

Shaking Up The World

A Roundtable Discussion

Gorbachev's extraordinary speech at the United Nations in December was breathtaking in its boldness and originality. It ushers in a new era in international relations. But what will that era look like? Our panel of eminent specialists peers into the future

The participants in the roundtable are: Denis Healey, Labour MP and former shadow foreign secretary; Giorgio Napolitano, head of foreign affairs and member of the central committee of the Italian Communist Party; Victor Orlik, journalist and editor of *Soviet Weekly*; and Charles Wheeler, a foreign correspondent who covers the United States and Eastern Europe for *BBC Newsnight*. The discussion was chaired by Jon Snow, diplomatic editor of ITN, who has recently spent much time in Washington and Moscow.

The speech that Gorbachev made at the United Nations in December seems in itself a considerable advance from the vision that we saw him articulating in 1981. Victor, I wonder if we could start with you? Do you feel that Gorbachev's vision is evolving?

Victor Everyone, both in the Soviet Union, and I hope beyond the borders of the Soviet Union, expects Gorbachev to go further, both in his domestic reforms and in the ideas and initiatives which he puts forward in the field of foreign policy. In his speech at the UN, he made clear that the essence of the new political thinking is the priority of human values in comparison with so-called class values. There has been a tendency by some Soviet and foreign writers to interpret the former as mainly about the survival of the human race.

That is too simplistic, there's nothing particularly new in that, Khrushchev was doing the same and Brezhnev spoke along similar lines. The strength of Gorbachev's position is that he is applying new political thinking to the domestic scene, that he presents Soviet foreign policy in its

inseparable unity with home affairs, hence democratisation, openness and tolerance at home are now part and parcel of Soviet foreign policy.

Given, Charles, that the headline of the day following that speech was that concerning troop and tank reduction, do you think that Gorbachev's message was understood here?

Charles No, it wasn't and I should plead guilty here. I covered that speech for *Newsnight*. We had to make a choice, to concentrate on the second half of the speech, or the first half, and although I found the first half absolutely fascinating, I could see no way with a deadline of four hours of tackling it. And even reading it now, I don't know how I would report it, because I don't really know what he means in terms of policy, and what troubles me is that there has been very little discussion of the first part of the speech since. I think it went virtually unreported.

Giorgio, do you think there is any sense in Europe that the ideas have been picked up, or do you think that they've merely gone

with the hardware, the decisions over arms and reductions?

Giorgio I think that in Western Europe there was a good deal of attention to the substance of the first part of the speech.

... the philosophical part of the speech?

Giorgio Yes, although perhaps nobody could praise that speech better than the *New York Times* did. I quote what they wrote the following day: 'Not since Woodrow Wilson presented his 14 points or since Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill promulgated the Atlantic Charter has a world figure demonstrated the vision Mikhail Gorbachev displayed on Wednesday at the United Nations. Breathtaking, risky, bold, naive, diversionary, and heroic all fit.' I think they understood. Up to a point, the more open-minded West European politicians understood it was a new vision. I think the main features of this vision had already been put forward in Gorbachev's book and also on some other occasions, for instance in his report to the 19th party conference. In the party conference he emphasised the priority of universal values over class values in international relations.

I don't share fully what Victor said. Indeed Gorbachev insists not only on survival but also on the necessity of cooperation for progress, and on the necessity of elaborating a new concept of progress. But also survival in this context is, not the same thing as Khrushchev meant. First, because at that time not all the consequences were drawn from the recognition of the deepness and gravity of the nuclear danger. The fact that nobody could win was never stated so fully and clearly before Gorbachev, neither by the Soviet Union nor by the United States.

Second, Gorbachev insists on the existence of a more and more interdependent and integrated world and the concept of interdependence was absolutely alien to Brezhnev and also to Khrushchev. It is a concept imported from Western political literature, but which was alien to the old leaders of the Soviet Union. A world in which there are growing common risks, nuclear and ecological, and where there is a new consciousness of those risks. There is also a new substance as regards to these risks which couldn't be seen 20 years ago. Then there is the explosive situation of the Third World. These are the three main common risks. Then there are the great new opportunities, provided by the technological revolution, which cannot be realised without a joint effort. So a joint effort to face common risks and to seize new opportunities. This is Gorbachev's radically new philosophy.

Victor You can't imagine Brezhnev adopting this position now?

Giorgio No, because the things Gorbachev is saying now could have been said at least 10 years ago. It was

already clear at that time that the two superpowers would lose control of many situations. The world needed to move towards multi-polar rather than bi-polar management. But after bi-polar management began to break down, instead of interdependence, which was already possible and necessary, there was confrontation between the two superpowers from the late 70s. Moreover, Brezhnev talked of class values and by that he meant the so-called defence of socialist Czechoslovakia and the struggle for influence in the Third World.

Denis Gorbachev really laid out his fundamental position in his speech to the Communist Party congress though at the time it was far too little noticed in the West. He then buried the concept that world history was a struggle between two camps, which in the end one or the other would win, hopefully the socialist camp, hopefully but not necessarily without war. Now he threw that away and said we must move, groping in the dark as it were - a most uncharacteristic phrase for any statesman to use, because statesmen like everyone to think they know exactly where they are going and that there is no darkness in their mind - towards an interdependent and even integral world. At the time he made that speech he was dominated by the recognition, not only that you can't win a nuclear war, but that even a large scale conventional war could produce similar damage, the Chernobyl type of thing ...

Giorgio He said it openly.

Denis he said that and I think it was this element that dominated him. But to me, the staggering new thing in his UN speech, and I agree with Charles, it was almost unnoticed here, though not in the US, was that he really overthrew the principles of marxism-leninism as the basis for understanding the world. What is extraordinary to me is that he should have said there were two great revolutions, the French revolution in 1789, the Russian revolution in 1917, and both gave a tremendous impetus, shaped a whole way of thinking. He said they were a most precious spiritual heritage, but not that the Russian revolution had established the way forward for humanity in the future, as all other Soviet leaders have said. He said on the contrary, and I quote his words: 'We are not abandoning our convictions, our philosophy or traditions, nor do we urge anyone to abandon their's, but neither do we have any intention to be hemmed in by our values. That would mean intellectual impoverishment, would mean rejecting a powerful source of development, the exchange of everything original that each nation has independently created.' So the idea of a bitter conflict between a Soviet way of looking at things and a capitalist way is abandoned.

Even before that, the class struggle had gone. I remember having a long argument with Trofimenko, Abartov's deputy, in Sweden, I think in the first

year Gorbachev was in power. Trofimenko urged us to take very seriously the desire for co-operation on security with the West, but insisted that the Soviet government had a socialist responsibility to assist revolution in the Third World, and he wouldn't be budged from that. But since then, Soviet spokesmen have explicitly abandoned that duty; we've seen them seeking to extricate themselves from excessive involvement in Angola, of course in Afghanistan, in Kampuchea and we may see it happening in Central America too. I think that what essentially he's done is to accept pluralism, to emphasise the importance of unity in diversity, which is very much not a traditional Soviet concept.

Giorgio There is a curious thing here. When there was a crisis in the international communist movement between the Chinese and the Soviet party in the early 60s, Togliatti proposed, *for the communist movement*, exactly the same formula, unity in diversity.

Denis The concept was around in Khrushchev's time. Khrushchev did in fact allow Gomulka to pursue his own way to socialism, and even before that, Stalin, in words, had allowed the Yugoslavs to pursue their own way to socialism, although there is evidence he contemplated the possibility of overthrowing Tito. In his UN speech, much more clearly than ever before, Gorbachev has emphasised the importance of giving people freedom of choice. How far that will go I don't know, and I think thoughtful people now are very concerned that the cold war gave a degree of stability over large areas of the world because the magnetic force, if you like, of the superpowers overrode tensions inside each bloc. As that magnetic force declines, we're finding the revival of local, national and communal hostilities.

In Eastern Europe now, it's not the Yalta settlement only that's at stake, it's also the Versailles treaty after the first world war; some of the states like Yugoslavia which were set up after the first world war, now threaten to break up into component parts. It could happen in Czechoslovakia. The tension over Transylvania between Hungary and Rumania is another example, and of course there is the problem which the Russians face in their own empire, which is the only 19th-century empire to have survived into the second half of the 20th century. The Western world is still obsessed by the image of the Soviet Union created under Stalin and his successors; it has not really come to grips with the effect on stability of the loosening of the units which were created by superpower hegemony. But here again I think Gorbachev has shown immense vision in suggesting that this is where the UN may have a very important role because it's not possible for the superpowers on their own to run the world together, any more than they can separately.

Can we then move from the vision to looking at the individual, practical building blocks that are going to have to be constructed to reach any concept of the sort of interdependent world that Gorbachev is looking at? We've tended in the West to concentrate very heavily on the military negotiations, but he talked in the UN about industrial progress which would be of benefit to all humankind, he talked about economic interdependence and how



Denis:
'The whole international landscape is undergoing enormous changes and with the slow disintegration of the bloc mentality, we are going to have a much more fluid situation'



new economic alliances are going to have to be developed. There is now much talk about 1992 and the future of the European Community, but little consideration has been given to the idea of a deal with Comecon, or the possibility that Hungary might be a member. Are we now looking at the possibility of a new series of economically interdependent blocs?

Denis For a long time after the end of the last war, people who looked towards an integrated world society thought it would come about through cooperation between great blocs - North America, South America, Western Europe, the Soviet bloc, the African bloc and the Latin American bloc - but I have personally always felt that if you divide the world up into a lot of multinational units, you don't make peace or prosperity more likely, you make it less likely. An untidy proliferation of overlapping organisations is a much healthier approach to stability in the future than that old one. All this I think is going to come acutely to a head when the European governments approach 1992 because already by bringing in the Mediterranean countries, the European Community has made the Monnet dream impossible. Now the southern members of the Community are quite interested in extending it to some countries in northern Africa - Morocco for example, is discussed as a possible member. There's of course Turkey pressing to get in, and then you've got the neutral EFTA countries - Austria, Sweden, even Finland - and East Germany is already a country member of the Community club because the Germans managed to get the removal of all customs barriers between the two Germanies...

Charles What's the way ahead in that case, perhaps to look East?

Denis Well, I believe myself that this will happen. I think the six, the original core of the Community, will have to accept that if they move in that

direction, then the sort of tight supranational Community which Monnet hoped for is really out of the question. Personally, I think that will be a good thing. To that extent, my thinking overlaps a tiny little bit with, I'm ashamed to say, that of Attila the Hen!

Giorgio The first thing is that Gorbachev recognises the importance of the regional integration process in Western Europe. I was in Moscow at the end of March with the general secretary of my party and we had a six-hour discussion with Gorbachev. A large part of the discussion was devoted to this very point, the successful story of the European Community. Gorbachev was tremendously interested in understanding the secret of its success. At the same time, although he recognises the importance of such regional integration processes, he said in his speech at the UN that they are not enough. At a regional level, nobody can give a solution to the problem of overall development on a world scale, which includes of course the developing countries. So the crucial point is for the European Community and other regional organisations - I attach great importance, for example, to an effort towards regional integration in Latin America, and particularly between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay; and anyhow we shouldn't underrate the regional integration process in Eastern Europe which Gorbachev wants to develop - is that there are open and cooperative relations between these different realities. In particular, the European Community must not become a closed community, a fortress. It must not be a fortress, neither towards the EFTA countries, nor towards the developing countries, nor towards the East.

Denis Nor towards America or Japan, because that's the central issue in the negotiations at the moment.

Giorgio But of course as regards America and Japan I think we must not be naive. We have to discuss very seriously with them the rules, because also America and Japan have to respect certain rules towards Europe. My fundamental preoccupation is relations with the developing countries. I don't think the European Community will have barriers towards Japan and the United States, we will find arrangements with them. My fear is that the European Community is not sufficiently open as regards relations with the South - the North/South problem. I think that the European Community is sufficiently open-minded also as regards relations now with the East and with the EFTA countries, but the point is what to do particularly for the developing countries.

Denis Today there is only one big country which is taking the economic development of the Third World seriously and that's Japan, at least for the last year or two. And I think it is very dangerous to ignore Japan's part in this process. The Japanese have started saying openly that they want to

move away from having the dollar as the only reserve currency in the Western world. They want several key currencies, including the yen, and I think this whole range of issues is going to play an increasingly important role. Now for a long time I think the Soviet Union will not be able to exercise much influence in these discussions because it's so much in a position of a *demandeur*. It wants Western technology, it wants access to hard currency and it has very little to offer in return by comparison with the others. By the way, I agree very much with Giorgio on the Third World. A study was done recently in the US showing that the Third World has lost twice as much in terms of exports to the OECD countries as a result of trade barriers, as it gets in aid from them. And the capital flows from many of the Third World countries are into the rich countries instead of the other way round.

Giorgio There is a net financial flow from South to North...

Denis I agree, but again when Gorbachev raises these issues, as he did, people say, 'well look, that's all very well, but you hardly give any aid yourselves, you haven't done much lending. And what lending you've done is largely to countries which share your political views and you've done it for political reasons.' I think that the Soviet leadership, and many of the people who advise it like Aganbegyan, who have a great deal of contact with the Western world, are beginning to realise that if they join the GATT and the IMF, as they now would like to, they'll have to accept the responsibilities as well as enjoy the advantages.

Victor The crucial thing is for the Soviet Union to become a member of the international division of labour. This constitutes the basis for all our deliberations on the subject. There has never been an understanding of this necessity by previous Soviet leaderships. The historic merit of Gorbachev and the people who support him and the new administration, is that at last we have realised that without becoming a member of the international division of labour, we won't be able to produce the commodities needed by the Soviet people, we won't be able to compete in the international arena. Now while accepting some of Denis' points on the Soviet role in the Third World, we have played a rather significant role in the economies of some developing countries. I can cite India, Egypt, not to speak of Syria, Indonesia and many other parts of the world. We were providing help and assistance on the basis of our economic performance, with all its virtues and shortcomings.

Finally, I want to come back to what Giorgio said about Gorbachev and Brezhnev. Let us not forget that the Helsinki agreement in 1975 became possible under Brezhnev, but we have not yet fulfilled certain stipulations of the Helsinki agreement. The Helsinki-isation of Soviet foreign policy is now a

priority under Gorbachev. The most important thing about Gorbachev is not these new ideas and initiatives, for they could be carried through by someone else, but *perestroika* and *glasnost* at home. Priority lies back at home. We must do away with the alienation of the masses, which has unfortunately become a reality under socialism.

You are saying that these foreign policy changes are a process which has been going on longer, and is no longer dependent upon Gorbachev.

Victor Sure, to confine all the changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union to Gorbachev is wrong. It goes without saying.

Charles Can I question that thesis for a second? I wonder if you underestimate the qualities of leadership this man possesses, that we haven't seen before, and we are not seeing anywhere else. What you've got in the world at the moment, and have had for the last two or three years, is a single person occupying the very centre of the world stage, to such an extent that the president of the US can only share that spotlight, maybe even only the edge of it, when he goes for a summit meeting with Gorbachev. Consider the implications of that in countries like Germany, in the Third World, in India, in the Middle East. I don't believe that any other Soviet leader who might have had the same idea and recognised the same imperatives in Soviet society, could have had the success he's had. Of course it's limited, and we know it's limited, but who else could have rallied not just Soviet intellectuals, but intellectuals in the outside world in support, and gradually be converting even



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Americans to the notion, which is a very difficult thing for them to accept, that this is not necessarily the ultimate enemy who wants to conquer them.

Victor It is not enough to praise Gorbachev, to shower him with compliments, as the Western press is doing. The thing is to reciprocate what he is suggesting.

Charles That is stage two. Stage one is to accept that the guy is being honest, which for example, Thatcher long before Reagan accepted, Denis I think you'll agree. And the second stage is to reciprocate and we are now, still to some extent, at the acceptance stage.

Victor Gorbachev enjoys immense

popularity in the Soviet Union. He is widely respected, but knowing our history, you must understand that we are fed up with the cult of personality. We don't want that kind of thing. Gorbachev is prepared to accept criticism and you will find plenty of critical remarks in the media.

Denis I think the first and vital thing is that Gorbachev has been a tremendous success in his external policy. He's changed Soviet policy towards the outside world, in ways he hasn't yet succeeded in doing inside, because inside the Soviet Union, according to what he and others say, he is faced with cynicism among the people and with the opposition of an enormous state and party bureaucracy which is terrified of losing its privileges. Now, foreign policy is made in all countries by a few hundred people, and in the Soviet Union those people have all been changed, in the party machine as well as in the foreign office. The old guard have gone and the new people are extremely able. Now the plain fact is that though all the experts in all the defence ministries in all the Nato countries were against the final INF agreement, because of Gorbachev, all the governments of those countries had to override their experts and pretend they welcomed it. So there you've had an enormous success which is due to Gorbachev's personal appeal to the people of the West over the heads of their governments. Second success; regional issues. Discussions between Russia and America on the Middle East started between Vance and Gromyko and then they were torpedoed by the invasion of Afghanistan. But since then you've had the Afghanistan settlement, you've had the settlement which has a good chance of succeeding over Angola, you've had a settlement which didn't involve the Americans very directly, but did involve the Chinese over Kampuchea, and you've got a number of other issues of that nature coming along.

Now, I think the great contribution which Gorbachev has already made has been to shift the executive branch into full support of his policy, in such a way that he has been able to attract a response, and a positive response, from Western governments. What I think is worrying the Western governments now is that the process has gone so far that when they get down to the most difficult allied problem of the conventional force balance in Europe, the Western governments are just not used to reacting collectively. They wait for the Americans to give a lead and then they respond, but Germany is no longer prepared for that - Genscher, the German foreign minister, was the first Western leader to recognise the sincerity and importance of Gorbachev. The problem of inter-allied diplomacy which Nato faces is a very difficult one indeed. In the end I think the Americans will probably have to force the issue. Bush wants to cut his forces in

Germany. You'll get reciprocal unilateralism because the Americans and the Germans can't keep their forces up to their present levels, the Germans for demographic reasons, the Americans for economic reasons. But it's dangerous if this process takes place only through reciprocal unilateralism, because there are so many policy issues involved which need to be dealt with at the same time: the changing relationship inside the West European countries, inside the East European countries, their relationships with one another - all this needs really to be managed consciously.

Isn't one of the problems with the way in which the West has been reacting to Gorbachev simply that there hasn't been the equivalent degree of original new thinking? The Nato response to the speech, to the cuts and the rest of it, was essentially disappointing. Let me just raise one original piece of thinking, which came from Admiral Schmelling, the now chastised German admiral, who suggested the radical and appalling thought, it seems, of destroying both Nato and the Warsaw Pact military units and coming up with a new scenario. The man is now being removed from active duty for the moment, we will see what happens. But it was an attempt to look at an original way forward and there is surely not enough of that going on in the West...

Denis The tragedy is that there is a lot going on, but it's not going on at the moment in the governmental machine. The interesting thing is that all my chums in the US when I was defence secretary, like MacNamara and Bundy, have all been making the sort of proposals which Gorbachev is now making. There are lots of people like that in Germany, mainly in the SPD. But getting it through the Nato bureaucracy is appallingly difficult.

But that brings us back to the problem that the West is worried about the survivability of Gorbachev. Everytime you criticise Nato's failure to come up with an original response, the answer comes back, 'but how can we believe that Gorbachev will survive?'

Giorgio On this question of reciprocity, of the Western response. First, I understand why we sometimes use the term 'to help Gorbachev'. But it's not completely correct. Of course, we want to give a positive answer to the opportunities Gorbachev is creating, not only for the West, but for peace and cooperation. But the basis must be mutual advantage, in disarmament, in resolving regional conflicts, in all fields. There is no other possible policy, neither for Gorbachev nor for the West.

I must say, just to be a little more optimistic, that a good example of new thinking was an unofficial but highly authoritative US report entitled 'How should we respond to Gorbachev?' by the Institute for East/West Security



**Charles:
'What you've
got at the
moment is a
single person
occupying
the very
centre of the
world stage'**



Studies. The concept was mutual advantage as a basis for giving answers to Gorbachev. Take the INF treaty. It has been a success for Gorbachev. At the beginning the double zero option was more or less an American propaganda ploy, but eventually it turned out to be a positive answer to the new position of the Soviet leadership. Take regional conflicts. The Soviet Union is again virtually into dialogue and possible negotiation in the Middle East, having been kept out for years. With Nicaragua there has been a certain change, particularly in the American congress. Angola is a success - the Americans can see the withdrawal of the Cubans, but at the same time it is a success for the Soviet Union, and for all people, with the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia. And in economic terms, Italy, West Germany and France are doing something concretely to intensify trade relations, common projects, common investment programmes, joint ventures, in their own long-term interest and in the interest of the modernisation and growth of the Soviet economy. It is only a beginning, but an interesting beginning.

The most negative point is the answer, if we can call it such, of Nato to proposals on conventional armaments. There was a very strong position taken immediately after Gorbachev's in the UN by the German SPD criticising Nato's too negative attitude and suggesting that it was now possible for the West to unilaterally cut battlefield nuclear weapons. That would be a concrete answer. But I still agree with Denis, the problem is not only to go on with unilateral reciprocal concessions. It is fundamental now to start with serious negotiations after the conclusion of the conference in Vienna and if we can put pressure on our governments, we have some chance.

Denis Could I just make one point about survival? I am very agnostic about the extent to which Gorbachev will achieve the sort of *perestroika* he wants inside the Soviet Union within the timescale he wants to achieve it. I think one has to be uncertain about that. I think that the change in Soviet foreign policy has come to stay, partly because the bureaucratic machine has already been changed, but mainly because what Gorbachev says is true. And forces will move the West to meet the Russians halfway, although it may be a slow business; in some cases it



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Victor:
**'Personally, I
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lear warheads, all these problems are coming at us at enormous speed, and I think the important thing is that you establish a working relationship between the blocs quickly so that they are capable of dealing with these new problems which are very difficult to foresee.

Last point, the only place I see real problems for Gorbachev would be if nationalism in some of the Soviet republics rather than Eastern Europe, became too powerful. I see that Abar-tov made the point, talking to some Americans recently, that the Russians would accept everything except seces-sion, that if there was an attempt to secede, they'd fight. He reminded his American audience that *they* fought against secession in the civil war.

There is an inevitable question which comes to mind when one talks about the gradual loosening of the blocs. What is to happen to the two Germanies and that symbol of less-than-free travel, the wall. What do you think, Victor, is going to happen to the wall?

Victor I expected this question! Personally, I am against all kinds of walls, including the Berlin wall, but I think it is still, to a very large extent, a question to be decided by the government of the German Democratic Republic. I belong to those trends in our foreign policy which are in favour of dismantling the wall, but I do remember being in Berlin and reading on this

wall the phrase: 'Jews and the Reds to the gas chamber.' Before that, I was of a single-minded opinion that it had to be removed, but this phrase bothered me.

Charles It's a red herring. I spent six years in Berlin as correspondent at various times. That wall is god knows how many miles long. There is graffiti from one end to the other and most of it is about sex. You get lots of people who write the most provocative slogans they can possibly think of on the wall.

Denis You know that on the wall in one place it says that 'sex will stunt your growth' and four feet below 'now he tells me!'

Charles I would suggest that even if Gorbachev and the Soviet leaders wanted that wall down - because it does to a certain extent reflect on the Soviet system as well as on the East German system, and presumably it was never put up by the Germans totally unilaterally - the East Germans would resist it, because what you've not had in East Germany is anything like the political development you've had in other East European countries.

Victor It is a delicate issue, I understand that.

Charles But right now I think you could take it down, I've discussed this with the East Germans many times over the last few years. What you would get is an awful lot of Germans going through the hole if you opened it up in order to visit the West, and I think something like 70 or 80% of them would go back again. And I don't think the reason which caused the wall to be built, namely the draining away of the intelligentsia and the young people of military age, exists any more.

Giorgio The strange thing is the combination in East Germany of ideological rigidity with such an external political flexibility. East Germany has become, as we were saying, the shadow or ghost thirteenth member of the European Community. I don't know whether in dismantling the wall so many people as 20 years ago would go to the West without going back to the East. The situation in East Germany, at least in economic and social terms, is much better than in the past.

Victor I would not overestimate the possibilities of the Soviet Union influencing even its allies, because every socialist country has its own politics and although we are quite unhappy about certain trends in various countries, we can't possibly impose on them now the vision and the ideas that we put forward.

Giorgio We raised the question of Czechoslovakia in our conversations with the Soviet leadership and I must say that my impression is that while the present Czechoslovak leadership was imposed 20 years ago by the Soviet intervention, today the Soviet Union has great difficulty in imposing a change in a democratic direction. And my impression is that Gorbachev and his collaborators are very cautious on all issues regarding Eastern European

allies. But I am personally convinced that there was a positive Soviet influence in relation to the decision of the Czechoslovak authorities to give Dubcek permission to visit Italy recently.

Denis I think the problem the Soviet Union has in normalising the politics in Eastern Europe is a very serious one indeed. The Western powers will have to be very sensitive indeed in how they play their part in a process which is bound to happen, in which Eastern Europe may return to the European home before the Soviet Union.

Charles Can we explore where the new commitment to human rights might lead in the context of Eastern Europe. Now, presumably, if human rights includes freedom of expression, it also includes freedom of association, freedom to form political parties, freedom to form opposition parties, freedom to have what the West calls, to use the cliché, 'free elections'. Now what happens if, in a country like Poland, where it is possible to predict the outcome of such an election, you allow an organisation like Solidarity, which is not so much a trade union as a mass movement, to stand and the existing communist government is pushed out of power? You then get what we in the West would call a parliamentary democracy of some kind. Imagine then the country decides to leave the Warsaw Pact, that it no longer wants the same relationship with its socialist neighbour, the Soviet Union. Is such a scenario something that Gorbachev can accept and watch happen as a bystander?

Victor You understand that I can't speak on behalf of Gorbachev! The only thing I can say is that he stressed several times, including in his UN speech, that we do not pretend to be holders of eternal truths. We are prepared to accept criticism, we have committed plenty of blunders and to a certain extent, it's me speaking not Gorbachev, we have demonstrated to the world how not to build socialism rather than how to build it. So speaking of the countries of Eastern Europe, you can't impose your own vision of happiness on them if they wish to go along the lines which you have described. Go ahead, that's my answer, it's up to them. Look at the processes taking place in Hungary. Could you contemplate the idea of Soviet troops intervening in the political processes in Hungary. No. Unimaginable.

Charles Not now, but maybe in 10 years time, yes.

Victor I doubt that. I am a great believer in human progress.

Charles One of the problems is that no one can be absolutely sure that the pendulum might not swing back. I'm not suggesting for a moment that it will, I don't think anything in the Soviet Union will ever quite get back to where it was before. But it is perfectly possible that *perestroika* will fail, *glasnost* will shrink, and that the Brezhnev doctrine will come back.

Giorgio A very strong point made by Gorbachev, which he frequently repeats, is, 'We have no alternative, there is nothing behind us, we cannot withdraw', and he said once, 'I could leave, my collaborators could leave, we could be substituted and for a short period, somebody could go back to the past, but inevitably, the same questions which opened the way to *perestroika* would emerge again.' I think this is a very strong point.

Victor The key to the irreversibility of the changes in our foreign policy lies at home. Democratisation at home is the best guarantee that any state will behave according to certain rules. It remains to be seen whether Western states will be prepared to accept the high standards now set by Gorbachev for foreign policy, based on interdependence and universal human values.

Giorgio You know a Hungarian leader told me a few weeks ago that they were accustoming themselves to the idea that in the next election, on the basis of new rules, the Communist Party will not have an absolute majority in the new parliament. So they are thinking of the possibility of a broad coalition government while retaining the alliance with the Soviet Union. A loosening or softening of the blocs must mean an alliance on rather different terms, with much more autonomy.

Denis The one thing that I think we in the West underestimated, and I personally speak now as someone who lived through that postwar period, has been the obsessive desire of the Russians, after Napoleon and Hitler, to have a really good *cordon sanitaire*. The security element dominated Soviet policy, the desire to keep the enemy as far away as possible. What tipped the balance in Hungary in 1956 in favour of military intervention was Nagy's extremely unwise statement that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact. And therefore, if we want to see the developments I think we would all like in Eastern Europe, the really important thing is that the West has got to play its part in guaranteeing Soviet security and that is best done by continuing the process of collective security and interdependence while avoiding provocation, which wasn't the case in 1956 with Hungary when Radio Free Europe was promising all sorts of aid to the opponents of the Soviet regime. •



**Jon:
'Isn't one of the problems with the way in which the West has been reacting to Gorbachev simply that there hasn't been the equivalent degree of original new thinking?'**

