

CONCLUSION

Several significant conclusions emerge from this study. These findings suggest that there is a sound basis for cautious optimism about the prospects for a further evolution of Soviet perspectives on East-West relations. However, they also reinforce the lesson that the West should not fall prey to wishful thinking, either by overestimating what Gorbachev has accomplished thus far or by assuming that further ideological change is assured.

On the one hand, we have seen: (1) Lenin did not have a well-developed theory of East-West relations. As a result, even though Soviet leaders continue to proclaim their fidelity to Leninism, they are not prevented from searching for new ways to come to terms with the West, and they are not precluded from experimenting with new approaches to ensure mutual security in the nuclear age. Leninism does not constitute a doctrinal strait jacket which must be discarded by the Kremlin before meaningful change can take place in Soviet attitudes and policies. It can be broadly and creatively reinterpreted so as to legitimize whatever policies the Soviet leadership chooses to follow. (2) Far-reaching doctrinal change is definitely possible. This was graphically demonstrated by Khrushchev during the period 1956-1960. (3) Although the Soviet propaganda line often shifts with dizzying rapidity, the core concepts of Soviet doctrine have been stable for long periods of time. In the past half century, since the orthodox Stalinist worldview coalesced in the 1930s, the latter part of the 1950s stand out as the one and only period of unambiguous and sustained ideological innovation. Consequently, if Gorbachev