

international problems such as disarmament but also assuring him of firm Western support for his reform programme in the Soviet Union, along with the strong economic cooperation now expected to follow from that support.

Ironically, with respect to the "German problem", Gorbachev has so far received a strong public expression of support only from Poland. Czechoslovakia's President Havel, who may turn out to be more representative of East European opinion on this matter, has taken a more sympathetic view of German unification as a legitimate aim of a democratic German community. Whatever the future course of this issue, Gorbachev has not, in the meantime, ruled out enlarged cooperation and the emergence of loose confederal structures between the two Germanies. He probably sees such flexibility as essential and desirable to the effective realization of West German economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and the East European countries.

Responding Positively to Gorbachev's Revolution

As the foregoing discussion indicates, Gorbachev's overloaded agenda of reform is beset by many serious difficulties. He and his advisors are firmly committed to their vision of *perestroika*; but their ideas, prescriptions and policy recommendations are not free from conflicting tendencies in practice. Moreover, Gorbachev has yet to develop a solid, popular constituency of acceptance and consensus on the direction that Soviet society should take. The creation of this populist constituency is the future task of his charismatic leadership and a rejuvenated Soviet party. In the meantime *glasnost* and democratization are still rather fragile plants and their further growth could be stunted depending on the social and economic disciplinary measures thought necessary to cope with social unrest, or to spur on a lagging economy. A new law on banning strikes in essential services and industries is a troubling augury of such measures. Similarly disturbing developments are the strong political pressure now being applied against secessionist movements in the Baltic Republics; the formidable military actions to deal with the latest outbreaks of internecine strife in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and neighbouring southern areas; and as also noted above, the introduction of a new five-year economic plan that is halting the movement towards a freer market-oriented economy.