

The optimists readily admit that Gorbachev's speech to the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress did not mark a fundamental revision of Soviet ideology and that it was less sweeping than Khrushchev's pronouncements at the Twentieth Congress, which demolished the Stalin myth, repudiated the inevitability of war, and put in place the foundations for a broadly expanded conception of peaceful coexistence. But they see Gorbachev's caution as a natural consequence of the fact that at the time of the Twenty-Seventh Congress he had not yet consolidated his power and was far more vulnerable than Khrushchev was at the time of the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956.

Although Malenkov and Molotov remained within the Presidium in 1956, they had both suffered sharp defeats the year before. Malenkov was forced to give up his position as head of the Soviet Government in February 1955, and Molotov's foreign policy views were rejected by the Central Committee in July 1955. Gorbachev's position within the Politburo during the latter part of 1985 and early 1986, at the time when the laborious process of drafting his report was under way, was far more tenuous, and hence his need for caution was greater. Since the Congress, Gorbachev has strengthened his personal power, but during this period his primary concern has been to formulate a programme for the fundamental restructuring of the Soviet economy, and he has not invested the intellectual energy and political capital necessary to move beyond the formulations adopted at the Congress.¹⁰⁹

It is true that Gorbachev did not break new ground at the Congress when he referred to interdependence, global problems, and the need for greater international co-operation. Brezhnev had conveyed a similar message at the previous Congress.¹¹⁰ However, those of a

¹⁰⁹ This was strikingly evident in the long-awaited speech that Gorbachev gave on 2 November 1987 to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Revolution. Although this speech contained a long section on East-West relations, it simply reiterated the themes that had been enunciated at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress a year and one half earlier, and it added little that was new. *Pravda*, 3 November 1987.

¹¹⁰ *C.D.S.P.*, XXXIII, No. 8, 1981, p. 12.