

1988, Gorbachev completed his third year as General Secretary. In the first three years of the post-Stalin period, from March 1953 to March 1956, the new Soviet leadership launched the following major initiatives: the Korean War was ended; the Soviet Union agreed to the neutralization of Austria and the withdrawal of its troops from that country; Moscow relinquished control of the Finnish naval base at Porkkala; diplomatic relations were established with the Federal Republic of Germany, re-established with Israel and Greece, and significantly improved with Yugoslavia; previous territorial claims against Turkey were renounced; the Geneva Conference on Indochina produced a negotiated truce; Khrushchev travelled to China on a mission of reconciliation; and the first postwar summit conference was arranged.¹⁰⁷ In comparison, Gorbachev's record of accomplishment is exceedingly thin. Sino-Soviet relations are improving at a snail's pace, more than 100,000 Soviet troops remain in Afghanistan, Soviet-Japanese relations are still frosty, diplomatic relations with Israel have not been restored, and even though a treaty has been concluded for the removal of intermediate-range forces from Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union remain far apart on the vastly more important issues of strategic missiles and space defences.

For all of these reasons, the skeptics see Gorbachev's call for new thinking in international politics as much ado about nothing. For example, Helmut Sonnenfeldt dismisses Moscow's "new thinking" as merely "old-fashioned thinking with a jazzed up vocabulary. It's old poison in new bottles."¹⁰⁸ The optimists, however, have a very different perspective and advance a number of arguments to support a more hopeful assessment.

While agreeing with many of the concerns and reservations expressed by the skeptics, they see grounds for a more optimistic assessment of what Gorbachev has achieved thus far and what he is likely to accomplish in the near future.

¹⁰⁷ Philip E. Mosely, *The Kremlin and World Politics*, New York: Vintage Books, 1960, pp. 363-381, 454.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in *Time*, 27 July 1987, p. 32.