

Mikhail Gorbachev's opening speech at Supreme Soviet

Here follows the full text of Mikhail Gorbachev's opening speech at the Third Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet on February 14.

Comrades,

Opening the Third Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, I would like to declare with full conviction that by the nature of questions before it, the session by far transcends the boundaries of an ordinary parliamentary assembly. The session should pass laws, the realisation of which will lead to specific, qualitative changes in the development of our society. This also underlines its importance for the country's life and our greatest responsibility.

I cannot but mention the peculiarities of the situation in which we begin our work. The main thing is that perestroika, which has swept all spheres of life and strata, has gone a long way towards democracy, glasnost and freedom, the unshackling of people's minds and energy. The policy of revolutionary renewal – it is an indisputable fact – has sharply accelerated the country's public development.

At the same time, as the Second Congress of People's Deputies and the plenary meeting of the Party Central Committee stressed, there is growing dissatisfaction in the country with the pace, rates and results of perestroika processes, with the situation on the consumer market, the exacerbation of inter-ethnic problems and the slackening of order.

Today society is actually united in its demand to step up work in all areas, to sharply enhance efficiency and responsibility, to put things in order and enhance discipline. Generally speaking, comrades, we have approached a frontier which calls for rapid and resolute actions, in the sphere of the economy in the first place.

Urgent and long-term measures to revitalise the economy, proposed by the government, were endorsed by the Congress of People's Deputies. For all its significance, it is only a programme which should be followed by everyday, persistent work of the government itself and all bodies from top to bottom subordinate to it. And naturally the labour collectives of the country.

The first six weeks of 1990 have not defused

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our anxiety. There is too much toing and froing and lack of organisation at the level of central organs in realising the outlined measures. Elementary efficiency is lacking at a time when no one can afford to sit idle. The process whereby the management of the economy is weakened has not been stopped yet. Direct economic ties between enterprises are too slow in coming, and the mechanism to restrict monopolism and of group interests does not function. This cannot go unnoticed. Action is needed. Where economic approaches have not been elaborated yet, the old ones should be used. It is a salient feature of the transitional period that the interaction of both is permissible, naturally with the accent laid on the new, on the movement ahead.

If there are no powers for this, it is essential to see to it that such powers are given. But if there is a lack of ability or simply responsibility, then the talk should be quite different.

Very much, undoubtedly, depends on the government and central bodies. But an immense responsibility for the implementation of the planned programme also rests with republican, local bodies, particularly concerning food, the light and food industries, the service sector, transport, and trade – everything that concerns the everyday needs of the population.

Our cadres at local level are getting rid of dependence tendencies slowly. Social tension in many cases arises owing to their sluggishness or, if you will, irresponsibility.

It is a fact that railway transport is literally a shambles and prompt unloading of railway cars has not been established anywhere. As a result, consumer goods, food, components, raw and other material resources essential for the stable operation of enterprises do not reach their destination.

We must act now so that urgent, closely interconnected measures can be taken simultaneously, and the economic reform can be resolutely carried forward.

These are two sides of the same coin. Along the road to reform, the introduction of new powerful incentives for labour productivity and the development of initiative should be ensured, and the door should be opened for new forms of economic management. There is no other way – on this score there is consensus in society.

The experience of the recent period indicates once again that all urgent problems of today can be radically resolved precisely along the road of restructuring the entire economic mechanism and, what is more, of the entire system of production relations.

A delay with perestroika and with radical economic reform can aggravate our difficulties still further.

Much in this respect depends on the Supreme Soviet and its current session, from which the country primarily expects laws on ownership and land, actually an entire package of economic laws.

The necessity of reforms and transformations is felt in other spheres just as keenly. Take, for example inter-ethnic relations. We are all disturbed by what is happening in a number of regions.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that it is

possible to genuinely undo conflict tangles, which lead to loss of life and material losses, and to stop dangerous centrifugal and secessionist trends only by accelerating the radical transformation of the Soviet federation.

Something else is also obvious: measures in this respect should combine resolute actions to protect the legitimate rights of people of all nationalities wherever they live.

We all keenly feel the tragic events in the country's south, which led to the loss of life and drove people from their homes on a mass scale.

On behalf of the Supreme Soviet, I would like to express the deepest condolences to families that lost their kith and kin and to those who found themselves in misfortune, abandoning their homes and homeland.

Every effort had been made to find a political solution to the issues that arose. But when nothing else could be done to prevent the death of thousands of people, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet adopted to emergency measures.

The situation there is under control, if one may put it this way, but strain remains. We should set aside a period of time, as was agreed upon earlier – and I was told that there is such a desire among the republics – to consider the situation that has taken shape and to try once again to find a reasonable approach through common efforts.

Life has shown that the Supreme Soviet's December session made the correct decisions. The rejection of these decisions resulted in a dramatic turn for the worse. The decisions sought to combine the interests of the two peoples, to confirm the sovereign rights and integrity of Azerbaijan and to provide all necessary guarantees for the development of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. This is the formula, and it deserves attention when we return to the issue.

The latest developments in Dushanbe, where the fire spread from Baku, also indicate the extreme danger of inter-ethnic strife.

This is a kind of chain reaction accompanied by an orgy of violence. The country's destiny and the safety of our citizens are at stake, comrades. We must do everything to put out the fire.

We must resolutely counteract those who stir up nationalist feelings and provoke clashes. These people are acting deceptively. Remaining in the shadows, they are inconspicuous among the mass of people and push young people, women and children to the front. The draft of the relevant law has been submitted to the Supreme Soviet. It is expedient to instruct the commission on legality, law and order to prepare it for consideration and adoption so that it can go into effect as soon as possible. We can't afford to be slow.

Comrades, the current situation is characterised by the colossal politisation of our society. This has been one of the main goals of perestroika, and one can only welcome the fact that the broad mass of people has become involved in the management of the state and the society. The elections will complete the formation of the

(Continued on next page)

Soviet Parliament discuss crucial property bill

SOVIET Deputy Prime Minister Leonid Abalkin has presented to deputies at the Soviet Parliament a new version of the property bill.

The draft, he said, proceeds from the recognition of the diversity of forms of property, their equal and competitive nature. This principle, Abalkin said, should be upheld as state policy, destroying the simplified view of one form of ownership as the best one — state, lease-holding or individual.

The bill lays down the provision that various forms of socialist ownership form the basis of the Soviet socio-economic system. It stands firm however on the inadmissibility of the exploitation of man by man.

The bill allows ownership by individuals, collectives, state and variants thereof. A special section deals with the legal status of ownership of joint ventures, foreign citizens, organisations and states.

Abalkin noted that it was decided not to include the term 'private property' in the new version, because it is unequivocal from the scientific point of view. Moreover, society has a negative attitude to the term 'private property'. At the same time the bill allows ownership by citizens of some capital goods. For example, a farmer can own a tractor and other agricultural equipment.

The speaker did not agree with press attacks on state ownership made in the course of the discussion. He said it is required but in a radically renovated form. The bill provides for a three-tier structure of state ownership:

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integral, new structure of soviets at the republic and local level. This, in itself, will mean a radical change in the functioning of our political system. The proposal by the February plenary meeting of the Central Committee that article six of the USSR Constitution should be changed has paramount importance.

These considerations and the continuing emergence of many new mass organisations have created a new situation in the country, and make it possible to direct the released energy of people into creative channels, in the interests of perestroika. It is in this vein that we consider the desire of those Soviet people who, at rallies and demonstrations, demand the acceleration of perestroika, the intensification of the struggle with bureaucratism, mismanagement, irresponsibility, the strict observance of laws, effective measures to combat crime and corruption, and putting transport, trade, services and the streets of our cities and towns in order. All this is natural in the development of democracy, glasnost and perestroika.

At the same time, comrades, I would like to draw your attention to the other side of the problem. It is very important that those people who pursue aims that are not in the interests of people and do not take advantage of this revolutionary democratic process, the awakened public initiative. Especially as we must be attentive to and duly consider any instigation against authorities, any violation of laws, any calls for violence or attempts to inflate discontent and sow panic. The culprits must get their just deserts.

The law-based state that we seek to create will be primarily distinguished by a diversity of views and interests in society that are free to assert themselves in the framework of political structures, to attain their goals through political means. This is the crux of the matter, comrades.

all-union, republican and communal.)

During work on the new version of the bill, consensus was not reached on all positions. Albalkin said there was no agreement on who should own land and natural resources: the union or republics. It is suggested that the issue be put off until after the problems of the Soviet federation are solved and write into the law only that land and its resources "belong to people living on a given territory."

The Deputy Prime Minister called on the deputies to consider this urgent issue in a balanced and careful way so as not to disrupt the frail balance between many points of view that has been reached in the course of prolonged preparatory work.

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USSR Supreme Soviet session property bill discussed.

A heated discussion began in the Soviet Parliament on the property bill submitted by Leonid Abalkin. The debate was bound to be critical after First Vice-President Anatoli Lukyanov suggested that deputies speak only about those items of the bill with which they did not agree. A five-minute time limit permitted 16 deputies to take the floor at the morning sitting.

As was expected, opinions clashed most strongly over the forms of property. Leonid Sukhov, a driver from Kharkov, in the Ukraine, believes that the bill proposes "the legalisation of private property." In his opinion, a law like this one will further worsen

I ask you, why have we introduced free election? Why do the Congress and the Supreme Soviet work? Why has broad glasnost been asserted? Why has the democratisation of society unfolded and extended?

All citizens and organisations espousing the Constitution can take part in the legal political process. Those who prefer intolerance, violence, and chaos can hardly be reckoned to be the democrats, they pass themselves to be, or supporters of pluralism and the free competition of ideas.

Our press and the mass media should draw a clear line between creative and destructive processes. It is impermissible for them to be used as a mouthpiece by instigators of disorder, strife, and violence.

The defence of our frail young democracy, the defence of the interests of people demand resolute actions from us. It is not only private interests and concerns, not only the well-being of individual social strata and groups of the population that are at stake today.

The point at issue is how perestroika will progress, if we will be able to achieve its noble goals along the ways of democracy, accord, without civil and inter-ethnic strife, and violence. Perestroika has revealed a variety of positions, judgments and views on current processes. This is normal. This process — one can forecast with certainty — will continue to develop. But we must have unity on the main thing: perestroika itself should be defended.

And finally: let us work, without going to extremes, and permanently remember our great possibilities and lurking dangers. Let us press on with our work and resolutely move forward.

Only in this way can we attain the major goals facing our state.

Let me wish you success in your work at this responsible stage of the activity of the USSR Supreme Soviet. I declare the Third Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet open. □

the economic situation of ordinary people. He demanded a nationwide referendum on the bill.

He was supported by Vavil Nosov, a machine operator from the Komi autonomous republic, northern Russia. He fears that if the selling and purchasing of land is allowed, land will be purchased by those who acquired money illegally.

Nosov was opposed by another worker, Vladimir Yudin from Magadan. He believes that the main meaning of the bill is to enable those who work honestly and hard to improve their living conditions.

Deputy Alexander Korshunov from Tashkent believes that it is too late to discuss the feasibility of private property, because it already exists in the country. He said that the most important thing was not to restrict the number of property forms, but to pursue a correct taxation policy. He was supported by Alexander Orlov, rector of a trade school from Chelyabinsk, the Urals region, who said that not enough attention was devoted in the bill to taxation.

Most speakers opposed the holding of a referendum on the property issue.

Soviet Parliament February 16:

Passions ran high in the Soviet Parliament over the fears that the introduction of private property would mean the end of socialism and widespread 'social stratification'.

Trade union delegate Karatai Turysov said the bill on ownership should enshrine 'socialist property'. The current draft mentions it only in the preamble.

"No one can explain what 'socialist property' is," Vladimir Tikhonov, of the Soviet co-operators' union, snapped back.

"This is just a phrase that impedes free enterprise in the Soviet Union," he said.

He was backed by political scientist Fyodor Burlatsky, who said the bill should be politically neutral.

A plant director from Udmurtia, Alexei Menshatov, spoke for private property, saying that family farms working 3.3 per cent of land account for a quarter of total agricultural output.

Kazakhstan's First Deputy Prime Minister Erik Gukasov proposed to sell land to all who wanted to buy it.

Several deputies opposed his proposal. Kim En Un, a fellow from Omsk University in Western Siberia, reminded Parliament that in the 20s, during rapid agricultural growth, land was not owned by the peasants.

All in all, 45 deputies took part in the debates on the issue.

The Supreme Soviet approved the bill in principle, giving its commission a week to finalise it and submit it for article-by-article discussion.

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DEPUTY Sergei Lushchikov noted, on behalf of the Parliamentary Legislation Committee, that the new edition of the law grants union republics extensive possibilities for specifying provisions in accordance with their national and historical traditions.

It is important that the law endorses a variety of forms of land management and recognises their equality, the deputy said. He disagreed with those who, during the nationwide discussion, said that the law is intended to destroy collective and state farms. The form of land management must be chosen by peasants themselves, with due account of specific conditions, and should not be imposed from

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Eduard Shevardnadze's speech in Canadian Parliament

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said that the USSR "clearly and without any reservations" welcomes democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe.

"We are marching in the same direction with our allies: we have abandoned impracticable and administrative models for organising social life," he noted.

Speaking on February 15 at the joint sitting of the foreign policy committees of the two chambers of the Canadian Parliament, Shevardnadze stressed the Soviet interest in the success of democratic changes in East European countries.

"I'd like to put it bluntly: we are not trying to put a brave face on a sorry business. Our national interest, our historic and even every-day interest lies in helping our neighbouring states be stable and prosperous. We shall only benefit by this."

The Soviet Minister who was in Canada on an official visit, said further that the Soviet Union "has no political problems concerning the stationing of our troops abroad."

He noted that the USSR stated two years ago that the Soviet aim is to bring troops inside its national borders.

Shevardnadze said that the only difficulty is

"to have the time to accomplish these conversions within the country in order to provide housing and work for the servicemen returning home."

Dealing with German reunification, the minister said that nobody doubts the right of Germans in the German Democratic Republic and West Germany to self-determination.

"But Germany's neighbours and European states also have the right to guarantees that a unified Germany, if it is established, will not be a threat, that it will not raise the question of redrawing European borders and that Nazism and fascism will not be revived."

Reminding the audience that the Second World War brought grief to untold numbers of families, the minister said: "they do not harbour hatred or ill feelings towards the German people, but they have a right to warn politicians about their responsibility for the past and the future."

Shevardnadze noted that "the German question has emerged at a very complicated time. It has turned out that about a dozen European countries are simultaneously in a state of transition from one state into another."

"The Soviet Union and Germany are among them. Such a period entails great dangers even under the best circumstances." Therefore, the

Soviet minister called for caution.

He warned against attempts by some politicians to play a lightning political chess tournament with a five-minute time-limit.

In the minister's opinion, the German question taught another lesson: people should not put off the solution of questions related to war and peace for a later date. "If we had agreed and begun the implementation of a programme for dismantling the structure of military confrontation in Europe in due time, the problem of German unity would have needed a quieter attitude and understanding."

Shevardnadze stressed that "the German question should be kept and discussed within the European process and should move in the direction, in which the whole Europe is marching: towards stronger security and development of co-operation." □

Shevardnadze: television interview

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said it is very important that the idea of the 'open skies' has been supported by all participants in the Ottawa conference. He said this indicates that a new stage of relations, new quality of confidence among states had been achieved. Shevardnadze gave an interview to Soviet Television on February 15.

"I believe this is a landmark in confidence-building," Shevardnadze said. He said that after the implementation of this idea, the questions of open space, open land, open seas and oceans will be on the agenda. "Enormous work lies ahead, but interesting and impressive horizons open," he said.

Regarding the German question, the Foreign Minister said: "I believe that together with our partners we have arrived at a very important decision and have found an appropriate form and mechanism so that the process of rapprochement, of unity of the German nation and related complex, difficult phenomena should become manageable."

The following formula has been arrived at: two plus four, that is the two German governments, of the German Democratic Republic and of West Germany, and the four powers – the Soviet Union, the United States, France, and Great Britain. Shevardnadze emphasised the importance of the fact that these states will be jointly deciding the external aspects of the rapprochement of the two German states.

"As to arrangements at the Vienna talks, I regard what has been achieved here as the follow-up to the Soviet-American dialogue in Moscow, where our positions had been brought closer. And here we have finally agreed that the USSR and the USA will each keep 195,000 troops in Central Europe."

Shevardnadze said the United States assumed the pledge not to surpass the 30-thousand ceiling in other European countries.

"Just as NATO member countries, we had a consultation on this matter with our allies, and this arrangement and mutual understanding suits the common interests," Shevardnadze said.

"I believe an important step has been taken to formulate by the end of the year the agreement on the reduction of conventional armament in Europe. This opens the prospects for a European summit," Shevardnadze said. □

Shevardnadze's *Izvestia* article

"THE last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan a year ago, on February 15," Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze writes in an article published by the newspaper *Izvestia* on February 14.

The Soviet Foreign Minister believes there are real prerequisites for advancing towards national reconciliation and political settlement in Afghanistan.

"We believe that there are the following stages on the way to Afghan settlement and this opinion is shared by leaders of the Republic of Afghanistan," Shevardnadze writes.

A broad dialogue with the participation of all political forces operating in Afghanistan and beyond its borders is of paramount importance to settlement.

Appropriate conditions should be created for an Afghan dialogue. Most importantly, the fighting must stop.

The nuts and bolts of the Afghan settlement will be the focus of the Afghan dialogue. It could be held in the form of an all-Afghan peace conference.

"The Afghans themselves must work out a mechanism for the internal settlement," Shevardnadze writes. "We believe a solid basis could be provided by the plan advanced by Afghanistan's President at the ninth non-aligned summit conference in Belgrade."

A period of transition could involve the preservation of the territories' status quo between the factions participating in the dialogue.

The Afghan question emerged in a certain extent because at various times a number of countries – above all the United States, Pakistan, Iran and the USSR – have been involved in it, Shevardnadze writes.

"In light of the importance of forming a consensus between the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan and Iran, we propose a conference of these four countries with the participation of the United Nations Secretary General or his representatives," the Soviet

Minister continues.

It is apparent that such a conference would not be valid without inviting representatives of the Afghan forces – the Republic of Afghanistan and various groups opposing it.

One of the key questions requiring an international consensus is the halting of arms deliveries to the warring Afghan sides and the simultaneous halting of military operations.

The halting of arms supplies would be a prologue to Afghanistan's demilitarisation. An international conference could register the status of Afghanistan as a neutral, demilitarised state.

The Soviet Union does not regard these ideas as the only possible platform for the Afghan settlement.

"We are prepared for constructive discussions with the United States, Pakistan and Iran on all aspects of the Afghan settlement. The Soviet side would meet with field commanders and with leaders of the Peshawar and other groups if these contacts are not wrongly interpreted as recognition of a 'transitional government.' We are also open to talks with Zahir Shah and his supporters and with everyone who would like to resolve the Afghan problem," Shevardnadze declared.

"Another humanitarian question of exceptional importance to us is the release of Soviet servicemen taken prisoner by the Afghan opposition. The Soviet Government and people are anxious about the fate of Soviet soldiers who continue to languish in captivity a year after the troop withdrawal was completed," Shevardnadze writes.

"The Soviet Foreign Ministry will not regard its mission as fulfilled until all Soviet soldiers are freed and reunited with their families," Shevardnadze emphasises.

"The Soviet Union is determined to do its utmost to ensure that neighbouring Afghanistan will again become a peaceful, independent, and non-aligned country, friendly to all peoples. We hope that the bleak chapter of internecine strife in the history of Afghanistan will close forever," the minister declared. □

Nikolai Ryzhkov's visit to Australia

Speech at dinner in Canberra

SOVIET Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov pointed to the improvement of the political atmosphere and the desire of most Asian and Pacific countries to seek their own security through political rather than military means.

He was speaking at a dinner arranged in his honour by Australian Prime Minister Robert Hawke in Canberra on February 14. Ryzhkov is in Australia on an official visit during a tour of several Asian and Pacific countries, including visits to Thailand and Singapore.

Ryzhkov noted at the same time that the situation in the region is complicated. The military presence is high in the area and some countries are involved in the expensive and dangerous arms race, he said.

Countries in the area do not use to the full opportunities to establish regional co-operation on an equal basis.

That is why President Gorbachev in his Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk speeches called on all Asian and Pacific countries to look jointly for ways to restructure regional relations and strengthen peace, security and co-operation.

The proposals on the relaxation of military tension in the region, buttressed by impressive practical measures are the essence of these initiatives. "We expect that the main military powers in the region will meet Soviet proposals halfway," Ryzhkov said.

Describing the state of relations between the USSR and Australia, he stressed that the Soviet Union regards broader co-operation between the two countries as a "priority area of Soviet

policy in the Asian-Pacific region and in the world arena."

Soviet-Australian relations have been developing in the right direction over the past few years, he noted.

The two countries are strengthening the political, including high-level, dialogue and consolidating their interaction in the international arena.

This dialogue is based on "the harmony or proximity of Soviet and Australian positions on important disarmament issues, including nuclear tests, nuclear non-proliferation, non-militarisation of space and prohibition and destruction of chemical stockpiles."

"We are also impressed by your government's unbiased and innovative approach to settling the Cambodian conflict," Ryzhkov continued.

Noting the existence of good prospects for the development and strengthening of bilateral co-operation in other areas, Ryzhkov noted that broader advantageous co-operation between the USSR and Australia accords with the interests of the Soviet and Australian people and is a contribution to the general improvement of the situation in the Asian-Pacific region.



News conference in Canberra

By TASS special correspondents *Alexie Voronin and Vadim Talanov*: SOVIET Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov expressed satisfaction with the results of his official visit to Australia. The visit gave a fresh impetus to economic relations and co-operation

in the foreign policy activity between the Soviet Union and Australia, Ryzhkov told a news conference in Canberra on February 15.

Noting that this is the first visit by a Soviet Prime Minister since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1942, Ryzhkov emphasised that many economic questions have been discussed during the visit.

"We have realised that Australian businessmen are greatly interested in co-operation with the Soviet Union," he said. "There is now more confidence in relations between the two countries. This is a good basis for relations, guaranteeing their further development."

The Australian side supports the transformations under way in the Soviet Union, the Soviet Prime Minister said with regard to the past negotiations. He said that matters of the economy and foreign policy were also discussed.

Ryzhkov said the situation in the Asia-Pacific region was discussed with the emphasis on the need to resolve the Cambodian conflict. The Soviet side once again expressed satisfaction and support for the proposals made by the Australian side for the solution of the Cambodian conflict with the participation of the United Nations, Ryzhkov said.

Other questions of the international situation, specifically processes in Eastern Europe and Soviet-American relations were also discussed, Ryzhkov said.

"We have come to realise that the Australian leadership, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and their colleagues approve of the Soviet initiatives and proposals in world politics and the steps the Soviet Union intends to take," he added.

The head of the Soviet Government noted the constructive character of the conversations and meetings he had in Australia. He said that they were imbued with benevolence and respectful attitude to the Soviet Union.

"We feel that the Australian people has a very positive attitude to the Soviet Union," he said.

Answering questions from journalists, Ryzhkov said that the Soviet Union is now at a very complex, crucial stage, when the old system is being eliminated, and a new system - in the economic and political area - is just emerging.

"We believe in perestroika and are of the opinion that we are on the right road," he said. "We shall continue on this road."

Ryzhkov also expressed the confidence that conflicts in the Soviet Union will not be an obstacle to the development of Soviet Union's business relations with foreign partners. He reminded those present of his invitation to Australian businessmen for co-operation, first of all in the Soviet Far-East. □

Ryzhkov's speech in Singapore

THE Soviet Union's foreign policy reflects perestroika in an international relations and the recognition of the priority of human values, freedom and a socio-political choice for all nations, Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, who is on an official visit in Singapore, said on February 16. He was speaking at a dinner given for him by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew.

This official visit is in line with this policy, Ryzhkov continued. With all the differences between the USSR and Singapore, they, as members of the world community, have common political and economic interests. These interests form a real basis "on which it is possible to develop mutually advantageous and equitable co-operation between the two countries for the benefit of their peoples." Ryzhkov believes that

this approach is acceptable to Singapore, "because it does not give unilateral advantages to anybody. Advantage can be only mutual."

Touching upon problems in the Asia-Pacific region, Ryzhkov pointed out that the USSR supported it becoming a zone of durable peace and broad mutually advantageous co-operation. He recalled the steps taken by the USSR to reduce its armaments in the Asian part of the USSR and to reduce the Soviet military presence in Mongolia and in the Kam Ranh naval facility in Vietnam. It was a Soviet initiative to begin discussing the limitation of naval armaments in the region.

Speaking about the Cambodian settlement, Ryzhkov said that the Soviet Union was ready "to contribute to working out a just and mutually acceptable decision on the basis of a balance of interests and reasonable compromises, and with due account for the real situation in Indochina. The undoing of the Cambodian knot will lead to a further lessening of tension in South-East Asia and will pave the way to putting into practice the idea of turning South-East Asia into a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality with a non-nuclear status. "The Soviet Union fully supports these concepts and is ready to promote their implementation," the Soviet Prime Minister said.

Speaking about those regional problems in the region on which "no significant progress has been achieved so far," Ryzhkov pointed to the "high militarisation level, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons there and high naval activity." He reiterated the Soviet Union's recognition of the "importance of the creation in the Asia-Pacific region of a multilateral negotiating mechanism that would permit every country of the region to take part in the discussion and settlement of regional problems." □

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Soviet Foreign Minister's interview with Soviet newspaper

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was completely pleased with the results of his trip to Canada to attend the international conference on open skies. On board the plane bound for Moscow, Shevardnadze told an *Izvestia* correspondent that the atmosphere at the conference was benevolent. He said there was no confrontation at the meeting and everybody was trying to avoid unnecessary aggravations.

Questions of reunification of Germany came up for discussion during the interview. Shevardnadze said it will not be as prompt as is predicted in Bonn. The reunification will probably take several years.

Shevardnadze believes the Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic Hans Modrow advanced a reasonable and balanced plan, admitting that reunification is a gradual process.

The Soviet minister believes that it is difficult to agree with the attitudes of some leaders who

turned the German problem, especially everything that related to the German Democratic Republic, into an issue of the election struggle.

"In a conversation with Genscher, I suggested that he ponder on the possible consequences," Shevardnadze said. "I noted that the Soviet Union has not yet had its full say. Let nobody think that Moscow will remain indifferent if the united Germany enters NATO. We have some variants to suggest," Shevardnadze said.

Shevardnadze does not agree that the Soviet Union was taken by surprise by the events in the question of Germany. He said the previous leaders of the GDR and Czechoslovak leaders did not keep up with the pace of events.

The Soviet Union could not impose its attitudes on them. One of the fundamental principles of new thinking is the refrain from diktat, from interference in internal affairs. At the same time, the minister does not believe the Warsaw Treaty Organisation can disintegrate.

"Until the German question is solved, Czechoslovakia, and the more so, Poland are interested in guarantees of stability. And the Warsaw Treaty provides precisely such guarantees," Shevardnadze said.

Focussing on Soviet-American relations, Shevardnadze noted that the Soviet Union is now building them in a different way. We have learned to look for and find rational substance in the proposals of our transoceanic partners," Shevardnadze said.

"Bush suggested cuts in the numerical strength of Soviet and American troops in Europe. We have thoroughly analysed the idea, and our positions were brought closer at the talks with Baker in Moscow. And now an agreement has been reached in Ottawa. One more knot has been untied," he went on.

The minister said there is no substance in reports in Western newspapers that the Soviet Union is to restore diplomatic relations with Israel in March.

"We have really taken definite steps toward normalisation. We have established consular, commercial and economic relations with Israel. But the Israelis themselves have complicated the situation recently. I mean the settlement of immigrants from the Soviet Union in occupied territories. This is an unreasonable and irresponsible policy on the part of Tel Aviv," Shevardnadze said. □

Shevardnadze meets Pakistani representative

Press conference at Anti-Zionist Committee

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze received on February 19 Iqbal Akhund, special representative of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and adviser to the head of the government for international affairs and national security.

Akhund handed over a message from Benazir Bhutto addressed to Mikhail Gorbachev.

During the meeting there was an exchange of opinions on some international and regional problems and prospects for the development of Soviet-Pakistani relations.

Akhund explained Pakistan's relations with India in connection with the tense situation in Kashmir. He set out the viewpoint of the Pakistani side on this matter.

Shevardnadze expressed the confidence that the Pakistani and Indian leaders by their joint efforts would find a way out of the situation. They have the necessary basis for solving disputes: the 1972 Simla Agreement.

Discussing the world situation, the sides noted with satisfaction that the main tendency in international affairs is the erosion of the policy of

confrontation and the establishment of mutual understanding and of a constructive dialogue.

Referring to the Soviet-American talks held recently in Moscow, Shevardnadze said that the sides confirmed their support for a comprehensive political settlement to regional conflicts under principles of national reconciliation.

The need for an early settlement to the Afghan problem was emphasised in this connection. This suits the interests of the Soviet Union and of Pakistan.

The Soviet side drew the attention of the Pakistani representative to a complex of Soviet-Afghan initiatives advanced on the eve of the anniversary of the Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It was said that the establishment of an inter-Afghan dialogue with the participation of all political forces would be promoted by a consensus among the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan and Iran which could be reached through a conference with the participation of the United Nations Secretary general or his representatives. Both the Republic of Afghanistan and the opposition could be invited to such a conference.

The establishment of a dialogue could be promoted by the working out of the question of introducing a cease-fire and halting arms deliveries to the warring sides and the removal of the existing stockpiles.

The importance of President Najibullah's proposals was emphasised. Najibullah expressed the readiness to send to Peshawar and Teheran delegations of Kabul representatives formed on a non-party basis and not to shell the places where opposition forces are deployed if the opposition stops shelling cities.

Shevardnadze also raised the question of the Pakistani Government's assistance to bringing about the release of Soviet servicemen taken prisoner in Afghanistan. Their destiny causes profound concern of all Soviet people.

Akhund assured Shevardnadze that the Pakistani side would be doing everything possible to solve this question in the spirit of humaneness and mercy. □

ISRAEL's illegal actions – the creation of settlements on occupied Arab lands – run counter to generally recognised standards of international law and undermine efforts to achieve a just solution to the Palestinian problem. This was stressed at a meeting with journalists held at the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public.

It was pointed out that the Soviet public was indignant over plans by the Israeli leadership to settle immigrants coming from the Soviet Union on occupied Arab lands. There were 13,000 of them last year.

Representatives of the Anti-Zionist Committee expressed solidarity with the struggle of the Arab people of Palestine against Zionist colonisation. They recalled that the Soviet Union had urged the convocation of the UN Security Council to discuss Israel's actions.

The collection *Perestroika and Jewish Problem* brought out by the Anti-Zionist Committee was shown to journalists at the meeting. It includes articles dealing with the development of Jewish culture and the activities of Jewish societies and organisations in the USSR.

Yuri Smirnov, Moscow's First Deputy Public Prosecutor, refuted rumours about pogroms allegedly being prepared in the city.

Anti-semitic and Zionist groups that became more active recently advocate ideas of national exclusiveness and isolation and create a favourable atmosphere for kindling national strife. Law-enforcement agencies will put an end to any manifestations of racism or chauvinism, said Boris Voronov, head of the Preventive Service of the Soviet Interior Ministry. □

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German unity: gut und schlecht

By Boris Korolev and Vladimir Markov, *Novosti* special correspondents:

MINISTERS from 23 NATO and Warsaw Treaty countries discussing the concept 'open skies' in Ottawa behind closed doors spoke 17 languages, but the accent was German. No matter what questions were raised, the issue of two Germanies going to become one always stuck out.

The pace of events is surpassing all expectations. Ist Das gut? Ist das schlecht? No one knows.

Bonn produced and Moscow endorsed the 'two plus four' formula: a dialogue between two Germanies is joined by the four states that guarantee the post-war German status quo.

In Ottawa, unexpectedly for observers and for participants, six foreign ministers from East Germany, West Germany, the Soviet Union, the United States, France and Britain had a first meeting. It launched the 'two plus four' mechanism.

How is it to be understood? Ist das gut? Ist das schlecht?

All six countries agree in recognising the Germans' right to self-determination, to independently shaping their future. The creation of the new mechanism does not alter anything here. That is good.

But building German unity – an expression of Mikhail Gorbachev – presupposes not only the solution of far from simple internal problems faced by the Germanies. Their domestic issues are closely intertwined with external ones – the

membership of both Germanies in military-political and economic groupings, and the commitments assumed by the Germans under multilateral and bilateral agreements, above all with neighbouring countries.

It is in the interests of all Germans and their neighbours that both German states should join in building this unity on an equal basis. At the start of the 'two plus four' mechanism this is guaranteed: Oskar Fischer and Hans-Dietrich Genscher attended the Ottawa meeting of the six on an equal footing. That is good.

To refrain from the temptation to impose terms on the current East German Government, and the one to be formed after March 18, is a task facing above all the Bonn cabinet and the leadership of the CDU/CSU, FDP, and SPD.

The gist of the German issue, its internal and external aspects is that war should never again start from German soil. This is reflected in a communique adopted by the six in Ottawa, which indicates that its meetings will be devoted to discussing external aspects of building German unity, including the security of neighbouring states. That is good, too.

One should think it is above all a matter of guaranteeing the post-war frontiers in Europe, including the Oder-Neisse border with Poland.

In spite of a desire by Bonn politicians to calm their neighbours on that score, contradictions here, including the stand taken by the Federal Constitutional Court proceeding from "Germany within 1937 borders," are well to the fore. That is bad.

The military status of future German unity is paramount. This is what is meant when Moscow and the East German capital speak of a desirable German neutrality. The last word causes an allergic reaction in Bonn and the NATO headquarters.

But it is not so much words that matter as the meaning of future changes: German unity must not call in doubt stability in Europe. New structures for European security, being worked out in Vienna and likely to be backed up with efforts of the six, must conform to the principle of undiminished security for all Europeans – in the West and in the East.

When, however, NATO politicians demonstrate a frank and greedy desire to see a future Germany as part of NATO, Moscow gives only one answer: "that is not serious." The one-sided NATO approach cannot be married, either through love or convenience, to statements of the West that it wants to preserve and strengthen stability in Europe. There is no doubt that Bonn and other Western capitals must ponder well the sensible and universally acceptable military status of German unity.

Moscow is not afraid of seeing Germany in a military coat. Only that coat must not be for marching. The Soviet Union will show a non-dogmatic and multi-optional approach here, too.

Two measures will help to deal with this problem: a future Germany's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction and a drastic reduction of the West German Bundeswehr. Although the West German Government insists that a future Germany will not claim either nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction, there will apparently be a need for treaty-based guarantees to that effect. The Bundeswehr, in effect remaining aside from radical disarmament – it is, of course, bad – should not be large enough to be seen as a threat by anyone.

'Two plus four' is a mechanism by means of which it is planned to ascertain chances for German unity that would benefit the whole of Europe.

The 'gut' side of the scales must outweigh the 'schlecht' side of it. □

Fifth *Mir* crew end mission

COSMONAUTS Alexander Viktorenko and Alexander Serebrov landed 55 kilometres to the north-east of Arkalyk (Soviet Central Asia) at 07:36 Moscow time on February 19, after completing their mission aboard the *Mir* space station.

The cosmonauts are feeling well, doctors said. Viktorenko and Serebrov have been replaced on board *Mir* by Anatoli Solovyov and Alexander Balandin.

The programme of work carried out by *Mir's* fifth crew included geophysical, astrophysical and medico-biological research and biotechnological and technical experiments.

Viktorenko and Serebrov made about 200 tests involving different photo equipment and spectrometers to study the Earth's natural resources and environment.

The crew continued experiments with the Roentgen International Observatory, in the Kvant module.

They used the Gallar technological unit to test the production of high-quality semiconductor for the electronic industry.

The programme of biotechnological research included new methods of cleaning drugs by an electrophoretic method. They studied ways of cultivating hybrid producer cells in weightlessness.

The crew completed the first biotechnological experiment with US equipment, in accordance with a commercial agreement.

They carried out extensive biological research to study plant growth and reptile development and cell changes in plant and animal tissues. They also tried several methods of growing wheat and lettuce in space.

During their 166-day stay in weightlessness, the crew underwent regular medical check-ups, providing new data about man's working abilities and functional state during different stages of the flight.

The arrival of the Kvant-2 module greatly expanded *Mir's* research potential. Viktorenko and Serebrov reactivated the module's equipment.

During their flight, the crew made five space walks. They installed new equipment outside *Mir* to carry out geophysical research and to study the influence of space on various construction materials.

They tested new space suits, a special device to move in space and the Kvant-2 docking section.

Results of research carried out by Viktorenko and Serebrov will be used in various branches of Soviet science and the economy. □

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Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman on German unity

SOVIET Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov on February 14 described the results of the meeting between East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow and West German Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl as "a stage in the negotiation process, which is to solve issues connected with the movement of the two German states towards each other and with the future of these states."

Answering correspondents' questions at a briefing, Gerasimov recalled the Soviet stand on this matter – "it must be solved by the Germans themselves, including the speed and the terms" of the process.

The Soviet Union considers the East German proposals – stage-by-stage progress in the two German states' mutual relations and within the framework of the common European process – the most rational and correct" approach, Gerasimov noted. "This opinion is known to the West German Government," he noted.

Gerasimov added that during the 'open skies' international conference in Ottawa, ministers of both German states, as well as of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France agreed to hold permanent consultations at various levels, connected with the reunification. □

Soviet economy: plodding on

Vadim Kirichenko, Chairman of the USSR Committee on Statistics, sums up Soviet economic performance in 1989.

FIRST of all about dynamism of social production.

Any price changes were ignored in determining the growth of national income last year.

The national income of the USSR rose by 2.4 per cent. This is a more realistic figure than earlier calculations based on 1983 unchanged prices.

A feature of this general index in 1989 was increased import of consumer goods (especially in the fourth quarter of the year) and increased production and sales of spirits. This had a positive effect on national income dynamism.

Net output, however, or national income minus imports and the greater turnover tax due to the sales of strong drinks, was only by 1.5 per cent.

This is close to the figure when national income per capita remains stable. Acceleration of economic growth assumes therefore a particular urgency.

It is not enough at present to criticise old guidelines demanding growth of rates at any cost. More emphasis must be put on ways of increasing such rates through more rational and streamlined economic structure, through increasing the end, rather than intermediate, product, and raising the efficiency of utilisation of all resources.

The urgency of the problem is highlighted by changes in rates last year. Industrial production is an example. Whereas in the early years of the five-year period the economy was reprovved for irregularities, for short-term slumps compensated for by later surges in the same year, the last year saw a slowing-down of the pace practically throughout the year. In December growth was negative, as compared with 1988 (-0.7 per cent).

The consumer market and money circulation today are still very much a pressing issue. In 1989, consumer goods production rose by 30 billion roubles, or by 7 per cent. Imports for sale went up by 8 billion roubles, or by 19 per cent. Their portion of trade resources amounted to 12 per cent. Trade in actual prices increased by 10.2 per cent, or in absolute terms, by 37.3 billion roubles. This is a rise unprecedented in previous years.

The consumer, however, does not feel these increases in the shops. If anything, he is staggered by growing shortages, by normal trade turning into rationed distribution of goods, and sales moving to enterprises and organisations. What's the matter?

One of the causes is failure to check the avalanche-like growth of cash incomes, the pressure of pent-up effective demand. This factor affects adversely the entire economy, and bears heavily on the consumer market, eroding its basis and very structure. In 1988, cash incomes of the population went up by 9.2 per cent, registering a rise of 41 billion roubles. In 1989, the increases were respectively 12.9 per cent and almost 64 billion roubles.

The pent-up demand of the population for goods and services, as estimated by the State Committee on Statistics, reached about 165 billion roubles. If we had tried to meet it through a market with free pricing, consumer prices would have at once shot up by at least 40 per cent, with bad and highly undesirable social effects.

An inevitable consequence of this situation on the consumer market and of uncontrolled growth of cash incomes fuelled by the printing of money (it increased by more than 50 per cent compared with 1988) has been the depreciation of the money and inflation.

Inflation takes the form of the growth of prices and of deferred effective demand. Studies made of registered goods prices and service costs pointed to the growth in 1989 of consumer prices (not taking into account prices changed to reflect improvements in quality) by two per cent. That is the price component of the inflation. Hidden inflation, due to the year's amassing of deferred demand, made up another 5.5 per cent. In summary, inflation last year rose by an estimated 7.5 per cent.

In the prevailing situation, improving the market and countering inflation depend decisively on more rigid cash income controls and determined restrictions on enterprise incomes growth (including the wage bill) through unwarranted price rises.

Incomes can and should grow, but only in proportion to end results. Otherwise, their growth loses sense, because it does not improve the standards of the people and mocks at social justice in our society.

Control measures are needed at all levels to improve the mechanism for forming the wage fund. In 1989, it grew 5.4 times faster than national income and almost 1.5 times faster than the sales of goods and paid services for the population.

The key task of social and economic development now is to produce more goods and offer more services for the population and raise sales.

Last year's results indicate that some ministries and departments failed to meet government orders for non-foods. Food production rose at an insufficient rate (3.2 per cent). The distributive network was short of some undelivered goods.

The high rates of growth in Group B (4.5 per cent) were due to a series of economic and administration steps taken by the government to counter a massive increase in cash pay and panic buying of many consumer items.

At the same time, substantial changes are being made in the production pattern of consumer goods, with emphasis on more costly items. The light industry, for example, increased the output of higher-priced items by 13 per cent, while at the same time producing as many other commodities as in 1988. The higher-priced goods amounted up to 40 per cent of the total output of the light industry.

So Group B was more guided by demand from better-off sections of the population, overlooking requirements of those with low incomes. If the substantial planned increment in consumer commodities is to be achieved through greater output of pricey items, then even the meeting of plan targets will not ease the social tensions.

The following example may illustrate this thought. Minimum pensions have been increased since October 1, 1989. Clearly, the growth of income in that group will first of all raise demand for foodstuffs, low-priced clothes and footwear and medicines.

As estimated by Committee on Statistics experts, the 1990 rise in cash incomes from increased minimal pensions - a rise of about 6.5 billion roubles - will go (45 per cent) to pay for foodstuffs, one-fifth to buy non-food articles, and approximately one-tenth, to pay for services.

Failing a substantial rise in resources to meet the increase and the changed structure of demand of certain groups of population, measures to increase their cash incomes will fall short of the social target sought.

The 1989 results indicate that upgrading of industries catering for population needs is proceeding at rates below those planned. Less

equipment was produced for the light industry, processing sectors of the agro-industrial business, distributive and catering units. Production of some items was even cut down, as compared with 1988. To remedy the situation, unflinching attention and effort must be devoted to the matter this and next years.

Excessive concentration of production, and monopoly in industry, with one or another item entirely or mainly turned out by one enterprise, was a distinctive shortcoming of the production pattern. Any malfunctioning at a particular plant hits in a severe way any related enterprises and even whole sectors of industry.

The national economy is also suffering from the monopoly even in the output of simple materials and products.

Immediate and long-term measures need to be urgently taken to effect devolution of production, develop a network of small-scale production setups, provide legislation to combat monopoly trends, and find a legal mechanism for closing down enterprises for ecological or other considerations as required by local authorities.

Increased time-wasting was another sad feature of last year. Loss of working time in industry and construction was up 1.3 times, amounting to over 40 million man-days, equivalent to more than 140,000 workers being absent from jobs daily. This accounted for the loss of more than four billion roubles' worth of output.

Strikes in the country were to some extent responsible for the increased loss of working time. Due to them during the past year the country was over seven million man-days short, with direct losses of output (non-fulfilment of jobs) amounting to 0.8 billion roubles. About half the working time was lost in the Transcaucasian republics. For that reason, about 30,000 men did not work daily in the Soviet Union through the year, and especially in September, when industrial unrest reached its peak - 100,000.

One more problem concerns pre-requisites for expanded reproduction in the near future.

Greater emphasis on making the economy serve social needs and priority given to raising the standards of the population are reflected in the increased share of resources allocated for social requirements (current consumption and accumulation fund in the non-productive sector). In 1985 the share amounted to almost 80 per cent, and in 1989, to more than 83 per cent. This is no doubt a positive sign, as also is an increase in investments to develop the social and cultural sphere from 22 per cent in the eleventh five-year period to 26 per cent in 1986-1989.

It should be noted, however, that with national income showing slow growth and social programmes enjoying priority, low rates in the growth of social production efficiency have resulted in the entire increment of national income having been used in recent years to boost the current consumption fund and non-productive construction. In consequence, the fund of expanded reproduction not only had its share in national income (minus non-productive construction) decreased, but also diminished in absolute terms. Its absolute volume, with due account taken of 1990 plan estimates, fell by more than 20 per cent, as compared with 1988. Thus, possibilities for expanding production, in quantitative terms, have shrunk appreciably.

This makes particularly important qualitative factors: increasing the efficiency of using the current potential and production accumulation, active resource-saving, and austerity measures. (Government Herald, No.4, 1990. Abridged.)

Baltic republics' more realistic approach

By Pavel Antonov, *Novosti* analyst

THE Baltic republics' stand on one of the most pressing issues to be discussed by the current third session of the USSR Supreme Soviet – on the alteration of the principles of the USSR's ethnic and state system and on a new union treaty of the Soviet republics is quite definite.

For instance, People's Deputy of the USSR Vaidotas Antanaitis made the following statement on behalf of the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania:

"Proceeding from the fact that Lithuania, which became victim of the occupation and annexation by the USSR in 1940, remains, in conformity with international law, an independent state... We propose that the Supreme Soviet of the restoration of the Lithuanian Republic which was recognised by the treaty between Soviet Russia and Lithuania of July 13, 1920...."

This view is shared by People's Deputy Marju Lauristin, the most probable candidate for her post of President of Estonia:

"The question of the Baltic republics' sovereignty has inevitably risen as a top-priority issue

which should be resolved according to the principles of the new thinking. The Soviet state has won many victories in foreign policy on this road, and it is important that we use such achievements also in resolving the problems of our federation...." Marju Lauristin, even proposed setting up a commission which would start preparing talks between the USSR Government and Estonia's bodies of power. In her opinion, this commission could be headed by Eduard Shevardnadze who has "vast experience of international talks."

But, despite the categorical character of the formulations, all this produces the impression that the mood "to take the opportunity to withdraw from the USSR" does not prevail even among the Baltic republics' radicals, as distinct from what was, say, six months ago. Antanaitis says that "Lithuania will work for an economic alliance and scientific, cultural, ecological and other relations with all the republics-states of the Soviet Union." Lauristin is confident that "all questions can be resolved in a quiet and balanced tone, through friendly talks and mutual respect for the common interests in the political, economic and military spheres, and with due account to the wishes of all the peoples living on

the territories of our republics."

The first reason for the alteration of the sentiments and positions is the economy. A thorough analysis of the economic situation has convinced the Baltic economists that in some cases rupture of ties, which have become firmly established over decades, would be suicidal.

But, in my view, it is not only the economic problems that have impelled the Baltic leaders to take a quieter and sober look at the possibility of withdrawing from the USSR. This issue is not so pressing in Lithuania because it is more homogeneous ethnically, but numerous non-indigenous peoples live in Estonia and Latvia. These people live in rather compact communities, and in many cases most of them are factory workers and, hence, are well-organised.

They are unlikely to be willing to break the ties with Russia. Rupture of these ties could result in major social conflicts, and this should be kept in mind.

Of course, history shows that the striving for freedom rejects even stronger arguments of discretion because, as is known, freedom is priceless, but only when someone is really deprived of it. Conversely, the new federation intends to ensure such freedom. □

Will private property thrive in the Soviet Union?

ALEXANDER YAKOVLEV, a Politburo member, spent three hours standing on the podium under a barrage of questions from students and teachers of Moscow University. A member of the audience asked: in

(continued from page 62)

above, Lushchikov stressed.

The future of collective farms was central in the debates at the session. Deputy Yevgeni Pokhitailo, Omsk, Siberia, said the bill's main shortcoming was that its authors had fallen victim to the wide-spread opinion that collective and state farms are not viable. He proposed limiting the size of land plots allotted to families and banning the use of hired labour on family farms.

State farm director Ivan Shundeyev, Chelyabinsk, Ural, was surprisingly among the opponents of the above point of view. He doubted that collective and state farms were capable of overcoming the country's food shortages, even after massive financial subsidies.

Collective farm chairman Mukharam Mukhamtzyanov, Tataria, also favoured a variety of management forms.

Estonian Deputy Ivar Raig was much more critical of the bill. He said it was conservative because it failed to mention private ownership of land.

Latvian scientist Arvid Grinovskis stressed that economic and psychological conditions were ripe for introducing private ownership of land in some regions of the country, while still far from mature in other regions. He proposed granting republics the right to decide independently, in their legislation, if the land managed by farmers and co-operatives should be progressively transferred to their ownership. □

what way will socialism in a future Soviet Union be different from capitalism, if private property thrives?

But why should private property thrive, the Party leader retorted, stressing the word 'thrive'. Nobody is going to privatise factories, banks and railways. The point is this – why shouldn't a peasant own his family business on a plot of land, or why shouldn't they be – privately owned clock-repair or any other repair shops, restaurants or any similar establishments? As for private property in the key industries, this kind of private property no longer exists even in the United States.

Incidentally, the status of private property, its functions and transformation in the capitalist world is a paramount question that ought to be studied more thoroughly, Yakovlev said.

Asked about the events in Eastern Europe, Yakovlev said:

The events there have been precipitated by a forced imposition of social structures the countries in question have had until recently. If their societies had developed in freedom and independence, we would have had a different picture.

The later the changes begin in these countries the more painful the implications of the reform drive. Sometimes, the consequences are tragic. Of course, there were warnings of an imminent explosion: 1953 in the GDR, 1956 in Hungary, 1968 in Czechoslovakia and the 1980s in Poland. But we were unable to respond adequately at that time, because we saw the world through the prism of confrontation. This explains why the developments that recently erupted in the East European countries had been driven deep down. Today we are witnessing this eruption...

I do not think that we should respond to abuses with more abuses. It would be only fair to acknowledge abuses in those countries, where the communists are denied jobs or even harassed. Even the execution of the dictator Ceausescu – I would prefer the verdict to be pronounced

by a normal court with all the necessary legal attributes.

Of course, there are the questions of our country's security, and we will try to keep them in the focus of our attention. I think that while we build a common European home, these questions will be solved with due account taken of the Western powers.

What I do know for certain, the senior Politburo member concluded, is that Soviet soldiers must never again participate in the building of any country's social system. □

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