

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mikhail Gorbachev has made the call for "new thinking" the central theme in his pronouncements on international politics. But what is the significance of this development? Are we witnessing the beginning of a historic reappraisal of the central tenets of Marxism-Leninism or just a skillful public relations campaign? Since we cannot evaluate the "new thinking" without a sound understanding of the old, this study attempts to answer these questions through an analysis of the development of Marxist-Leninist doctrine pertaining to East-West relations as it has evolved from Lenin's day to the present.

The major conclusions of this study, some of which challenge widely held views, are as follows: (1) Lenin, who was primarily a political activist rather than a theorist, did not bequeath his successors a well-developed theory of East-West relations. His perspectives on international relations embodied contradictory elements, since at one and the same time he sought to promote world revolution and to consolidate the revolution in Russia through expanded trade and improved diplomatic relations with the capitalist world. Lenin's contradictory views are consistent with a wide range of policies.

(2) Stalin, who borrowed very selectively from Lenin's ambiguous legacy, was the true father of the harsh, black-and-white view of the world that became so prominent in the 1930s and 1940s. Stalin was acutely suspicious, insecure, fearful, and deeply pessimistic. He believed that there was no basis for prolonged co-operation between communist and capitalist states. This bleak pessimism pervaded all his policies.