

Is there no stopping the man? From an Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) deal (December '87, Washington DC) to a breath-taking speech at the United Nations (December '88, New York). In between, an agreement to pull out of Afghanistan, a breakthrough in relations with China, settlements in prospect in Angola and Kampuchea, Ronald Reagan visiting Moscow - followed by a stream of West European leaders including Kohl, de Mita and Mitterand. A brand new dynamism in Soviet foreign policy has become a hallmark of *perestroika*.

Yet this is not running for the sake of it in the manner of the England football team. Gorbachev and his key foreign policy personnel - Shevardnadze, Yakovlev and Arbatov - know where they want to go. During the past year they have outlined with increasing clarity their view of the post-cold war world.

Firstly, they recognise that the world is ever more closely-knit together; by global markets, by modern communications, by ecological concerns and by the potential for military catastrophe. Interdependence is the name of the game: the era of autarky is over. Secondly, they see militarism, and not capitalism, as the main danger, based on an assessment of the nuclear threat, regional conflicts inflicting immense loss of life, and an uncontrolled arms trade. Thirdly, they argue for the primacy of politics over force in international affairs. Here, dialogue, reason and argument can assert themselves, generating the political momentum to impose restraints on military hawks and permit free choice to nations and peoples.

From this flows their emphasis on universal human values: on the role of international institutions like the UN, on the need for disarmament, on their commitment to new military doctrines of 'reasonable sufficiency', and on joint action to tackle issues of the environment and debt. All this



Gorbachev: Pacemaker for disarmament

## Global Warming

The 1988 'Christmas present to the world' unwrapped by Gorbachev at the United Nations in December topped a year of rapid thaw in East-West relations. **Jon Bloomfield** assesses where the USSR's dynamic foreign policy initiative are leading

and more was on display during Gorbachev's tour de force speech at the UN; even a call that on human rights matters the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice at The Hague 'should be binding on all states'. What we have here is a coherent view of today's world, its key problems and how to tackle them, guided by a philosophy best described as progressive humanism. This new thinking discards not just proletarian internationalism, but Clausewitz too!

As the bipolar cold war period fragments we stand on the brink of a new international era. Gorbachev's attraction flows from the sense that he has of these new times and how they could be shaped. They will herald major changes, perhaps none bigger than in Eastern Europe, where Gorbachev speaks of 'Soviet divisions remaining for the time being', and in the two Germany. This era could well see the withdrawal of all foreign troops, including Britain's, from the continent. As with all change, some facets will be disturbing; none more so than the

ugly national antagonisms already surfacing in the Balkans. But these will have to be negotiated rather than repressed.

Most Western political and military leaders are responding to this new dynamism in the ponderous, staturesque manner of a pair of England centre-halves. They can't cope with the sudden mobility of their old adversary. They know they are facing something new, but mostly they carry on playing the way they've been taught for the last 40 years. This has been the standard British position espoused by Margaret Thatcher, George Younger, Michael Heseltine and Sir Geoffrey Howe. Sir Geoffrey concluded a recent lengthy speech on Soviet foreign policy by saying: 'We must maintain our defences and work harder to explain the need for continued nuclear deterrence. We must face up to difficult decisions on nuclear modernisation and burden-sharing', code for more lethal nuclear weapons and higher defence spending.

There has been one persistent exception to this view: West Germany. In the

Federal Republic, politicians across the board have acknowledged that a qualitative change has taken place in the USSR which requires new thinking and policies by the West. Before his recent death, the hawkish Franz Josef Strauss was calling for negotiations on short-range nuclear weapons.

The liberal foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has been pushing persistently for a radical response to Gorbachev's initiatives, while Chancellor Kohl has been reluctant to follow the US and Britain into agreeing Nato's nuclear modernisation programme. He was pressed again on this during his November trip to Washington, but with Mitterand beginning to shift his ground too, the 'peace through strength' brigade are being placed on the defensive. The impact of Gorbachev's UN speech can only heighten this tension within Nato, which enters its 40th anniversary year increasingly unsure of both its purpose and its future.

Gorbachev's policies and appeal to public opinion makes the traditional Western orthodoxy of four decades ever more anachronistic. When *The Sun* declares: 'There has never been a greater chance for peace and understanding in the world' (December 8) then something really is afoot. It's time for the prime minister to write a new script.