The Conception (1985–1991)

As said above, the ideas of the new thinking were not fixed for all time. They constantly evolved. Three main phases in their development can be identied.

The first phase was connected, above all, with the position put forward at the Twenty-seventh CPSU Congress and the deepening of that position in the subsequent period. It was characterized by a theoretical-political analysis of major changes in the world that had taken place since World War II and by the political requirements those changes raised. The practical task was to search for a realistic way to end the Cold War and find a way out of the vicious circle of mistrust, hostility, and confrontation.

The second phase found expression, above all, in the speech by the general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee at the UN General Assembly on December 7, 1988, at a time when the first changes for the better in international affairs were becoming evident. This phase was marked by the advancement of major ideas having to do with prospects for planetwide development. We were no longer talking about "the struggle between two camps" but about the global interests of humanity, the principles of a new world order, and the urgent need for a future based on the codevelopment of all members of the international community.

The third phase was reached in 1990–91. It embodied the idea that changes in the realm of international relations alone were insufficient, that the future of humanity could be reliably assured only along the lines of a new paradigm of civilization itself, in a process in which a new form of civilization was emerging.

What are the basic postulates of the new thinking? Its starting point is the recognition that despite their dissimilarities all the nations of the world are interdependent. We speak of recognition because this interdependence,

which is a form of unity or oneness, had been taking shape for decades. This dynamic had been studied by scientists and scholars outside the Soviet Union and was taken into account by Western foreign policy. As early as 1975, for example, Henry Kissinger declared that global interdependence had become a central factor of U.S. diplomacy. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, this viewpoint concerning interdependence was perceived as an "alien class" concept. Nonetheless interdependence was a tangible reality, impossible to disregard, and by the mid-1980s it had become the foremost tendency in world relations.

On the one hand, the internationalization of economic life, the mutual influence or reciprocal effect of political decisions taken by various nations, and the formation of an increasingly dense worldwide informational and cultural network—all this was creating an entirely new picture of the world. On the other hand, many complicated and acute global problems had accumulated—for example, problems of ecology, demography, raw materials, and energy sources—and were impossible to resolve within the framework of a single country or even region.

Along with these global problems, national and regional difficulties continued, which included social and class problems. In the last analysis, the resolution of these problems proved limited or entirely impossible unless the new global realities of a world that was becoming a single whole were taken into account.

A new configuration of the driving political interests was taking shape. Interests that were not national, local, or class-based but universal were coming to the fore. It was precisely the satisfaction of these needs that turned out to be the precondition for satisfying all others. The conclusion that in our day universal human interests and values take priority essentially became the core of the new thinking.

This proposition that universal human values must take priority largely contradicted the views that had become solidly established almost everywhere. The assimilation of these new realities in the Soviet Union proved especially difficult because the conception of world development that had become entrenched in our country after the 1917 revolution was based on the postulate of an inevitable, profound division in the world. Despite the major shifts that had taken place, the old views and the old approach to problems still remained in the arsenal of the Soviet government.

Let me return to the question of the wholeness and interdependence of the world. The recognition that interdependence was the real state of affairs

in the world meant that the foremost trend of development was not one of ever deepening division but one of ever greater unity in the worldwide system. And the Soviet Union—as a part of this system—should search for and find its new place within this framework.

An international conference of political parties and movements held in Moscow in November 1987 formulated the conclusion that it was no longer possible to regard world development solely from the standpoint of the struggle between two opposing social systems. From this it followed that international relations had to be freed of ideologies. At the UN General Assembly in December 1988 I argued that it was necessary for cooperation to develop into "co-creation" and "co-development."

The second fundamental proposition of the new thinking was that we had to allow for diversity among nations as well as their interdependence and common interests. Thus a key force driving modern progress is the dialectic between wholeness and diversity, between unity and individuality, and between nations and regions. The world is not uniform but exhibits unity within diversity, the juxtaposition and harmonization of differences.

These propositions of course are not new. What new contribution did the new thinking make to the understanding of this reality? It carried the recognition of diversity to the necessary logical conclusion: recognition of the fact, above all, of the undeniable freedom of choice for all peoples, the freedom to choose their own path of development and way of life.

Every country and every nationality has its own rights, national interests, and aspirations. This is a most important reality of our times. But the assertion of these rights and freedoms has obviously outpaced the ability of some political leaders in the major Western countries to understand and grasp the significance of the irreversible changes that have taken place. Hence the relapses into attempts to impose hegemony, subordinate other countries to the interests of the major Western powers, and dictate to other countries by political, economic, or military means. Any attempts at interference in the internal affairs of another country must be ruled out. It is equally impermissible to attempt to destabilize legal governments from the outside. This kind of approach is the essential prerequisite for genuine democratization in world politics. Many people talk about democratization, but too often they forget: This is not just a verbal exercise; it must be carried out in political practice—above all, in the political practice of the strongest and largest states. The behavior of these states decisively determines the character and forms of development of international relations. Have the

politicians assimilated this reality? On the level of rhetoric, yes. But there are still too many instances that prevent us from giving a positive answer to this question.

A big question is whether a contradiction exists between the increasing unity of the world and ensuring real freedom of choice. There is certainly a contradiction. As the world becomes more integrated and interdependent, it is, figuratively speaking, shrinking, but at the same time it is becoming increasingly multifaceted. In a sense it is expanding. We cannot ignore either of these tendencies as they are two sides of the same dialectically developing process.

"To oppose freedom of choice is to set oneself in opposition to the objective course of history." This is a statement from my report at the Nineteenth CPSU Party Conference in June 1988. I concluded that our concept of freedom of choice occupied a key place in the new thinking. Taking into account the new situation in the world, the problem of interests must be addressed in a new way. Instead of some countries imposing their interests on others, a genuine balancing of interests in international relations must be found.

To be sure, it is important that every nation properly identify its own interests. This is the politicians' responsibility in every country and a measure of the honesty of their intentions.

Finally, a third group of problems that was addressed by the new thinking involves the nature of modern weaponry and humanity's entry into the age of nuclear missiles.

Albert Einstein was one of the first to speak of the necessity for new thinking in the nuclear age. But no one listened to his warnings. (In general, scientific conclusions usually go unheeded even today.) Yet the very first atomic bomb explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated that we had entered a new stage in human history. For the first time in its history, the human race had weapons that could extinguish all life on earth. The Day of Judgment, instead of being a biblical allegory, could become a reality, a tragedy made by human hands. This realization was what dictated my statement as CPSU general secretary on January 15, 1986. The main point of that statement was the proposal that we move toward a nonnuclear world in the twenty-first century.

Deep reflection on the situation, on the possible consequences if weapons of mass destruction were used, forced us to draw three theoretical-political conclusions of prime importance.

The first was that the nature of modern weaponry leaves no country any hope of defending itself by purely military and technical means, not even if, for example, it created the most powerful defense system possible. The problem of guaranteeing security appears more and more clearly as a political problem that can and must be solved, above all, by political means. And political means imply negotiations—and still more negotiations. Negotiations presuppose patience, tolerance, and a consistent search for mutually acceptable compromises.

Security could no longer be built on the fear of an inevitable retaliation, meaning that the doctrines of containment or mutually assured destruction were outdated. The only sure way to security was to eliminate nuclear weapons and to reduce and limit weapons production in general. Throughout history the justification for warfare, its "rational purpose," was the possibility of achieving certain political goals by military means. But nuclear war is irrational; it makes no sense. Worse yet, even warfare involving only conventional weapons could have consequences comparable to those of a nuclear war in view of the widespread existence of countless nuclear power stations, nuclear-fuel production plants, and nuclear storage facilities, as well as petrochemical and chemical plants in general—damage to any of which would itself cause enormous disasters. Thus a completely new situation has arisen: It is impossible to achieve political goals by using modern weapons, above all, nuclear arms. On the other hand, it is entirely possible to plunge all of humanity into the abyss of destruction.

A second conclusion—actually a corollary of the first—is that politics based on the use of force is doomed.

Of course there are attempts to show that this is not so, that wars—even small ones—can still serve as a continuation of politics by other means and can produce definite results. But the experience of the entire era since World War II shows that not a single armed conflict has given its participants or, above all, its initiators any serious political dividends.

A peace based on positions of strength is internally unstable, no matter how one may argue the case. By its very nature, such a peace is based on confrontation, secret or open, on the constant danger of eruptions of fighting, the constant temptation to attempt to achieve one's aims through the use of force. This kind of peace is advantageous (if under present-day criteria such a thing can be considered an advantage) only to the arms manufacturers.

It is already true today and will especially be true in the future that the authority or prestige of a government, and its place in the international

community, will increasingly be defined not by the size of its armies but by its civilized conduct, by its commitment to universal human interests, by the freedom and prosperity of its citizens, by its ability to preserve and enrich its uniqueness not at the expense of others but through honest and mutually advantageous cooperation with others.

We must be realists. The road to such a world will be long and difficult. Renunciation of the use of force in politics, renunciation of the practice of measuring the security of a country by its armed strength—these aims will not be achieved all at once.

With minimal agreement among nations, the field of operation for the politics of force can be limited or narrowed. Unsanctioned use of force on an international level would immediately be subjected to rigorous collective counteraction.

A third conclusion, which is a logical continuation of the first two, is that security under contemporary conditions (especially if we speak of the major nuclear powers) can only be mutual. Taking world relations as a whole, security can only be universal.

These were the considerations that inspired Soviet policy, leading us to advance a program in 1986 for creating a universal system of international security that would encompass not only military but also political, economic, and humanitarian fields.

The theory and methodology of the new thinking were based on the desire to combine military policy with a moral approach to world affairs. This is a highly complicated task; much has been said and written about it in the past as well as at the present time, but no solutions have yet been found. We cannot say that a full solution was achieved even in the perestroika era. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the basic international decisions made in that era did correspond to principles of morality. Reflections on the essential problems of the modern world, the ways in which the world has been developing, and the principles of relations among nations gradually led us to the following conclusion: It is impossible to provide for and guarantee new horizons in the future by limiting oneself to the improvement of international relations—that is, the existing ties among nations. The ultimate solutions lie in the very basic elements of human existence, the deep-running processes that determine the life of the human community.

"A new revolution in consciousness is needed," I stated in Rome on November 30, 1989, on the eve of a meeting with President Bush. "Only on this basis will a new culture and a new politics adequate to the challenge of

the times be created. The key point of support in this experiment or attempt at solving this world-historical problem will be the eternal moral precepts, or, as Marx called them, the simple laws of morality and humaneness.

I devoted much attention to this topic in a speech I gave on May 31, 1990, at a meeting with intellectuals in the United States:

> It seems to me that in recent times a very general idea stands out ever more clearly, one that has taken hold of people's minds on the eve of the twenty-first century. This is the idea of universal unity. To embody this idea in practical terms is an epoch-making task. . . . For humanity to rise to a level at which it can realize the meaning of its own history, this must occur without irreparable harm to the environment, without exploitation of some by others and certainly not of entire nations, and without irreversible moral and spiritual losses.

These ideas were not fully fleshed out before the end of 1991. But they did serve as a kind of spiritual culmination of the explorations connected with the emergence of the new thinking.

Thus far we have spoken about the basic conclusions of the new thinking in the form in which they were stated and applied in the years from 1985 to 1991. These conclusions were subsequently developed further in theoretical aspects, but we will discuss that in a later chapter. For now, we must try to answer an important question: What were the practical results of applying the principles of the new thinking?