

Suddenly the image of the Soviet Union in the world has changed. Immobility has given way to initiative and dynamism. In superpower relations, Gorbachev has seized the high ground. At home 'change' dominates the agenda.

WILL GORBACHEV SHAKE THE WORLD?

A roundtable discussion

The participants in the roundtable are: Włodzimierz Brus, a fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford and author of *Socialist Ownership and Political Systems*; Monty Johnstone, a writer on Soviet and East European politics and a member of the Communist party executive committee; and David Lane, professor of sociology at Birmingham University and author of *Soviet Economy and Society*. It is chaired by Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*.



The participants from left to right: Włodzimierz Brus, Monty Johnstone and David Lane.

It has been suggested that the recent CPSU congress represents a turning point in Soviet history akin to the 20th congress in 1956. To what extent is that the case?

Monty Johnstone It's a turning point to the extent that it represents a recognition by the party leadership of mistakes and gives priority to reversing declining growth rates by new policies for reform and modernisation. And accompanying this, there is a rejuvenation in the leadership with a younger general secretary and the replacement of a whole number of other leaders by younger people. In a number of respects there are similarities with 1956, which attempted to break with what had been a Stalinist past and to set the Soviet Union on a new course, including modernisation in a certain sense. Like the present congress it also emphasised important initiatives by the new leaders to promote peaceful coexistence. On the other hand, this congress was in no way as dramatic as the 1956 20th congress with the denunciation of Stalin's terror in Khrushchev's secret speech, and of course there was nothing as horrible to denounce. As far as the question of the position of the congress in history is concerned, it's too early really to compare it with the 20th congress. The 20th congress had enormous repercussions both in the Soviet Union itself and in the other socialist countries and throughout the world communist movement - repercussions that can still be felt at the present time. How far the 27th congress will do this we just don't know yet.



Michael Gorbachev: how will he change Soviet politics?

Włodzimierz Brus In my opinion there is no comparison. I would ask a more limited question, 'can it be described as a

turning point?' From an economic point of view, in some respects it may be regarded as a turning point. Firstly, it was acknowledged for the first time at this congress that the Soviet economy has lost any kind of dynamism. Previously, this was denied, it was of no official concern for Soviet leaders, the contrary in fact. Secondly, although this was not made entirely clear, by implication it was admitted that the causes of this were to some extent a product of the economic system. Of course the previous leadership was blamed first of all, but also some element of systemic explanation was implicitly acknowledged. In this sense, it does represent some kind of turning point. But two particular facts prompt me to respond to this question of a turning point in a negative way. Firstly, there was an absence of any profound analysis as to what the systemic causes were, apart from general talk about bureaucracy, lack of discipline and so on. Secondly and more seriously, there was no concreteness as to the measures which have to be undertaken. These two factors of course are linked: when you don't analyse the reasons, you can't state clearly what measures need to be taken.

David Lane I don't think that it's comparable to the 1956 congress in its scope or as a turning point. If anything, it would be more useful to compare it with the 22nd party congress in 1961. Nonetheless, the tenor and emphasis within this congress changed considerably towards a real concern with the problems of Soviet development. Some of the reasons for this change of emphasis and tone are to do with the changed political culture in the Soviet Union. In 1959, for instance, only about 9m people had been through higher education compared with 18m in 1982. Now the largest sector of the economy is in services (including communications), which makes the occupational structure much more akin to those of Western societies. These are new realities, new pressures. The message of this congress is that the party is out to modernise Soviet society.

What differentiates the Brezhnev era from what might be beginning to develop now?

David In the Brezhnev era, the leadership was prepared to sustain slow growth in the the economy. It was not prepared to face up to a number of key internal problems whereas the present leadership has an emphasis on 'acceleration' - growth, investment and efficiency.

Wlodek I don't accept any kind of uniform 'Brezhnev era'. Since the mid 1950s there has been a declining growth rate. The only time when this trend was reversed was 1966-70, which was the beginning of the 'Brezhnev era'. As we know the 'Brezhnev era' started with an attempt at economic reform, the most far-reaching so far in the Soviet Union as far as relations between the centre and the enterprises are concerned. Talk of a 'Brezhnev era' is merely an attempt to find an easy way out of the problem. This first part of the 'Brezhnev era' ended, in my view, with the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. This was immediately the sign for a retreat as far as the reforms were concerned, both in the Soviet Union and East European countries, with the exception of Hungary to a limited extent. The latter phase of the 'Brezhnev era' showed, with the resumption of declining growth rates, that the improvement was only short-lived, that the underlying and accumulating problems had not been solved. Now I expect in the first period of Gorbachev's rule some sort of an upswing. But the central

question is to what extent can it be sustained and the longer-term trend reversed. That requires an analysis, so far lacking, of the real causes of this inertia and loss of dynamism in the Soviet economy.

Monty The problem Wlodek poses of how far the initial impetus will be maintained is a crucial one. Its paramount importance is recognised, and it is planned that growth rates should rise more rapidly in the 1990s than in the present five-year plan. But I accept that this does not of itself mean that they'll succeed.

What are the main problems of the Soviet economy and what do you think will be done about them?

Wlodek The Soviet economy, with that brief exception of the late 60s, has long been subject to a declining growth rate. Prior to Khrushchev it was 10%, he anticipated 8.5% which was not achieved. The average under Brezhnev was higher than that postulated by Gorbachev until 2000, namely an average of 4.7%, which is low compared with the 70s.

In the 1970s, the Soviet economy, like the Opec countries, benefited from the big increase in oil prices, a situation which of course is now being reversed. Now one of the central problems of the Soviet economy has been - in a situation of growing scarcity at home and internationally, exemplified by the oil question - its inability on the one hand to improve labour productivity sufficiently and on the other hand to use resources more economically. It remains an extremely wasteful economy. This is the main economic problem, apart from the special issue of agriculture which has grown only 1.1% per annum over the last five years. This economic slowdown, in a situation of increasing scarcities lies very deep in the economic system. There is now some recognition of this, and obviously a desire to break the impasse, after all Gorbachev doesn't want to preside over a stagnating economy. But the question is to what extent this will be translated into real measures, and this was my main doubt when I read the congress material.

David I think in the fields of management and labour the Soviet economy can be improved considerably. In the area of labour productivity there is a great deal of inefficiency which was recognised at the Congress and also in widespread discussion in the Soviet press. The policies on incentives will surely enhance productivity. The proposals on the rate and kind of investment and the writing off of capital will also lead to hikes in productivity.

So what do you expect to happen in the area of economic reform? How radical will it be?

Wlodek There is a lack of clarity which may be justified by certain political considerations. For example, Gorbachev never used the term 'market' with regard to the reforms which he wants to introduce. Maybe because he doesn't want to create unnecessary ideological difficulties. Maybe one should read between the lines, that he does want to introduce some market regulation but doesn't want to call it that. There are, in my view, two main elements involved in a radical reform. One is the target or command plan, which fosters the hiding of resources and so on. And the second is the physical allocation of producer goods. Now nothing has been said about the dismantling of these.



Changing the image of the leader: handshaking in the street is now important.

There is the so-called comprehensive experiment, which in 1987 will be extended to the entire economy, but this leaves a lot of the old system intact.

Monty I would agree about the vagueness at an official level, but it does seem to me there is more discussion going on albeit in relatively restricted circles. And this could be a preliminary to bringing these questions before a wider public.

David The political leadership is doing a great deal to bring in a new spirit of discipline, efficiency and accountability in the organisation of the economy. The central ministries have been singled out as institutions which have been a break on progress and they are to be put under greater control. The intention to give factories greater independence, and within factories to give work brigades more initiative is likely to have a salutary effect on improving output. By enhancing the organisation of the system, creating a psychological atmosphere in which efficiency will be given a greater priority, a considerable economic advance can be achieved.

Monty In a sense, there are two contradictory points. On the one hand, there is a greater awareness on the part of Gorbachev and the people associated with him of the need to take more drastic measures than were taken in the past precisely because previous reforms such as those in 1965 have run out of steam. On the other hand, it's not enough to have a correct policy, and it's not enough to have leaders who recognise certain steps need to be taken. It's also necessary to have large sections of the population, including the leaders at the lower levels, prepared to go along with it. In that respect, the negative experiences of the past make it more difficult to activate people because their hopes have been raised in similar ways and then disappointed. This is the major problem if this potentially very hopeful development with Gorbachev is actually going to be sustained.

To what extent is the underlying problem that of an old centralised system was very well equipped to handle certain kinds of problems like industrialisation and the war, but which is ill-equipped to deal with what is now a much more sophisticated and complex economy and society?

Wlodek This is the problem, the extent to which the system can cope with present-day problems. I agree with David that the main emphasis of the leadership at the moment is to change the

spiritual aspects, the atmosphere, the discipline and so on. This, of course, was the Andropov line and it is also Gorbachev's. Now this can mobilise immediate reserves which were previously hidden because less emphasis had been placed on them. And the less emphasis on them in the past, the more slack you have in the economy to mobilise. But this is a once and for all gain which can only be short-lived. You are then stuck again. The reliance on the psychological and spiritual is, I fear, much too great. I am not a great believer in the long-term effects of exhortation.

David A lot of the centralisation which occurred during the Stalin period was to do with the nature of the intellectual and physical capital of a developing society. But the intellectual resources are now much better and 'intensive' growth is possible. The educational level of specialists, managers and workers is much higher than it was. The kind of changes that Gorbachev has in mind will meet with a response from a large proportion of the population. People will be able to work in a situation of less centralisation and control than they had hitherto, and the reserves available in the economy will be better utilised. People will also be able to show more initiative and participation in running things.

Gorbachev has said quite a lot about the need to 'deepen and extend democracy'. What do you think is meant by that?

Monty A great deal of emphasis was laid in Gorbachev's report on this. He argued that the economic and social objectives set were inconceivable without the greater participation of the people, the improvement of socialist democracy and so on. But the problem in discussing this at the moment is on the economic questions. There was a reference, for instance, to the need to overhaul the electoral procedures in the Soviet Union, but no indication as to what would be done. Whether for instance, there is any consideration of having multi-candidate elections, or even two candidates, as is happening in Hungary and some other socialist countries. And apparently nobody, as I understand it, actually took up this point at the congress. There is a great deal of talk, and it's been a theme which Gorbachev has stressed ever since he became general secretary of an increase in publicity and information. Now there have been improvements in the Soviet press and so on, but with considerable limitations, even in the economic sphere where I notice that even today the grain production statistics are not published, as they haven't been for several years since they began to have real problems meeting targets. Take the question of debate. I understand that throughout the congress there was no clash of opinion among the delegates. This, I know, has been traditional since 1927, but a development of genuine socialist democracy requires that one begins to have a position where differences of opinion which undoubtedly are debated in private at the top actually come out into the open. That has not yet happened. My final point in this context is that it may well be that the need for democratic participation in order to achieve success in the carrying out of the new economic plans will push Gorbachev and the other leaders to loosening things up in this respect and going considerably further than they have done so far.

David A number of very positive things have come out from the congress. There is an intention to make people who are in positions of authority accountable. This is connected with the anti-corruption campaign and a number of speakers referred to the importance of *all* people being accountable for their actions.

The leadership has also talked about increasing the role of trade unions in their defence of workers. A number of suggestions have also been made about forming councils in enterprises drawn from the trade union, party, komsomol and other groups. These are all movements in the right direction. Another thing clear in the congress is the emphasis on party control, which undoubtedly increase as a means of more effectively curbing the bureaucracy.

Monty I personally think there is considerable potential flowing from this congress and the changes that have been taking place since Gorbachev took over. But I would need to see in practice what happens before I was very definite on it. You see many of the things that David quotes don't convince me. The fact that there is reference to the need for the trade unions to play a more critical role in defending workers is not new. Exactly the same thing was said even by Stalin and many times subsequently. As far as a commitment to accountability is concerned, this has been standard. The present Soviet constitution, adopted in 1977, contained a special provision that citizens could appeal to a court 'in the manner prescribed by law' against officials infringing their rights. We learn from Gorbachev's speech that they are now proposing nine years later to introduce the law which is going to make this possible. They haven't passed it yet. It's not a question of declarations of intent, but seeing what happens in practice. One further point. So long as the nomenklatura system operates, where it is the party which is responsible for deciding who is eligible to fill the key posts in the state apparatus, the economy, the trade unions and considerable other parts of the social sphere, there are going to be very serious limitations on a genuine democracy.

Wlodek There are some interesting and hopeful elements but they are very minor and second-ranking in significance. I attach most importance to the new 'councils of the workers collective', or workers councils. But the role of these councils depends in the first instance on the real scope of decision-making in the enterprises and this remains unclear, although it is said it will increase. Real influence here is linked to the possibility of electing managers, or at least having an influence on management election, and this starts to clash with the nomenklatura principal.

Now Monty made an important point about there being no sign of any sort of disagreement at the congress. It was as boring as it was before, and much more boring than the Soviet papers have recently been. Another example of how things haven't changed is the way many changes of position, for example partly first secretaries in the republics, were announced *before* the congress, often just before. The congress was presented with a fait accompli. In my view, there have been no examples of a real extension of the democratic process within the leading institutions. And this is extremely important for economic renewal. You cannot have a more efficient economic system within the framework of the, in my view, old obsolete political system. This is the key question. The leadership, moreover, shows a clear tendency to keep all the reins very firmly in their hands, even more so as David rightly said, while at the same time arguing for more initiative, independence and so on. This, for me, was the worrying sign. It is easy to criticise the past leadership. The first big break, the real turning point, will be when someone comes out and criticises the existing leadership.

Would you explain the limited nature of developments so far in terms of Gorbachev's own relatively weak position within the party apparatus

prior to the congress or is it already a defining characteristic of Gorbachev's political project?

Monty It's impossible to say. I wrote an article for *Marxism Today* a year ago, for which I was violently attacked in the Soviet Union. In this I suggested that fairly soon we were going to see a new leadership which I thought would be headed by Gorbachev, but that whoever was selected for the leading position would have to satisfy the party leadership that he was not in danger either of being a new Khrushchev or a new Dubcek. Now whether, despite these considerations, which I am sure weighed very heavily in the minds of the party leadership that elected him, we'll find that he either has ideas which go well beyond, as far as democracy is concerned, what the people who elected him were prepared to countenance or whether the actual pressures on him in occupying the position and in trying to pursue the economic objectives will force him to go considerably further than he previously envisaged, I just don't know.

Wlodek I don't know either. But certainly I wouldn't contemplate even mentioning the name of Dubcek in this context, because there are clear signs already of a broad ideological offensive against the term political pluralism.

Monty My reference to Dubcek was precisely to say that I don't think such political pluralism is on the cards at the moment. But there is a certain *de facto* pluralism already existing in the Soviet Union, including the political sphere. Take the letter in *Pravda* on February 13 from old Communists criticising the special stores



A new political style: Gorbachev meets the workers.

and other privileges of party officials. And then we had the press conference that Aliiev, a member of the politbureau, gave to the foreign press in which he was asked about these privileges and attempted to justify them and say they needed to have special shops for party officials because they worked 24 hours a day.

Wlodek This is not pluralism.

Monty I will limit it even further if you like, a minimal *de facto* pluralism, but from minimal *de facto* pluralisms can grow phenomena that could push forward political changes.

It's not a structural pluralism, but permitted pluralism. It's allowed to exist but it's not in any way institutionalised.

Monty It's certainly not institutionalised. It exists and enables different views to be expressed, where there are no structures to facilitate this. The important question is either it will develop as a part of the necessary conditions for the participation of the Soviet people which is going to be needed if they're going to make the kind of economic changes and so on which are required. Or alternatively you will have, as you had after a few years of Khrushchev for instance, the public disappearance more and more of these elements, and more and more a new orthodoxy growing up. And obviously I hope for the former rather than the latter.

David If you are looking for political pluralism you're not going to find it but that obscures the development of a much greater exchange of views and a more open press. There has been criticism of privilege in the press and Gorbachev himself has pointed to contradictions in Soviet society, between for instance the forces and relations of production. There is now a younger generation of people in positions of power - some 97% of the delegates at the congress were born after the second world war - and this newer generation does desire a much more open politics. They've been influenced by the image of the West and what they think is happening there. These are the kind of people who are pushing for much more openness in the system. It is 'openness' that Gorbachev emphasises.

Monty mentioned this question of special privileges. What is the scale of inequalities in this area and to what extent will this problem be tackled over the next period?

David It is extremely difficult to measure inequality. Letters in *Pravda* in February have criticised privileges such as special dining rooms, shops, housing and transport. Such things make an enormous difference to people's lives in a 'shortage' economy. The kinds of privileges that exist and the kinds of things that the present leadership wishes to abolish are basically the development of the role of unearned income, bribery and corruption and unearned privileges going with rank and position. The present policy will, I think, attempt to undermine unearned advantage and seek to replace it with earned income. This involves more goods in the shop windows and more money in people's pockets. What I see as Gorbachev's vision is a society geared to distribution 'according to one's work'. Minimum pay is also to rise. I would foresee the development of greater wage differentials and improvement all round, but a decline in the kind of administrative privileges referred to earlier. That is the objective.

Wlodek I agree with this, but again this is one of the issues on which there was a lack of any profound discussion at the congress, even of any signalling of the problem. Clearly an economic reform which is supposed to be radical must bring important changes in income distribution. If wages are linked as is suggested with enterprise performance, there will be unequal pay for the same work, because it will depend also on the performance of the enterprise. It cannot be assumed that all enterprises will perform the same way. This question was never even raised. The fact must be faced that radical reform will not only have beneficial effects. There may be some side effects that need to be discussed.

Monty On the question of the salaries paid to political leaders, I would make two points. Firstly, so long as they claim to be entirely faithful followers of Lenin, and yet as one remembers Lenin insisted that leaders and state officials in socialist states

should only receive the average worker's wage, it is difficult for them to speak of the actual salaries which they themselves get. It is interesting that at the press conference that Aliev gave he was specifically asked by a Spanish press correspondent, what is your salary as a member of the politbureau? He replied, 'I live well, but not better than a factory manager!' Even the Soviet journalists who were present there apparently couldn't suppress a wry smile at this statement. And he even actually answered the question. And that brings us to the second point. If you are going to have information and accountability, surely the minimal standards that you have, for example, in a bourgeois democracy where everybody knows how much a minister is paid because it's all laid down, should apply to the leadership of the Soviet Union. And they're still some way away from that.

What do you think the impact of these developments will be in Eastern Europe and the communist movement more widely?

Wlodek In Eastern Europe they will start to admit the slow down and stagnation. In some countries this will probably mean mild encouragement to a pragmatic improvement in the economic system. The Czechs, for example, might shift a little from their completely immovable position. As for the communist movement in general, I believe it may help those communist parties in the developed countries which felt very uncomfortable with this declining image of the Soviet Union. However, this depends not on proclamation, but on real progress achieved. Otherwise I don't think it will make much difference.

Monty I agree with Wlodek on Eastern Europe for the immediate future. As far as the international communist movement is concerned, especially in the developed capitalist countries, in general I think people have been impressed by the readiness of Gorbachev to engage in far-reaching criticism and apparent self-criticism of the developments which have been taking place in the USSR. This is seen as a courageous act and as something which is positive in setting right things which were wrong. It is of course presumably fairly embarrassing to those parties who defended everything that the Soviet Union did, but to parties like, for instance, the British, Italian, Japanese or Swedish which were making these criticisms, it only goes to confirm the kind of points which we were making previously and to show that the elements of sclerosis that worried us about the Soviet leadership are coming to an end. Now we would hope very much that the logic of the situation for reasons that I outlined earlier will push towards a democratisation, but even without that, the process of modernisation, even with technocratic characteristics, is preferable to the kind of bureaucratic inertia that one saw previously. In Gorbachev's report he made some remarks about the international communist movement that certainly parties like the British and the Italian would regard as being positive, namely he recognised that it is normal there should be diversity in the international communist movement. Finally with regard to the question of peace, where the practical steps taken by Gorbachev in the field of foreign policy, the proposals in relation to nuclear disarmament by the end of the century, the moratorium and all the rest of it, which have given the Soviet Union the initiative, have been regarded by the communist movement as extremely positive. And indeed I think they are, both from the point of view of the overriding need for world peace, and also of course as a basic precondition for the realisation by the Soviet Union itself of the economic objectives that it has set itself.

NOVOSTI ANNOUNCEMENT, TURNING POINT IN SOVIET LIFE

The 27th Congress of the CPSU has gathered at an abrupt turning point in the life of the country and the contemporary world as a whole¹, Mikhail Gorbachyov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee said, delivering the political report of the CPSU Central Committee at the party's congress. He pointed out that documents to be discussed at the present congress would speak of 'what the Soviet Union will be like as it enters the 21st century, of the image of socialism and its positions in the international arena, of the future of humanity.

'The path travelled by the country, its economic, social and cultural achievements, convincingly confirm the vitality of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, and socialism's tremendous potential as embodied in the progress of Soviet society. We can be legitimately proud of everything that has been achieved in these years . . .', Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

While duly commending the achievements, he continued, the leadership of the CPSU considers it to be its duty to tell the party and the people honestly and frankly about the deficiencies in our political and practical activities, the unfavourable tendencies in the economy and the social and moral sphere, and about the reasons for them.

Noting that today's priority task is to overcome the negative factors in society's socio-economic development as rapidly as possible, Mikhail Gorbachyov said that the situation came to a turning point not only in internal but also in external affairs. The modern world is complicated, diverse and dynamic, and shot through with contending tendencies and contradictions. It is a world of the most intricate alternatives, anxieties and hopes.

Noting that the progress of the present day is rightly identified with socialism, the General Secretary characterised world socialism as a 'powerful international entity, it accounts for more than one-third of humanity, for dozens of countries and peoples opening up in every way the intellectual and moral wealth of man and society.'

'Social progress is expressed in the development of the international communist and working-class movement and in the growth of the new massive democratic movement of our time, including the anti-war and anti-nuclear movement,' Mikhail Gorbachyov continued. 'It is apparent, too, in the stratification of the political forces of the capitalist world, notably the USA, the metropolitan centre of imperialism. Here, progressive tendencies are forcing their way forward through a system of monopolistic totalitarianism, exposed to the continuous pressure of organised reactionary forces. . . .'

Stressing that the progress of humanity is directly connected with the scientific and technological² progress, Mikhail Gorbachyov pointed out that the facets and consequences of the scientific and technological revolution varied in the different socio-political

Extracts from the speech by Mikhail Gorbachyov, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 27th Congress.



systems. 'The capitalism of the 1980s, the capitalism of the age of electronics and computer science, computers and robots, is leaving more millions of people, including young and educated people, without jobs', the report says.

The General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee described in detail the principal contradictions of the contemporary world, including the internal contradictions of the capitalist society. He described as the most important ones the contradictions connected with the relations between the states belonging to two systems.

While capitalism regarded the birth of socialism as an 'error' of history which must be 'rectified' at any cost, by any means, socialism, as distinct from capitalism, has never, of its own free will, related its future to any military solution of international problems, the Soviet leader pointed out. However, the ruling circles of the imperialist countries circulate today the myth of a Soviet or communist 'threat' for the purpose of justifying the arms race and the imperialist countries' own aggressiveness.

Although it is becoming increasingly clear that the path of war can yield no sensible solutions, either international or domestic, it is not easy at all, in the current circumstances, to predict the future of the relations between the socialist and the capitalist countries, the USSR and the USA. The decisive factors here will be the correlation of forces on the world scene, the growth and activity of the peace potential, and its capability of effectively repulsing the threat of nuclear war. Much will depend, too, on the degree of realism that Western ruling circles will show in assessing the situation. 'With nuclear war being totally unacceptable, peaceful co-existence rather than confrontation of the systems should be the rule in the inter-state relations'. Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

Speaking about the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism, the General

Secretary stressed that anti-communism and anti-Sovietism constituted its dangerous aspect. 'This concerns not only external policy. In the modern-day system of imperialism it is also a most important area of internal policy, a means of pressure on all the advanced and progressive elements that live and fight in the capitalist countries, in the non-socialist part of the world', Mikhail Gorbachyov said.

The political report of the CPSU Central Committee identified global-scale contradictions affecting the very foundations of the existence of civilisation, as those of pollution of the environment, the air and oceans, and the exhaustion of natural resources. 'The global problems, affecting all humanity, cannot be resolved by one state or a group of states', Mikhail Gorbachyov stressed. 'This calls for co-operation on a worldwide scale, for close and constructive joint action by the majority of countries.'

The speaker pointed out that the destinies of peace and social progress were now linked more closely than ever before with the dynamic character of the socialist world system's economic and political development. He spoke in detail about the deepening and expansion of co-operation between the socialist countries.

The report stresses that the CPSU is an inalienable component of the international communist movement and points out that the Soviet public is prepared to go on promoting links with non-communist movements and organisations, including religious organisations militating against war.

This is also the angle from which the CPSU regards its relations with the social democratic movement. 'It is a fact that the ideological differences between the Communists and the social democrats are deep, and that their achievements and experience are dissimilar and non-equivalent. However, an unbiased look at the standpoints and views of each other is unquestionably

useful to both the Communists and the social democrats, useful in the first place for furthering the struggle for peace and international security.'

Mikhail Gorbachyov proposed a meeting between the leaders of the countries which are permanent members of the security council to discuss what could and should be done to strengthen peace. He also proposed the convocation of a world congress on problems of economic security at which it would be possible to discuss in a package everything that encumbers world economic relations.

The section of the report devoted to the Communist party, which has a membership of 19 million people, dealt with the results of the discussion of the new edition of the party programme and of the amendments to the party rules.

'First of all, the conclusions and provisions of the CPSU programme and rules have met with widespread approval. The Communists and Soviet people support the party's policy of accelerating the country's socio-economic development and its programme's clear orientation towards the communist perspective and the strengthening of world peace', the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachyov, said in conclusion.

THE 27th CONGRESS C.P.S.U.

I Read all about it, and the follow-up every week in SOVIET WEEKLY

Subscription Offer

£6.50 per annum (£3.25 for V/ year) post free. Students and Pensioners £3.25 per annum. School-teachers £3.25 per annum (plus 40 free paperbacks each year). Libraries, in U.K. only: Free (plus 40 free paperbacks each year). Overseas (airmail) \$40 U.S. per annum.

Every Thursday at Newsagents 16p

TO: Soviet Weekly, Dept MT, Freepost London SW7 4BR (no stamp required).

Please send me Soviet Weekly for one year / six months.

I enclose.

P.O./Cheque

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

NAME.....

ADDRESS..