

age, these obsolete tenets feed a policy that may result in a worldwide conflagration. . . . The new thinking required by the present-day world is incompatible with the notion of it as someone's private domain, with "do others a big favor" with one's tutelage and precepts as to how to behave and what path to choose — socialist, capitalist or something else.¹⁰⁵

On another occasion, he declared:

One of the main lessons of Reykjavik is that new political thinking corresponding to the realities of the nuclear age is an indispensable condition for coming out of the critical situation in which mankind finds itself at the end of the 20th century. Profound changes must take place in the political thinking of mankind.¹⁰⁶

The skeptics argue that statements like these cost the Soviet Union nothing. They are a cost-free means of fostering the politically beneficial impression of open-mindedness and moderation while still not conceding that the Soviet Union might have ever erred in the past and contributed, even to the slightest degree, to cold war tensions and the arms race.

A fourth basis for skepticism is the fact that there has been relatively little change in the actual conduct of Soviet foreign policy under Gorbachev. Sounding the familiar refrain that it is deeds not words that really count, Western analysts have pointed to the lack of significant movement in Soviet policy toward Afghanistan, China, Japan, and the Middle East. Gorbachev has adopted a new tone and called for an improvement in Soviet relations with a number of countries (for example in discussing Sino-Soviet relations in his Vladivostok speech of 28 July 1986), but he has not followed up with much in the way of concrete action.

The initial years after Stalin's death provide a useful comparative bench mark for evaluating Gorbachev's foreign policy. In March

¹⁰⁵ *Pravda*, 19 August 1986, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ "Vremia trebuet novogo myshleniia," *Kommunist*, 1986, No. 16, p. 13.