

will not change overnight. Yet to a truly remarkable degree, Gorbachev has already brought a new climate to the Soviet Union. *Glasnost*' represents not just more publicity and openness about some of the negative features of Soviet society, but a significant lessening of past defensiveness and feelings of inferiority.

Gorbachev's handling of the Sakharov case provides a good example of his bold and self-confident style. It also illustrates how the pursuit of internal reform and external detente may reinforce each other. Improved East-West relations may be an incentive for — as well as a consequence of — domestic relaxation.

Once Gorbachev decided to seek a major improvement in East-West relations, Andrei Sakharov's continued confinement to Gorky became a serious liability. Yet it was not easy for the Soviet leadership to reverse itself and allow him to return to Moscow as a free man. This would amount to a confession of past error and would expose the Soviet regime to Sakharov's continued criticism. Thus it appeared that the Soviet leadership was in a no-win situation. What was to be done?

Gorbachev's handling of this conundrum was creative and innovative. It would appear that he squarely confronted the problem and decided: (1) that the foreign policy costs of Sakharov's banishment were too high; (2) that the Soviet leadership should have the self-confidence to endure Sakharov's criticism of its policies; and (3) that a skillful policy could convert a costly liability into a major asset. Instead of trying to muzzle Sakharov, why not let Sakharov's criticism of the Soviet regime serve as a dramatic symbol to the outside world of the "new" Soviet regime and its innovative leader? What better way to enhance the Soviet image abroad than by allowing Sakharov to appear on Western television screens criticizing Moscow's policies? Would this not undercut Western attempts to depict the Soviet system as repressive and undemocratic? The release of Sakharov would serve an important domestic function as well. It would help Gorbachev in his courting of the Soviet intelligentsia. The support of writers, poets, economists, scientists,