatelem Revoliutsionnogo soveta DRA B. Karmalem, Kreml' 14 marta 1985 g.', Russian and East European Archives Documents Database (READD) Collection, NSA, R10066, 1.

25 *Ibid.*, 2.

26 Anatoly S. Chernyaev Diary 1985, NSA website, [www.gwu.edu/~nsarhiv](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarhiv), entry for 17 October 1985.

from Afghanistan took longer than it should have done, Cherniaev has suggested, because the issue was 'still seen primarily in terms of "global confrontation" and only secondarily in light of the "new thinking"'.<sup>27</sup> There was also the problem which afflicts all leaders who embark on an unwinnable war of explaining why so many deaths had been caused to no avail. Gorbachev, having played no part in the decision to invade Afghanistan and having been privately opposed to it, could have used that as an escape route. However, addressing the Politburo in early 1987, and acknowledging that it would be possible to 'get out of Afghanistan fast' and blame everything on 'the former leadership', he went on:

We have to think about our country's authority, about all the people who've fought in this war. How could we justify ourselves before our people if, after we leave, there followed a real slaughter and then the establishment of a base hostile to the Soviet Union? They'd say you forgot about those who suffered for this cause, about the state's authority! We'd only embitter everyone by abandoning our duty after losing so many people.<sup>28</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that Gorbachev was seeking an international settlement, one which would neither convey the impression of an unseemly Soviet retreat nor produce an outcome that would leave Afghanistan in the hands of people far more hostile to the Soviet Union than the country had been before its traditional rulers were overthrown.

### The 'new thinking' and common security

A notable milestone in the development of new thinking on security issues was an international conference, held in Moscow in February 1987, called 'The Forum for a Nuclear-Free World and the Survival of Humankind'. Although Andrei Sakharov, the prominent dissident and physicist, described the event as 'staged primarily for propaganda purposes', the forum marked his return to public life – indeed, his entry into it more fully than in the past.<sup>29</sup> Following a telephone call from Gorbachev in December 1986 to tell him he was now free to return from his exile in Gorkii (Nizhniy Novgorod), Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, had arrived back in Moscow later that month. Notwithstanding his scepticism about the motivation for holding the conference, Sakharov

27 Anatoly S. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, transl. and ed. by Robert English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2000), 90.

28 *Ibid.*, 106.

29 Andrei Sakharov, *Moscow and Beyond 1986 to 1989* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 15.

welcomed his invitation as a participant, since 'after many years of isolation', this was his 'first opportunity to present [his] views before a large audience'.<sup>30</sup>

The conference was more important than Sakharov surmised. He openly dissociated himself from the position which the Soviet leadership had adopted at the Reykjavik conference whereby insistence that the United States stop its attempt to develop a defensive missile system – Reagan's SDI – was made part of a package. Without concessions from Reagan on SDI, the deep cuts in nuclear arsenals on which both Gorbachev and Reagan had agreed at Reykjavik had not taken place. Other Soviet speakers at the forum stuck to the official line, but Sakharov, addressing the forum, said that any anti-ballistic missile system, including SDI, was doomed to failure. It would be 'expensive and ineffective'.<sup>31</sup> As Sakharov notes: 'Two weeks after the Forum, the USSR renounced the package principle for intermediate range missiles, and soon thereafter proposed the elimination of shorter-range missiles.'<sup>32</sup> That is not to say that Sakharov's opinion and this decision were an example of cause and effect. Cherniaev, even before the Reykjavik summit, had urged Gorbachev not to make deep reductions in nuclear weapons 'conditional on a space agreement'.<sup>33</sup> However, Sakharov's dismissive view of the viability of a defensive missile system, given his eminence as a physicist and his role in the development of Soviet nuclear weapons, could only be helpful to those of Gorbachev's advisers who thought that the linkage with SDI should be dropped.

In Gorbachev's own speech to the forum on 16 February 1987, there was much more than met the eye of most observers. An exception was Joel Hellman, the unnamed principal author of an insightful analysis of Gorbachev's speech and of some of the roots of his 'new thinking' more generally.<sup>34</sup> Distinguishing Gorbachev's reflections and pronouncements from those of previous Soviet leaders, Hellman noted that Gorbachev used 'apocalyptic terms more characteristic of the language of the anti-nuclear movement than of traditional Soviet perceptions of nuclear arms'.<sup>35</sup> In contrast with 'Brezhnev's and Chernenko's unabashed pride in the achievement of nuclear parity', Gorbachev spoke of 'nuclear suicide', 'the point-of-no-return',

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.    <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.    <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> 'Textual Analysis of General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's Speech to the Forum "For a Nuclear-Free World, For the Survival of Mankind", Moscow, February 16, 1987', prepared by the Staff of the American Committee on US-Soviet Relations (manuscript).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

and the real danger that 'life itself on Earth [might] perish'.<sup>36</sup> He also endorsed a trend in international relations (which no previous Soviet leader had discerned or supported) 'away from competition and rivalry towards "interdependence" and "unity"'.<sup>37</sup>

A minority of Soviet scholars, and a still smaller minority of enlightened officials, had since the 1970s been developing ideas on foreign policy which deviated from Soviet orthodoxy and emphasised global interdependence. These discussions were little noticed outside the USSR and, even when they were, usually deemed a matter of purely 'academic' interest, rather than of potential consequence. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Within strict limits, the advice of specialists such as the directors of two major international relations institutes, Nikolai Inozemtsev of IMEMO and Georgii Arbatov of the Institute of the United States and Canada, modified Soviet policy even in the Brezhnev years in a more pro-détente direction. The real breakthrough, however, occurred in 1985 when, as Robert English puts it, the 'new thinking' came to power.<sup>38</sup>

Many of the premature Soviet 'new thinkers', who were able to develop still more radical ideas when a political leader receptive to innovative thought suddenly appeared in the Kremlin, had been influenced by their reading of Western writings – including the literature of the peace movement, of 'Eurocommunists', and of social democrats – and by their travels abroad. Precisely because they had privileged access to Western political and social scientific analysis and some direct contact with their foreign counterparts, it was the *institutchiki* and *mezhdunarodniki* (specialists in research institutes and international relations specialists – two overlapping categories) who contributed substantially more to the new thinking which came to power with the accession of Gorbachev than the dissidents. Sakharov was a partial exception to that generalisation, but in the absence of civil society in the Soviet Union before perestroika, heterodox thinking in official institutions, including the International Department of the Central Committee and a number of research institutes (especially IMEMO, the Institute of the United States and Canada, and Oleg Bogomolov's Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System), was much more influential than the *samizdat* and *tamizdat* writing of dissidents.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* The quotations are from Gorbachev's 16 February 1987 speech, the full text of which is published in Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, IV, 376–92.

<sup>37</sup> 'Textual Analysis', 2.

<sup>38</sup> 'The New Thinking Comes to Power' is the title of the penultimate chapter of English's excellent study of the development of fresh thinking within the Soviet Union. See Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 193–228.

Matthew Evangelista has notably drawn attention to the significance of certain transnational organisations, such as the Pugwash movement, which brought scientists from East and West together.<sup>39</sup> The former head of the Soviet Space Research Institute, Roald Sagdeev, noted in his memoirs: 'Throughout the most difficult periods of confrontation – the ups and downs of the Cold War – the Pugwash meetings remained the only reliable channel for important arms control discussions between the Soviet and American blocs.'<sup>40</sup> Evangelista points out that the very expression 'new thinking' appeared in the founding document of the Pugwash movement, 'drafted by Bertrand Russell and endorsed by Albert Einstein in 1955'.<sup>41</sup> (Shevardnadze refers to this document in his 1991 memoirs.<sup>42</sup>) Both Evangelista and English note the significance also of the Palme Commission – the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, headed by Olof Palme, the former Swedish prime minister – which included among its members the German social democrat Egon Bahr and Cyrus Vance, the former US secretary of state.<sup>43</sup> The Soviet representative on the Palme Commission, Georgii Arbatov, has written that it 'became an important aspect of my life and exerted a great influence on my understanding of politics and international relations'.<sup>44</sup> He found himself having to argue and find common ground with 'people who were unusually perceptive and original thinkers'. The most significant of the notions they came up with, Arbatov concludes, was 'the idea of "common security", the essence of which was that we cannot guarantee our own security at the expense of someone else's, but only on the basis of mutual interests'.<sup>45</sup> That was to become one of the tenets of the new thinking on foreign policy of the Gorbachev era.

### Informal transnational influences

Many of the transnational influences that contributed to the fundamental ideational change in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 1980s

39 Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999). See also Evangelista's chapter in this volume.

40 Roald Sagdeev, *The Making of a Soviet Scientist: My Adventures in Nuclear Fusion and Space from Stalin to Star Wars* (New York: Wiley, 1994), 64–65.

41 Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, 3. 42 Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 46.

43 See Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, esp. 160–62 and 185–86; and English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, esp. 168–69.

44 Georgi Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 311.

45 *Ibid.*



occurred outside formal organisations. At one level, there were the trips abroad of specialists in the research institutes and, at a still more significant level, those of senior officials in the International and Socialist Countries Departments of the Central Committee, among them two future influential advisers of Gorbachev – Cherniaev, who from 1970 until 1986 was a deputy head of the former, and Georgii Shakhnazarov, who from 1972 until 1988 was a deputy head of the latter. For both of them, seeing Western countries for themselves and interacting with foreign politicians and social scientists were important. Both also were members of the ‘Prague group’, people who had worked on the *World Marxist Review* (*Problemy mira i sotsializma* in its Russian version) and had interacted with West European and Latin American as well as East European Communist intellectuals while producing that journal of the international Communist movement. All these experiences played a part in the evolution of their political thinking.

Especially important was the unusually wide experience of the Western world of Aleksandr Iakovlev, whose speedy promotion by Gorbachev was noted earlier. Iakovlev had spent a year in New York at the end of the 1950s as a graduate exchange student at Columbia University without being at all won over to the American way of life. His ten years in Canada, however – from 1973 to 1983 – were a period in which he was able to compare at leisure the vastly greater economic efficiency and political liberty of the country to which he was ambassador with the economy and polity of Brezhnev’s Soviet Union. The standard of comparison he now had with which to judge the Soviet system made him much more critical of it, although, like Gorbachev, in 1985, he still believed that it was reformable.

The most important examples of transnational influences for the conceptual revolution and policy transformation that occurred in the Soviet Union during perestroika were those on Gorbachev. That follows from the strictly hierarchical nature of the system and the power and authority that accrued to the general secretaryship. Gorbachev had made short visits to the Netherlands, Belgium, West Germany, France, and Italy during the 1970s. Holidays in France and Italy were especially important in leading him to question the discrepancy between Soviet propaganda concerning the capitalist world and West European realities. Gorbachev wrote in his memoirs that, after seeing the functioning of civil society and of the political system in these countries, his ‘a priori faith in the advantages of socialist over bourgeois democracy was shaken’.<sup>46</sup> He was led to ask himself: ‘Why do we live worse than in other developed

<sup>46</sup> Gorbachev, *Zhizn’ i reformy*, I, 169.

countries?’<sup>47</sup> More important still were the visits he made, which have already been touched on, when he was a Politburo member but not yet general secretary, to Canada in 1983, to Italy in June 1984, and to Britain in December of the same year. The Italian visit as head of the Soviet delegation for the funeral of Enrico Berlinguer made a strong impression on Gorbachev. He found it remarkable that the Italian president, Alessandro Pertini, was present at the funeral and bowed his head before the coffin of the leader of the Italian Communist Party. ‘All this’, Gorbachev wrote, ‘was a manifestation of a way of thinking not characteristic for us and of a different political culture.’<sup>48</sup>

‘The Gorbachev revolution’ had roots both in Soviet society, most significantly within a critically thinking part of the political elite who found themselves empowered when Gorbachev was elevated to the general secretaryship, and in a broad range of transnational influences. The latter were a consequence of the new possibilities in the post-Stalin period for learning about the outside world and about ways of thinking other than those which had received the imprimatur of the Soviet censorship. In that connection, it is worth adding that for senior members of the Soviet *nomenklatura*, such as Central Committee members (whose ranks Gorbachev joined in 1971), there was the possibility of ordering Russian translations of foreign political literature, printed in minuscule editions and available only to the politically privileged. A majority of regional party secretaries had no interest in taking advantage of this, but both Gorbachev and his wife were voracious readers and a steady stream of such literature made its way from Moscow to Stavropol in the period before he moved to the capital as a secretary of the Central Committee in 1978. His reading included the works of Eurocommunists (among them the three-volume history of the USSR by the Italian, Giuseppe Boffa) as well as the writings of leading social democratic politicians such as Willy Brandt and François Mitterrand.<sup>49</sup>

### Changing Soviet–US relations

Much policy was made, of course, in interaction with foreign partners during the perestroika period, especially with the United States (and with the Federal Republic of Germany over German unification). But to reduce international influences on the Soviet leadership to the policies of the Reagan

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev: On Perestroika, the Prague Spring, and the Crossroads of Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 49–50.

administration, or even to see them as the main determinant of Moscow's foreign policy during this period, would be grossly misleading. The views of Gorbachev, together with those of key allies whom he promoted speedily to influential positions, had already undergone an important evolution in the direction of what Gorbachev as early as 1984 was calling 'new political thinking'. There was a logical connection between Gorbachev's desire to end the Cold War, an important element in his thinking from the moment he became general secretary, and the subsequent dramatic decision of the Soviet leadership to allow the countries of Eastern Europe to acquire their independence and discard their Communist regimes in the course of 1989. This brought the Cold War, in the sense of military rivalry between two blocs, to an end. The Cold War, as a clash of systems, also ended in 1989, for the changes within the Soviet political system by then – the development of political pluralism, freedom of speech, and contested elections – meant that it was no longer meaningful to call even the Soviet Union Communist. The leading role of the Communist Party was in the process of being dismantled and 'democratic centralism' had been thrown to the winds, with party members, adhering to radically different political agendas, competing against one another in elections for the new legislature.

The Soviet leadership was responding to the positions Reagan had staked out, just as Washington was having to respond to Gorbachev's diplomatic initiatives.<sup>50</sup> At the first summit meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan in Geneva in 1985, no breakthroughs occurred. At the second – in Reykjavik in 1986 – when both leaders came close to agreeing to ban nuclear weapons, a spectacular change of policy on both sides was thwarted by the stumbling block of SDI. When the Politburo agreed at a meeting on 28 February 1987 to decouple SDI from the issue of removing intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe,<sup>51</sup> it was possible for Reagan and Gorbachev to sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on 8 December of that year, the second day of their Washington summit. Reagan had particular reason to regard this as a success, because it incorporated his 'zero option' of the early 1980s, dismissed out of hand by the Soviet leadership then, involving the removal of Soviet missiles already deployed as well as the non-deployment or removal of Pershing and cruise missiles. The treaty infuriated many in the

50 See Beth A. Fischer's chapter in this volume.

51 A. Cherniaev (ed.), *V Politbiuro TsK KPSS ... Po zapisiam Anatoliia Cherniaeva, Vadima Medvedeva, Georgiia Shakhnazarova (1985–1991)* [Inside the Politburo: From the Notes of Anatolii Cherniaev, Vadim Medvedev, and Georgii Shakhnazarov (1985–1991)] (Moscow: Alpina, 2006), 151–52.

Soviet military because, as Jack Matlock (the US ambassador to Moscow at the time) observed, the Soviet Union not only 'agreed to eliminate many more weapons than the United States did', but also included 'the SS-23 (called the "Oka" in Russian) among the missiles to be eliminated'.<sup>52</sup> The Soviet military held that the Oka had a range of only 400 kilometres and should not, therefore, be covered by the treaty. For the sake of getting an agreement, however, Gorbachev was willing to accept the American view that its range could be 500 kilometres or more.<sup>53</sup>

The treaty was, however, not so much a victory for the United States as a victory for those on both sides of the Cold War divide who wished to lower tension and move from mere arms control to significant steps of disarmament. It had its hard-line opponents in Washington as well as in Moscow. Those in the United States were more publicly vocal, for in 1987 (as distinct from 1990–91) open opposition within the Soviet Union to the general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU was still ruled out. Paradoxically, old institutional norms protected the new thinking from old thinkers. In the United States, two former secretaries of state – Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger – as well as Senators Bob Dole, Dan Quayle, and Jesse Helms were among the prominent conservative opponents of the INF Treaty.<sup>54</sup> Some of the original supporters of the zero option had endorsed it because they were confident that the Soviet Union would never admit that the deployment of SS-20 missiles had been a mistake. For these spurious advocates of the elimination of intermediate-range missiles from European soil, the zero option, as Matlock puts it, 'was useful only so long as the Soviet Union rejected it'.<sup>55</sup>

The final summit meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan was in Moscow from 29 May to 2 June 1988. Although stronger on symbolism than substance, it provided evidence for citizens on both sides of the Atlantic that a qualitative change for the better had taken place in the relations between the two major Cold War rivals. For Soviet citizens, this was an especially salient issue, since they had experienced a devastating war in their homeland, and their fear of war in the decades since then had been profound. Reagan's recognition of how much had changed in the Soviet Union was highly significant. When he was asked by a reporter in Moscow whether he still believed that the Soviet Union

52 Jack F. Matlock, Jr, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 274.

53 *Ibid.*

54 George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 1007–08; and Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 275.

55 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 275.

was an 'evil empire', he responded, 'No, I was talking about another time, another era.' This answer reverberated around the world.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast, President George H. W. Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft showed an excess of caution about how much the Soviet Union had altered. Bush's initial ambivalence stemmed, in part, no doubt, from his lack of credibility among conservatives, whose support Reagan had cultivated for decades. Nevertheless, when Bush and Gorbachev finally had their first summit in Malta in late 1989, Bush decided they shared 'a lot of common ground'.<sup>57</sup> For the first time in the history of such meetings, the general secretary of the CPSU and the president of the United States ended a summit with a joint press conference. It followed talks which Bush characterised as having 'shown a friendly openness between us and a genuine willingness to listen to each other's proposals'.<sup>58</sup> The dexterous press spokesman of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gennadii Gerasimov, was able to announce: 'We buried the Cold War at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea.'<sup>59</sup>

### The Gorbachev revolution in perspective

The funeral of the Cold War was a victory for the West in the sense that democratic political systems had proved more attractive to the citizens of Communist Europe than their own political regimes, and market economies had turned out to be more efficient than Soviet-style command economies. That is not at all the same thing as endorsing the popular oversimplification that it was the pressure of the Reagan administration or American military superiority that left the Soviet leadership with no option but to concede defeat. The policy that Gorbachev pursued was, in fact, one that aroused vast misgivings, and later scathing criticism, from a majority of officials within the Soviet party-state, not to speak of representatives of the military-industrial complex. The Soviet Union had held on to what it saw as its legitimate gains from the Second World War (in Central and Eastern Europe) during decades in which the preponderance of military power favoured the United States much more than it did by the 1980s. It was, after all, only in the early 1970s that the Soviet Union reached a rough parity with the United States in military strength.

56 Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (London: Little, Brown, 1993), 9.

57 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 173.

58 *Ibid.* 59 Beschloss and Talbott, *At the Highest Levels*, 165.

While Gorbachev eventually enjoyed good personal relations with both Reagan and Bush, he was ideationally more comfortable with European social democratic statesmen, such as Brandt (although by the perestroika period he was no longer German chancellor) and González. George Shultz's recollections are the best foreign-policy memoirs by a major American political actor of the 1980s, but they exaggerate the extent to which Gorbachev was responding to US tutelage. The sources of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' were diverse, with American official circles but a part, and by no means the major part, of them. That both Reagan and Gorbachev shared a horror of nuclear weapons brought them close to far-reaching agreements in Reykjavik in 1986 and to the successful signing of the INF Treaty in 1987. Their otherwise extremely different world-views intersected in a desire to rid the world of the nuclear threat, but they had reached those positions entirely independently and under very different influences.

The changes that made up 'the Gorbachev revolution' had many sources, but what made them possible to implement was an interdependent mixture of ideas, leadership, and institutional power. For Gorbachev, and for a number of those he chose to be his advisers and close associates, seeing the outside world for himself (and they for themselves) was very important. That also, however, is a point about *their* mindsets, their intellectual and political dispositions. Travel is said to broaden the mind, but over many years Andrei Gromyko was a living refutation of the notion that this automatically occurs. While it would be naïve to portray the United States as a non-ideological, purely pragmatic international actor and the Soviet Union as the one ideological superpower, there is no doubt that the USSR had the more systematically ideocratic regime. It possessed a body of doctrine, Marxism-Leninism, which, while not unchanging, seemed impregnable to fundamental challenge until Gorbachev undermined it from within. He rejected the essentials of Leninism while continuing to express his respect for Lenin.<sup>60</sup> Given the extent to which Lenin had been deified in the Soviet Union, that may have been the only way to end the ideological hegemony of Leninism, although Gorbachev, projecting much of his own reformism on to Lenin, continued to cite him not only for prudential reasons. If, though, we are to speak of the evolution of Gorbachev's views stopping at a particular destination, that destination would be social democracy, a merging of the liberal and socialist traditions.

60 Archie Brown (ed.), *The Demise of Marxism-Leninism in Russia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 284–94 on 'Gorbachev, Lenin, and Leninism'.

Ideas were crucially important in the transformation of the Soviet system and of Soviet foreign policy, but ideas on their own were not enough. Throughout the post-Stalin period there were people in the USSR with radically unorthodox ideas, but until the second half of the 1980s that did not get them very far (unless 'far' includes the labour camps of Siberia). In a Communist system, to a much greater extent than under conditions of political pluralism, ideas needed institutional bearers. In this strictly hierarchical society, more power resided in the general secretaryship of the Central Committee than anywhere else. The Cold War ended when it did because of the confluence of events that brought a leader with a mindset different from that of every other member of Brezhnev's, Andropov's, and Chernenko's Politburo to the locus of greatest institutional power within the system. Having reached that position, and drawing upon ideas which were not necessarily novel in a universal sense, but which were path-breakingly new in the Soviet context, Gorbachev was able to inaugurate a conceptual revolution as well as systemic change, both domestically and internationally.