

## How We Can Encourage Gorbachev's Changes

To the Editor:

The recent steps toward greater internal freedom in the Soviet Union are so significant that even Andrei D. Sakharov expresses the view they represent a fundamental change (news story, Feb. 12).

Yet the prevailing reaction of American commentators to moves that would have won universal praise just a few years ago has been to warn that we should not yield our applause to partial measures. The tone of some of these assessments is that we must never accept as genuine progress anything less than the Soviet political system's becoming a duplicate of ours. Such views are not only unrealistic but also counterproductive to their authors' declared purposes.

Plainly, as long as the Soviet Union holds even one prisoner of conscience, that is one too many — and we should not hesitate to say so. But just as plainly, Mikhail S. Gorbachev

will not continue on his present course over substantial internal opposition unless he sees some gains. Whatever the Soviet leader's personal desires, Soviet hard-liners will not permit him to do so.

What our foreign policy needs is a measure of moderation and predictability. We should make clear that particular reforms will be met with particular concessions, further reforms with further concessions.

If our response to this historic moment is instead to insist on all or nothing, we are likely to wind up with nothing.

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