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Summit welcomes Gorbachev policy

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LEADERS OF the seven major western industrial countries yesterday gave a first welcome to the policies of Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, saying they held out the hope of a turning point in East-West relations.

In the most encouraging assessment of East-West relations for years, the seven said: "It is our hope that they will prove to be of great significance for the improvement of political, economic and security relations between the countries of East and West."

On the day the Soviet Union proposed an international inspectorate to monitor a nuclear test ban, the heads of government acknowledged that "new opportunities for progress" had opened up since last year's Tokyo summit and that the goals of nuclear disarmament

and conventional force reductions should be pursued.

Although President Reagan obviously endorsed this declaration, his spokesmen put their emphasis on its qualifying clauses, namely, that Soviet actions would be closely watched on human rights, Afghanistan and people-to-people contacts.

Mr George Shultz, US Secretary of State, said human rights were stressed "as necessary in themselves and as a gauge to the quality of a relationship which is still possible."

The leaders implied that the brighter horizons for East-West relations stemmed from Mr Gorbachev's internal and external policies which they were following "with great interest."

The approving reference to Soviet internal affairs was both unusual and rather more

cautious than some delegations wished. West Germany pressed unsuccessfully for the inclusion of an appeal for greater economic collaboration between the two halves of Europe.

On arms negotiations, the declaration gave only general backing for US efforts to negotiate "balanced, substantial and verifiable reductions."

Mr Shultz indicated that a fuller endorsement of the US position on removing medium- and short-range nuclear weapons from Europe could be expected from the meeting of Nato foreign ministers opening in Reykjavik tomorrow.

The Gulf issue, which some leaders feared would plague the summit, was overshadowed until the leaders started their meeting yesterday morning in the elegant 16th century library of the Fondazione Cini on the island of San Giorgio, a short

ferry ride from St Mark's Square.

In the event, France, West Germany and Britain beat off what was said to be only token US pressure for a statement which might have risked compromising their official neutrality on the Gulf war by appearing to favour Iraq.

The statement ultimately contained only the faintest hint of support for the US objective of mandatory sanctions by the United Nations to try to end the fighting.

Mr Shultz, nonetheless, claimed that the declaration's call for "effective measures by the United Nations security council" really endorsed the US strategy of calling for a ceasefire backed up by a mandatory arms embargo if either country refuses. Mrs Thatcher had also offered this interpretation earlier in the

day. Mr Shultz, for his part, paid tribute to British activities in the Gulf, revealing that the Royal Navy had escorted 140 vessels through the area this year.

In addition to East-West relations and the Gulf, the summit returned to the subject of terrorism for the sixth time in nine years. The leaders promised counter measures against states clearly involved in supporting international terrorism and confirmed the principle of "no concessions to terrorists or their sponsors."

In the wake of the controversial US arms sales to Iran, this affirmation seemed aimed at rebuilding the US Government's credibility in resisting terrorist pressures.

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