

Mikhail Gorbachev's talks with Syrian President

ON APRIL 28 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev had talks with visiting Syrian President Hafez al-Assad. First, they met as part of delegations. The leaders of the two countries continued the talks head-to-head for three hours after a dinner given in honour of the Syrian guest.

Major international changes have taken place since their previous meeting, although friendship, the traditions of comradeship, trust and the principles on which long and fruitful Soviet-Syrian co-operation is built have remained unchanged over those years.

The first part of the Soviet-Syrian talks was completely devoted to the positions and policies of the two friendly countries. That was a profound and open analysis of their revolutionary past and current problems many of which are very similar. Therefore, the sides exchanged experience in tackling these problems. The whole atmosphere and desire to understand the essence of questions discussed were evident of deep mutual understanding and invariable solidarity, as well as of the sides' genuine interest in the success of the policy pursued.

The sides also touched upon the international importance of restructuring for the whole world and ways to find political solution to major contemporary problems. Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union saw its main foreign policy task in preserving a relatively stable progress in the dialectics of contradictions of world development.

Analysing the degree of a world war threat, that has been lowered considerably in recent years, Gorbachev and Hafez al-Assad expressed serious concern about the possession of nuclear weapons by Israel.

Naturally, the sides paid much attention to the situation in the Middle East. They agreed that the process of a general settlement and the convocation of a Middle East peace conference were being impeded by the United States. Its present stance on the Middle East is even worse than that of the previous administration. As a result, Israeli leaders have no incentive to search for a real way out of the deadlock. Their actions are aggressive.

President al-Assad spoke about the attempts of some Western circles to use the Soviet Union's preoccupation with its internal affairs to step up their pressure on progressive forces and the Arab world. This subject brought the conversation to a major problem of world significance.

The trend of a certain revanche that is preserved in the West should be studied seriously, Gorbachev said. It is linked with the events in Eastern Europe, above all. It is based on delusion and anti-communist stereotypes. That the socialist idea is being buried. In the meanwhile, the processes in Eastern Europe, no matter how painful they may be, are taking place as part of a general stream of profound democratic changes characteristic of contemporary development. This stream also includes a new prospect for the socialist idea on which the philosophy of Soviet perestroika is based.

World development cannot be measured in terms of this or that election campaign or the term in offices of some government. The factors that are now being formed in the world will determine its fate for decades, if not a century, ahead. If one looks at the current processes current turning point in the life of humanity is obvious. It is particularly important that this traditional period is not undermined by forces acting in their narrow selfish interests.

"I do not share the pessimistic assessments of the future," Gorbachev said. "Illusions are inadmissible, but the prospects based on quite realistic assessments of the possibilities of progress should not be lost either. The forces of dialogue and interaction are very strong, including in Western Europe and the United States, although the temptation to use the current situation for restoring 'American leadership of the world' continues to exist. We see all this."

Gorbachev and Hafez al-Assad discussed several specific issues. They noted favourable development of Soviet-Iranian relations after the visit of President Rafsanjani to the Soviet Union.

The sides also considered the situation in and around Lebanon, as well as the situation in the Arab World in general. In this context, they discussed major theoretical and historical issues,

including the nature of nations and peoples, prospects and specific features of their relations, positive and negative moments of their development.

President al-Assad expressed the concern of Arab people about the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. Gorbachev appreciated Syria's objective position on this matter, but denied all allegations about the existence of any 'collusion' between the Soviet Union and the United States. The idea of a certain US-Soviet collusion in the emigration issue has recently been spread in some Arab countries too.

Gorbachev said that increasing emigration of Soviet Jews in recent years was caused by internal processes in the Soviet Union, some negative trends in inter-ethnic relations and also outside influence. While provoking Soviet Jews to leave the Soviet Union, the United States is closing its door to them.

President al-Assad suggested several ways for settling this problem. Gorbachev agreed that this problem should be considered in the context of the rights of Arabs but not only in the light of human rights in general. The Soviet policy is invariable in its fundamental solidarity with the Arab liberation cause.

The sides also discussed questions of further co-operation in modernising the Syrian Armed Forces.

In other words, the two presidents had a major and useful conversation rich in thoughts and information. The recent summit will, undoubtedly, promote friendship and co-operation between the two countries and peoples.

The talks were attended by Eduard Shevardnadze, Dmitri Yazov, Konstantin Katushev, as well as Karen Brutents, Alexander Dzasokhov, Vladimir Polyakov and A. Zotov. From the Syrian side, Abdel Halin Khaddam, Mustafa Tlass, Farouk al-Sharaa, D. Naame and I. Naib.

Soviet President addresses people of Sverdlovsk

THE Soviet Union has approached such a phase of perestroika when it is necessary to make a new serious turn, President Mikhail Gorbachev told the general public of Sverdlovsk on April 26. He was speaking during his tour of the Urals area.

"Everything that has been done so far is very important," he said. "We are living in a different country compared with the time when we made the first steps in our policy of perestroika. I am sure the country will no longer be as it was. The people will not agree to go on living as we lived before.

"Those who suggested the policy of perestroika at the beginning of 1985 and who are now at the helm of the country," Gorbachev said, "we are committed to the socialist choice and want to try to ennoble Soviet society by joint efforts.

"Many are concerned over the prospect of the radicalisation of the economic reform and transition to market economy," he went on. "In such a country as the Soviet Union, with all its com-

plexities, vastness and immensity, one should not act by 'shock therapy' methods.

Therefore it is essential to normalise the financial, consumer market and at the same time to adopt a whole package of decisions, without which market-oriented relations cannot develop and there can be no independence of businesses and regions.

"The Soviet leadership wants to establish normal market relations in order to stimulate people's initiative and technological process and achieve new economic results and, it means, new opportunities for solving social problems.

"The transition to market relations," he said, "will lead to a regrouping of the work force. Therefore it is necessary to set up a system that would envisage unemployment benefits and retraining free of charge."

From his point of view, a system of state regulations of the prices of basic goods, envisaging mechanisms of social protection, compensation and so on and so forth, is also essential.

Having pointed out that the Communist Party is living through hard times because it was the

(continued on page 144)

IN THIS ISSUE

- Soviet President meets Prime Minister of East Germany p142
- Soviet and Chinese foreign ministers in wide-ranging talks..... p143
- Primakov on Lithuania: civilised divorce needed p144
- Eduard Shevardnadze's interview with Irish Times p145
- The cost of victory..... p146

Soviet President meets Prime Minister of East Germany

SOVIET President Mikhail Gorbachev met East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere on April 29. The East German Prime Minister was in the Soviet Union on a working visit at the invitation of the Soviet leadership.

The Soviet President and the East German Premier discussed the principled aspects of interaction between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. "We," Gorbachev said, "are for preserving and multiplying all the good things which have been achieved in relations between our peoples, millions of Soviet and East German citizens."

The Prime Minister favoured active co-operation between the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union in all vitally important spheres of political, economic, scientific, technical, cultural and spiritual life.

He stated that the government he headed would honour East German obligations with respect to the Soviet Union, take into account Soviet interests in German affairs and display allegiance to the Warsaw Treaty. "Our policy, including in national relations, will never pose a threat to the Soviet people, other countries of Europe and the world. We intend to be dependable and the predictable partners of the Soviet Union."

Gorbachev and de Maiziere conducted frank and mutually beneficial exchange of views on the key aspects of the major issue of the European and world politics – unification between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Soviet side resolutely confirmed its respect for the right of Germans to self-

determination and the legitimate interests of East Germany as a sovereign subject of international law. As regards the two German states' rapprochement and unification, Gorbachev noted that it would be dangerous to replace this natural, although far from simple, process with the annexation of one by the other. This would lead to the disruption of equilibrium and might signify undermining European stability – a major disaster for all.

The Soviet attitude remains negative towards unilateral, unbalanced proposals for the future German state to join NATO. This attitude stems from political realism and a serious concern about prospects for Europe and new approaches to its problems.

The Soviet Union has the legitimate right to participate in defining the united Germany's international legal status. From the Soviet Union's point of view, a peace treaty or another equipotent act on the final peaceful settlement is consistent with this aim. The conclusion of such an act, by the way, was known to be proclaimed objective desired by both the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. This document would finally end the German issue and open up another, consonant with the German national dignity and the interests of other European nations.

"We favour the synchronisation and coordination between the process of German unification and the formation of security structures on the European scale. This will strengthen peace on the continent, essentially advance co-operation on the continental scale. We must pool our efforts to find a solution of this kind," Gorbachev said.

"The similarity and proximity of the Soviet

and East German approaches towards key international aspects of German unification," Gorbachev noted, "is a factor which will substantially facilitate the search for balanced, reliably guaranteed solutions."

Lothar de Maiziere expressed understanding of this formulation of the issue, and readiness to look for constructive compromise solutions to issues concerning which approaches differ.

The two leaders agreed that East Germany's international commitments must be taken into account and adhered to after the two German states unite.

The Soviet President wished the East German Prime Minister success in his activity for the benefit of German citizens at this extremely responsible turn in the German and European history. The meeting was held in a friendly and business-like atmosphere.

Shevardnadze meets Markus Meckel

"SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on April 29 met East German Foreign Minister Markus Meckel, who accompanied East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere on his working visit to the Soviet Union.

Their conversation centred around bilateral relations, their present state and prospects conditioned on the current process of German unification, and external aspects of this process in connection with the two-plus-four negotiations.

The East German Foreign Minister confirmed the new German government's commitment of the obligations under the treaties and agreements between the two countries. He said the new East German Government was ready to develop bilateral co-operation in the interests of both nations and of peace and security in Europe.

Now that the history has given Germans a chance to build a united Germany, Shevardnadze stressed, it is important to act responsibly in accordance with good sense. Legitimate interests of other nations must be taken into account in order to ensure controlled progress towards unification coordinated with the European-scale process.

Progress towards unity, the two ministers agreed, must not undermine but strengthen the pillars of peace and stability in Europe. Everything must be done to make the united Germany a major factor of continental stability.

The Soviet minister noted in principle the need to ensure legal continuance – the united Germany should carry on the activities begun under the basic treaties and agreements between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. Whenever German unification makes expedient a revision or modification of bilateral obligations, this work should be done under mutual agreement.

The ministers discussed the key tasks to be accomplished by the two-plus-four mechanism and stated that its work was of pivotal significance for matching the German right to unification and the interests of European and universal security.

Both sides agreed that decisions should be made to ensure the formation of new security structures in Europe without disrupting the present balance of forces. The path towards it lies through the transformation of the existing military-political alliances and the institutionalisation of the European process.

Shevardnadze shared with his counterpart specific reflections concerning the forthcoming

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Soviet and East German prime ministers hold talks

TALKS were held in the Kremlin on April 29 between Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere.

The two prime ministers discussed the state of, and prospects for, relations between the Soviet Union and East Germany taking into account the forthcoming creation of the currency, economic and social union of the two Germans.

Ryzhkov stressed that people in the Soviet Union valued the considerable positive potential gained in relations with the German Democratic Republic and the large-scale interaction in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres as well as in international affairs. Broad trade and economic relations, mutual annual supplies of commodities and services, worth many billions of roubles, conditioned a high degree of integration of the two countries' economic complexes. This is a reality impossible to ignore. Hence the need to preserve and develop everything of value that can serve the benefit of the peoples in the two countries.

De Maiziere shared this view and reaffirmed the East German Government's desire to maintain close East German-Soviet business co-operation based on principles of effectiveness and mutual benefit and expressed confidence that the Soviet Union would remain an important political and economic partner both for the German Democratic Republic and for the united Germany.

The two prime ministers favoured allegiance to mutual commitments, including in foreign trade. They noted the significance of new forms

of production, scientific and technical co-operation and joint ventures, including on a trilateral basis with the participation of West Germany. Confidence was expressed that the formation of new economic models in the two countries and the switching over to forms of co-operation consistent with world practice will be facilitated by the accelerated transition to settling accounts in bilateral trade in freely convertible currency at current world prices.

The Soviet side expressed interest in the further involvement of East Germany in building integration projects on Soviet territory in accordance with current inter-governmental agreements, as well as in continuing Soviet assistance in building power installations on East German territory with the possible enlisting of West German co-operation in accomplishing these tasks.

The prime ministers stated that during the process of unification of the two Germans, coordinated solutions must be found taking into account the economic interests of the Soviet Union, including the legal protection of Soviet movable and immovable property on East German territory. It was deemed advisable to hold bilateral consultations concerning this set of issues.

Ryzhkov and de Maiziere favoured maintaining close contacts between the Soviet and East German governments in the interests of mutual understanding concerning topical issues of bilateral relations and the European process.

The talks took place in an atmosphere of mutual trust and openness. □

Soviet and Chinese foreign ministers in wide-ranging talks

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and his visiting Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen met in Moscow on April 25 for a thorough discussion of bilateral issues and the world situation.

They stressed their common desire to broaden co-operation and improve mutual understanding in the spirit of the Soviet-Chinese Communiqué of May 18, 1989.

Qian is accompanying Chinese Premier Li Peng, who has been in Moscow on an official visit since April 23.

During their meeting, Shevardnadze and Qian stressed the importance of stepping up contacts between the foreign ministries of the two countries, a goal served by a newly-signed protocol on consultations between the ministries.

Shevardnadze and Qian agreed that the ministries would regularly discuss underlying international problems and bilateral relations and explain their positions on international issues.

They repeated that it was expedient for the Soviet and Chinese Foreign Ministers to meet at least once a year.

Shevardnadze and Qian discussed specific steps to fulfil a just-signed agreement on basic principles for the mutual reduction of armed forces and military confidence-building measures along the Soviet-Chinese border. They agreed to launch practical talks to work out a schedule for other details for troop cuts there.

When discussing a frontier settlement, both parties noted agreement at respective talks on some 90 per cent of the common border, and offered useful considerations on how to proceed with work regarding the frontier sections that have so far eluded agreement.

Both sides expressed resolve to continue the border talks and look for mutually acceptable solutions.

When discussing international problems, emphasis was made on the need to ensure stability and security amid sweeping changes in the world. The ministers took note of an emergent system of relations based on new political thinking and on ideas to create a new international political and economic order.

Shevardnadze stressed that relations with every country should be valued. It has taken a lot of effort to normalise Soviet-Chinese relations. "More than a quarter-century was lost in their development, which cost dearly the people of our countries and other socialist nations. The negative effects were felt not only in Asia, but elsewhere in the world," the Soviet Foreign Minister said.

"Something similar has happened in relations between the USSR and Albania. The rupture could have been avoided. We are not going to deny our share of responsibility for what happened. The latest statements by representatives of the Albanian leadership about readiness to restore diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were not lost in Moscow.

"We can only welcome such statements and, for our part, are prepared to restore and develop friendly relations with Albania on the basis of complete equality, respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and mutual benefit," Shevardnadze said.

Shevardnadze briefed Qian on preparations for the forthcoming Soviet-US summit. They paid much attention also to processes taking place in Europe, including major changes in Eastern Europe and the complex array of

international issues connected with the prospect of a united Germany.

The discussion covered a wide range of issues related to the situation in Asian and the Pacific. Both parties called for measures to scale down military confrontation in the region and promote various forms of co-operation there.

The two ministers agreed that without a Korean settlement it would be impossible to achieve genuine security and stability in North-Eastern Asia and that dialogue between North and South Korea was the key to defusing tension on the Korean Peninsula.

Serious attention was given to the situation in Afghanistan, which is a neighbour of both the Soviet Union and China. The ministers specifically discussed ways to ensure peace and stability in that country.

They noted headway at negotiations on Cambodia, including increased understanding on various aspects of a settlement, and urged more vigorous efforts in this direction. The role the United Nations can play in the political resolution of related problems is becoming every more clear. The latest statements by Cambodian head of government Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Sihanouk demonstrated the gradual rapprochement of their positions.

Shevardnadze welcomed the forthcoming contacts between Chinese and Vietnamese representatives, expressing confidence that an early normalisation of Chinese-Vietnamese relations would be very instrumental in achieving a healthier situation in South-East Asia.

The ministers briefed each other on their contacts with parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. They agreed that a balance of interests of direct participants in the conflict could be achieved only through political talks.

The meeting was friendly and business-like. □

Continued from previous page

meeting of the Six at the foreign ministerial level in early May. He said he regarded the issues of the united Germany's military-political status, borders and forms of peaceful settlement as the key issues.

The conversation was held in a constructive business-like atmosphere. □

Soviet-Chinese Communiqué

THE leaders of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China expressed "satisfaction with the dynamic development of ties and co-operation between the two countries in the political, economic, trade, scientific-technical and other areas after the normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations," says a communiqué on the results of the official visit of Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to the USSR, made public in Moscow on April 26.

The leaders of the Soviet Union and China informed each other about the situation in their countries. The Chinese side stated anew that Taiwan is the inalienable part of Chinese territory. China strongly opposes any attempts to create a situation of "two Chinas", "one China and one Taiwan" or "independent Taiwan". The Soviet side reaffirmed its invariable and consistent support for this stance of the Chinese government.

The leaders of the two countries discussed pivotal international issues of mutual interest.

In attaching great importance to the development of the disarmament process, the sides positively appraise moves by various countries to reduce armaments and lower military confrontation. The Chinese side welcomed the progress achieved at the Soviet-US arms reduction talks.

The two countries' leaders paid due attention to current processes in Europe. They noted the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region, of ensuring peace and security there and boos-

ting co-operation involving all states in the region. The USSR and China declared for enhancing the authority of the United Nations Organisation.

The sides said that they "would exert efforts to facilitate a just, rational and comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian problem and approved and supported the United Nations' active role in this issue."

They support the North-South Korean dialogue and intend to continue to promote detente and stability on the Korean Peninsula and help create conditions for a peaceful unification of that country.

Upon the outcome of the talks, the USSR and China signed several documents, which help increase co-operation between the two countries. Co-operation between the USSR and China in a variety of areas has good prospects, the communiqué says. □

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Primakov on Lithuania: civilised divorce needed

"TALKS between Moscow and Vilnius on Lithuania's secession can begin only if Lithuania withdraws to 'the March 10 line', i.e. the day before Lithuania proclaimed independence. The search for a formula to 'save face' may be left to the discretion of the Lithuanian leaders," TASS was told by Presidential Council member Yevgeni Primakov.

The member of the country's supreme leadership pointed to the possibility of a political settlement and said "the declaration of independence may be torn up or it may be put in a desk drawer and temporarily suspended."

Primakov described as "not serious" the policy pursued by the present Lithuanian leadership. "Crucial decisions that affect not only the fate of perestroika in the Soviet Union but also stability in the world cannot be taken all of a sudden," he stressed.

"The Lithuanian leadership's sally looks even more strange against the background of new laws promulgated by the Soviet Parliament, which radically change the very nature of relations between the centre and the republic," Primakov said.

"If before relations were based simply on the principle of universality, henceforth a differentiated approach will be applied. In other

differ in character from those with other republics."

Reaction in the Soviet Union to the Lithuanian declaration of secession was far from uniform, Primakov said. "The overwhelming majority of the country's population did not applaud the move, and President Gorbachev, frankly speaking, has had to restrain many people," the Presidential Council member said.

Primakov said he did not agree with the opinion now circulating in Lithuania that "50 years within the Soviet union gave nothing to the republic."

"Lithuania received more from the centre, especially during recent years, than any other republic," he said. "It turned from a poor country with scattered farmsteads into a republic with a highly-developed economy." While in the Soviet union, it was given additional territory, including five regions from Byelorussia.

"We condemn the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact as strongly as Lithuanians do, but it remains a fact that as a result of that pact Lithuania received Vilnius and the adjacent territory," Primakov said. The port of Klaipeda was ceded to the Soviet Union as a result of World War II and was then handed over to Lithuania.

As a result, it is perplexing that the Lithuanian leaders argue in favour of secession by alleging that the documents on Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union, dating back 50 years, were illegal. "The absolutely unfair Russo-German Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed

70 years ago might likewise be proclaimed illegal and then it would be considered that Lithuania never left our state.

"Taking into account the actual situation in the country, it can be stated that Moscow has been pursuing a most flexible policy with regard to Lithuania," Primakov said.

As concerns the 'economic blockade' of Lithuania, it simply does not exist, he stressed. "The phrase is a hyperbole used by journalists succumbing to the temptation of using a catchphrase." A blockade means closed borders, cut-off supplies of electric power and foodstuffs - there is nothing of this kind. Moreover, Moscow has had to make additional efforts to maintain economic links to an adequate level while mistrust in Lithuanian partners is growing among enterprises in other regions of the country."

The Soviet leadership cannot be indifferent to violations of human rights in Lithuania, Primakov said. He called "utterly undemocratic" the practice of granting Lithuanian citizenship only to people whose political sympathies coincide with those of the present Lithuanian leadership. No civilised country in the world conditions citizenship on the renunciation of opposition to government, he stressed.

No one is going to retain Lithuania by force, Primakov said. Even the most trusted marriages sometimes fall apart. "But the divorce must be performed as it is accepted among civilised people - be it a marriage blessed by the church, a secular marriage or cohabitation." □

Soviet Parliament passes resolution on Chernobyl

ON APRIL 25, the eve of the fourth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, the Soviet Parliament passed a resolution on a unified programme of additional measures to deal with its after-effects.

A colossal amount of work has been accomplished over the past four years, but the measures taken appear to be insufficient, the resolution points out. The extent of radionuclide contamination had not been fully documented.

The majority of scientists described as un-sound the concept that a person can be exposed safely to 35 rems over 70 years of his life, which has been officially accepted until now. As a result, a highly tense socio-political situation has formed in areas affected by radiation.

In the resolution the USSR Supreme Soviet

endorsed a union-republican programme of urgent measures for 1990-1992, presented by the government. Under the programme, from 180,000 to 200,000 people will be resettled from the contaminated areas of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia.

The programme, which will cost 16 billion roubles, also provides for the organisation of comprehensive medical aid for the organisation of comprehensive medical aid for the population and measures to stabilise radiation levels in the contaminated areas. It is the first stage of a long-term state programme, the elaboration of which the government plans to finish this year.

The parliament recommended to the USSR Council of Ministers setting up a state committee to clean up the consequences of the accident. The governments of the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia are advised to form similar bodies in their republics.

The government of the country was charged with drafting a bill on the Chernobyl accident that should, in part, define the legal status of its victims and participants in the efforts to deal with its aftermath. A bill on the use of nuclear energy and nuclear safety is also to be drafted.

The resolution of the Supreme Soviet commits the USSR Council of Ministers to develop, this year, scientifically-grounded criteria for radiation safety and, by September, to draft and endorse a special programme, The Children of Chernobyl.

Measures are to be adopted to stop, as soon as possible, the production on the contaminated territory of foodstuffs which do not conform with safety standards. The government will have to elaborate an array of measures to phase out the Chernobyl nuclear power station. □

Presidential spokesman on situation in Lithuania

"THE position of the Soviet President and the government on the Lithuanian problem has not changed: its settlement must be achieved within the framework of the Soviet Constitution and peaceful dialogue," the Soviet President's press secretary told a news briefing in Moscow on April 28.

Arkadi Maslennikov said that despite many dramatic collisions, it seems an "awareness of the need to return to the road of reason is felt in Lithuania and abroad."

The appeal by Francois Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl to the Lithuanian leadership, the spokesman continued, "stands not far from the line which has been pursued by the Soviet leaders from the beginning."

The position of the US President testifies to George Bush's serious approach to the situation in Lithuania. It is also important that the position of the US President reflects the feelings of the American public, as revealed in recent public opinion polls, Maslennikov stressed. □

(continued from front page)

nucleus of the command-and-administer system and its political mechanism, Gorbachev expressed conviction that the Party must regain the original role of political vanguard, as was visualised by Lenin.

Touching upon developments concerning Lithuania, the President noted that they had reached deadlock. "However," he said, "the Soviet leadership is trying to find a way out by political means and is counting on the prudence of the Lithuanian government."

Gorbachev emphasised the need to return to the situation that existed before March 11 when the republic's Supreme Soviet adopted an act on the restoration of an independent Lithuanian state. Such was the mandate given by the Third Congress of USSR People's Deputies, Gorbachev said. □

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Eduard Shevardnadze's interview with *Irish Times*

"THE most important thing is probably to devise a military and political status for a united Germany which would not radically tip the balance," Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said in an interview published in the *Irish Times* on April 28.

He emphasised that "this can be achieved fully if Germany becomes a militarily non-aligned state whose armed forces would have a potential sufficient only for defence purposes."

"The other guarantee, the significance of which is hard to overestimate is, that the movement toward a united Germany should be combined with the efforts to create all-European security arrangements," Shevardnadze pointed out.

He also recalled that the present military and political structures "were shaped not for a united Germany, but for two German states belonging, moreover, to different alliances."

"The prospect of the German unification is an important incentive for radically re-shaping the present European security arrangements, in fact, for creating them anew.

"In any case, it would be a mistake to destroy the existing security systems in the course of building German unity, without creating new ones to replace them," Shevardnadze said.

Touching upon a future Germany's affiliation with military blocs, the Soviet Foreign Minister pointed out that "the membership of a united

Germany in NATO is unacceptable to us, since it would mean a radical disruption of the current balance of forces in Europe."

"We must seek together other solutions that would not lead to anyone's diminished security. Such solutions can be secured if we show realism and mutual respect for the interests of the sides."

In this connection he again returned to the idea of the dual membership of a united Germany in NATO and the Warsaw Treaty. "Because this is an unconventional suggestion, does not mean at all that it is unrealistic," Shevardnadze said.

"The idea of 'dual membership' not only could help resolve one of the most difficult questions that arises in connection with the unification of Germany but also constitute a practical step towards creating all-European security arrangements.

"The territory of Germany would thereby be turned into a 'testing ground' for a constructive interaction between alliances, a place where they would be gradually dissolved," he emphasised.

Touching upon the functioning of the 'two plus four mechanism' Shevardnadze said: "We share the approach of those states who believe that the results of the work of 'the Six' must be reviewed at a CSCE participating countries summit conference and, possibly, approved by them."

In answer to a question about the Soviet Union's relationships with the European communities, "we value especially the support on the part of the EC to our initiative about convening a summit conference of the CSCE participating

countries in 1990.

He spoke of the Soviet side's readiness for the most active co-operation with 'the Twelve' in the practical preparation and holding of this conference and imparting a qualitatively new impulse to the development of the CSCE conference as a whole.

Shevardnadze also recalled that the proposals by the country's leadership regarding the establishment of an all-European council, composed of heads of state, a CSCE committee of ministers of foreign affairs, and a military risk prevention centre.

He went on to say that "the current changes in Europe are a good premise to ensure that both political and economic co-operation between the Soviet Union and the European communities reaches a qualitatively new level."

"In the circumstances where there is an incipient rapprochement between the East and the West of the European continent, we believe it possible and realistic to set the goal of channelling our political dialogue with the European communities toward a gradual transition from a mere exchange of views and comparison of positions to practical interaction and partnership in consolidating the positive changes in Europe and in the world at large."

Shevardnadze believes that the Soviet Union and 'the Twelve' could co-sponsor many concrete ideas and steps toward creating a European commonwealth in the 21st Century. □

Briefing at Soviet Foreign Ministry Press Centre

A SPECIAL briefing for members of the public, on the subject Foreign Policy Interests of the USSR and the New Realities in Eastern Europe, was held at the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Press Centre on April 29.

The current changes in Eastern Europe,

guaranteed by the perestroika reform programme in the Soviet Union, serve the national interests of the USSR and signify an end to the period of confrontation with the West, said Alexei Nikiforov, deputy head of the ministry's department for the European socialist countries. "Only now can we permit ourselves to cut troops, armaments and defence spending, to concentrate attention on the really strategic areas of defence," he said.

Speaking about the negative consequences of processes in Eastern Europe, Nikiforov drew attention to an upsurge in right-wing sentiments, rising nationalism and sometimes a sharp turn towards the West in terms of economy and politics, which not always suits the interests of these countries. He described the new realities as temporary difficulties.

"We are facing a period of adaptation to new regimes, the new style of thinking. We are prepared not to allow the relapse of patronisation of our neighbours," the Soviet spokesman stressed.

"It is expedient to proceed not from the party-ideological criteria, but from the national-state interests or the balance thereof," he continued.

Yuri Gremitskikh, first deputy head of the Foreign Ministry's Information Department, raised the subject of German unification. This process, he said, "is viewed by everybody as an event which will be accompanied by the signing of a variety of international treaties and agreements."

Questions of borders, the military-political status of unified Germany and possible claims should be solved and formalised in documents. The Soviet side, Gremitskikh stressed, favours a peace treaty which will mean the final peaceful settlement with Germany. He stressed the need for international legal, political and other levers to prevent a new threat of war coming from Germany. □

Soviet spokesman on US resolutions on Jerusalem

SOVIET Foreign Ministry spokesman Vadim Perfilyev described a resolution recognising a united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which was adopted by the US Senate following its passage in the House of Representatives of the US Congress, as being at odds with international law.

At a briefing in Moscow on April 26, Perfilyev emphasised that, under United Nations resolutions, eastern Jerusalem is an inalienable part of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

He said the decisions by both chambers of the US Congress contradict the stance of the US Administration, which, judging by its statements, favours defining a final status during talks for a comprehensive settlement between Arab states and Israel.

"The action by the US Congress causes still greater regret because it harms efforts to launch a Middle Eastern peace process, including a Palestine-Israeli dialogue, which was favoured by the Palestinian leadership," Perfilyev said.

"The ball is now in Israel's court, which, we hope, will make a correct choice in favour of the policy of reason and peace," Perfilyev said. □

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The cost of victory

IN EARLY May, 45 years ago, when the valleys of Europe were covered with a white-blue veil of blooms, the act of the unconditional surrender of the German Armed Forces was signed, heralding the great victory in the most destructive war ever waged by man.

Novosti analyst Olga Trofimova talks with Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei Akhromeyev about this noteworthy date.

A platoon, company and battalion commander during the Great Patriotic War, Sergei Akhromeyev was a high-ranking military leader in the post-war years and is now President Gorbachev's advisor and a member of the USSR Supreme Soviet's Committee for Defence and State Security.

TROFIMOVA: Lately, some historians have suggested their own versions and assessment of the beginning, the course and the results of World War II. What was the actual contribution of the USSR and of its allies in the anti-Hitler coalition to the defeat of the German fascists? What price did we pay for the victory?

AKHROMEYEV: I would rank the significance of this victory for the Soviet people with that of the October Revolution. The October Revolution of 1917 allowed us to build a federal socialist state, our homeland, which we managed to defend during the Great Patriotic War.

When the war broke out I was 18 and when victory came I was 22. And even though it was an impetuous time of my youth, and I've lived a long life and experienced and seen a great deal, the Great Patriotic War had the greatest impact on me. World War II (the Great Patriotic War was its inalienable part) involved two coalitions: the anti-Hitler coalition uniting the USSR, the US, Britain, France and China – its chief members – as well as dozens of other states, and the fascist block encompassing Germany, Italy, Japan and their satellites. We are well informed how that conflict proceeded. I think it is the moral duty of every decent person, while returning to the recent history, to remember that the great victory was moulded by all states and nations – big and small.

We do not forget the enormous contribution made by the US – the state which fought against the Japanese militarists for almost 4 years. We

pay due tribute to Britain and France who entered the war in 1939. In 1940, and during the first six months of 1941 Britain was actually left to face the German fascists virtually alone. We also remember the great effort of China which fought against the Japanese militarists from 1937 to 1945.

And yet, it should be admitted in all fairness that the main contribution to the victory was made by the Soviet Union. For three years running, before the Second Front was opened in Europe, it was the only force fighting against the Wehrmacht and its satellites along a front which in 1942 extended to 6,400 kilometres. Then the role of the US and Britain was limited mainly to the use of aviation and navy, and to combat operations in Africa and Italy. It was the Soviet Union that crushed the backbone of fascism, destroying at the Soviet-German Front more than 600 fascist divisions, as well as divisions of Germany's allies. The bulk of the German Army's and air force's material was also destroyed at this front.

In 1944-45, the Soviet Armed Forces liberated 11 European states which constituted a territory of more than 1 million square kilometres. Seven million Soviet soldiers had tramped the war roads of Europe and more than 1.5 million took part in the liberation of Manchuria.

We paid a dear price for the victory to which we were advancing for 1,418 days and nights. Today, specifying our losses, we have established that the war had taken a toll of 8,668,400 servicemen. Not all of those losses were unavoidable. At the initial stage of the war many mistakes were made in planning and controlling combat operations. Add to this general disorder and confusion. Underlying all that was subjective and objective reasons and of course Stalin's personality cult. An extremely conceited person. Stalin was in fact unprepared to act as the leader in that situation. Our military defeats in 1941-42 are rooted in the 1930s, when by Stalin's order prominent military leaders and military personnel at all levels were destroyed.

What lessons should be taken from that war in our nuclear and space age? What prompts the states and nations, particularly in Europe, to adopt the new political thinking?

First, such a war must never be repeated. Just think that all that tragedy occurred in Europe – a tragedy incurring enormous human, material and cultural losses. After 1945 many nations had

to start building everything from scratch. Now, should a nuclear conflict flare up, there will be nothing to restore.

I think that European peace lasting for 45 years confirms that the nations and governments have drawn the right conclusions. We see, at the same time, that although military threat has decreased lately, it has not been removed altogether. Therefore now we should think how to replace the system of military pacts with new structures of security in the interests of all Europeans.

In our time of new thinking there are opportunities to find new approaches requiring joint effort. What I mean is the need to broaden the dialogue between the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and NATO, and to cut down the states' defence potential to the limits of reasonable sufficiency.

The Vienna talks on cutting down conventional armaments proceed well in my opinion and there is hope that in the second half of the year the problems yet unsolved will find their solution and the prepared agreements will be signed at the all-European summit.

The German issue, is undoubtedly the most acute problem of the European politics. The reunification of East and West Germanies arouses legitimate concern in many states, including the Soviet Union. Will not reunification increase the danger of potential aggression on the part of the future united German state? True, the Germans are different now, as they have drawn adequate conclusions from World War II. But in order to ease the anxiety of other nations, a new system of collective security should be created within the framework of the general European process – a system in which a united Germany should live and act jointly with other states. The governments of the Soviet Union and other states actively work in this area.

As a war veteran, tell me please, what moments seemed to you particularly horrible and happy during those grim years?

The worst of what I saw and experienced during the war was the siege of Leningrad, when 20,000 people could die of hunger in just one day. I took part in the defence of Leningrad and I will never forget how this city lived, fought and survived. And the happiest time was the victory day of course. As the song goes, it was a day when joy was mixed with tears. □

Allies meeting on the Elbe 45th anniversary

*Moscow April 25
by Oleg Moskovsky TASS:*

FORTY-FIVE years ago today, Soviet and American soldiers joined hands across the River Elbe.

To mark the historic date, Soviet and American war veterans will, in keeping with tradition, have a reunion in the West German of Torgau today. The Soviet delegation is led by Lieutenant-General (retired) Vladimir Orlov.

It is not the first time that Alexander Silvasenko, director of a school in Podolsk, a city near Moscow, will come to the banks of the River Elbe. He was among the first to welcome the American allies on the Elbe in April 1945.

Silvasenko told TASS on the eve of his departure that he went to the Front in 1942 as a commander of the machine-gun company. He was wounded twice and shell-shocked once.

He recalls that in the evening of April 24, 1945, his company fought its way into the city of Torgau. At three in the afternoon of April 25, a

group of soldiers in an unknown uniform unexpectedly appeared on its outskirts. "Four of them approached us. We met right in the middle of the bridge across the Elbe and shook hands. We did not know each other's language but the soldier's common sense helped sort things out."

Silvasenko saw among the Americans an officer who presented himself as William Robertson. Using gestures, Robertson asked Silvasenko to take him to the commander of the company. "He, in turn, invited us to his division to confirm that he had really met Russians," Silvasenko said.

Silvasenko went to the American divisional headquarters with a group of Soviet officers, accompanied by Robertson. "We were received by Major-General Emil Reinhardt, Commander of the 69th Division." Soviet and American soldiers went to the Elbe together, where American soldiers met their Soviet comrades-in-arms. The supreme commander-in-chief marked this event by a special order. On April 27, Moscow saluted the allies' meeting with a 324 gun salute. □

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Yalta, Potsdam and changes in Eastern Europe

By Dmitri Ardamatsky, *Novosti* analyst

THE policies of President Gorbachev has proved to be a most powerful stimulant for processes aimed at overcoming the division of Europe and making it an integral political, economic and cultural entity – a common European home.

The activation of this process is sometimes linked with Moscow's renunciation of its 'rights' in Eastern Europe, or the collapse of the concept of the division of Europe adopted by the great powers in Yalta and Potsdam in 1945. In the latter case it is presumed that the big three missed the possibility of creating an integral Europe.

But the Yalta and Potsdam agreements coordinated a post-war policy designed to create a stable peace and a system of international security, establish the UN, demilitarise and denazify Germany, divide it into occupation zones, and settle the issue of Poland's western borders and other problems.

These agreements did not signify the division of Europe, which happened later. It was generally recognised that the Yalta and Potsdam agreements took into account the special interests of the victorious countries. (Scientists have calculated that the Soviet Union lost 30 million human lives in the war.)

These interests reflected not 'imperial claims' but an objective to protect oneself against other aggressions. The Soviet Union had a right to expect that a certain buffer territory would be created to protect it against a direct attack from the west, in particular from the territory of Germany. Today this is called the sphere of influ-

ence.

So, the division of Europe was caused not by the Yalta or Potsdam decisions as such. The watershed was the irreconcilable contradictions in ideology and politics, or rather different attitudes to democracy, human rights and freedoms. The incompatibility of these attitudes predetermined the bloc division of Europe, the cold war and the threat of nuclear catastrophe.

Today we are witnessing not the collapse of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, whose main ideas and ideals were developed by the Helsinki Final Act and the successes of the European process. We are witnessing the collapse of the system of values which was forced on the Soviet Union and, after the war, on East European countries by Stalinism. This system of values split Europe.

When we say that the cold war is over, we mean above all that the 'historical contention' in international affairs has stopped, that the time has come for ending ideological confrontation, and that the East is returning to the system of European traditions. The attempts of the 'socialist community' countries to isolate themselves in a sterile ideological medium and reject development ways which the world followed led to a conflict with the world and a mounting nuclear threat.

The formula 'East-West' is losing its significance. It reflected the global conflict between the two opposing and irreconcilable socio-political systems. Today Eastern Europe is united only by the fact that it is getting rid of totalitarianism.

What could be the Soviet Union's role in this situation? Should it fight for its privileged position?

Gorbachev is advocating the new political thinking, the freedom of choice, and a common European home. This presupposes renunciation of claims and privileges on the one hand, and a policy of strengthening European stability on the other. How can we balance changes in Eastern Europe with the need for stability? By gearing the decisions of states and nations to the global balance of interests, Gorbachev said.

Just like 45 years ago, history has presented us with the German question. Its solution must take into account the interests of all European countries. That is why Moscow thinks that a united Germany should retain military-political obligations not only to the US and other NATO members, but also to the Soviet Union and its East European allies.

For decades the Soviet Union guaranteed the maintenance of the status quo in Eastern Europe. In conditions of bloc rivalry this served the interests of stability and peace in Europe. Now that the situation has changed, the Soviet Union could become a guarantor of the idea of European unity, the progress of the new political thinking, and the construction of a common European home.

It has already acted in this vein, because changes in Eastern Europe were made possible by the new foreign and domestic policies of the Soviet Union. Renunciation of these policies and attempts to revive versions of the old model, which are being advocated by powerful forces in this country, could lead to an even greater isolation of the Soviet Union, very dangerous for the world. That is why Gorbachev's policy must be supported now. □

Spokesman on Soviet-US consultations of chemical weapons

THE results of the 15th round of Soviet-US bilateral consultations on a ban on chemical weapons, which drew to a close in Geneva on April 26, were summed up by Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vadim Perfiliev at a briefing in Moscow the same day.

Special attention during this round of consultations was devoted to finalising the elaboration of a bilateral agreement on the Soviet Union's and the United States' mutual obligations before a multilateral convention is concluded. Such an agreement would include the elimination of their stocks of chemical weapons down to equally low levels.

Progress has been achieved, and discussions aimed at resolving the remaining issues are being continued.

In addition, the two sides emphasised that human and environmental safety will be a priority during the elimination of chemical weapons under a bilateral agreement, Perfiliev said. The two sides agreed that the stocks of chemical weapons will be reduced by each side down to the level of 5,000 tons.

Another priority sphere of consultations, Perfiliev said, was the implementation of the mem-

orandum of understanding reached in Wyoming by the Soviet Foreign Minister and the US Secretary of State.

Efforts were continued to establish trust between the Soviet Union and the United States concerning the chemical capability of the other side.

The delegations also exchanged information in view of preparations for visits by representatives of the two countries to chemical weapons storage and production facilities and chemical industry plants.

Such visits will be exchanged in June and August of this year and then at the beginning of 1991. In all, there will be seven visits to each country, he said.

The sides also intensified efforts in the field of bilateral co-operation towards the elimination of chemical weapons and continued discussions to expedite the conclusion of a multilateral convention banning chemical weapons, Perfiliev said.

Bilateral discussions on a ban on chemical weapons will be continued at a regular foreign ministers' meeting, the spokesman said. Mutual hope was expressed during this round of discussions that it would be possible to sign a bilateral agreement on chemical weapons at the forthcoming Soviet-US summit, Perfiliev said. □

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The war has already become part of the distant past for hundreds of millions of young and middle-aged people. Yet the Soviet people will never forget May 9, 1945 – the day when the great victory over Nazi Germany was finally achieved. As many as 45 years have passed since that time, yet here we would like to pause once again to consider the major landmarks of the war and recall HOW WE MADE OUR WAY TOWARDS VICTORY.

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CELEBRATIONS IN RED SQUARE May Day meeting resolution urges unity

PARTICIPANTS in the meeting in Moscow's Red Square on May 1 on the occasion of the international day of solidarity among working people called for pooling the efforts of Soviet Trade Unions to ensure social guarantees and protect the rights of working people.

The May Day holiday is celebrating its 100th birthday. Standing on the tribune of the mausoleum were Mikhail Gorbachev, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, Parliament Chairman Anatoli Lukyanov and other Party and state leaders and representatives of the work collectives of the capital.

For the first time, the demonstration and meeting in Red Square were held as purely trade union activities, on the initiative of the Moscow City council of Trade Unions.

"In light of the transition to a market economy, our aim is to establish a reliable system to protect the interests of working people," Gennadi Yanayev, Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Soviet Trade Unions, told the meeting.

However this does not mean that trade unions champion equalisation approaches, he added. "We do not seek equality in poverty," Yanayev

said.

The Soviet trade union leader described national concord and solidarity among the Soviet Union's workers as one of major conditions for the success of perestroika.

Only a stable political situation can guarantee the realisation of working people's rights, Yanayev said.

Ibrahim Zakaria, General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions, addressing those present, pointed out the need for trade unions around the world to combine efforts to build a new, fair international economic order.

He spoke of the Soviet Union's contribution to reducing the nuclear threat and to building a world without hunger and poverty.

Participants in the meeting adopted a resolution expressing support for all progressive forces in the work for peace, freedom, and peoples' happiness.

"We are calling on the working people of all nationalities to unite and prevent our ranks from splitting. We shall continue to support humane, democratic transformations that ensure social guarantees for the working people," the resolution says.

The document calls on the government to prevent unemployment, to create an effective system for the protection of working people's rights and guarantee fair remuneration of labour. □

Scientists call for US-Soviet joint study of Mars

by Alexander Korolev, TASS correspondent.

MORE than 100,000 Americans have signed the US Planetary Society's declaration calling on the Soviet Union and the United States to explore Mars jointly.

Soviet Prime Minister on transition to market economy

THE government should complete the elaboration of basic documents on a transition to a planned market economy by the middle of May and report them to the USSR Supreme Soviet, Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov, who visited a number of Moscow enterprises on April 26, told Soviet television.

Ryzhkov drew attention to the fact that people are inadequately informed and draw on every kind of bits and scraps of information and on rumours and that all this brings about a "very nervous and abnormal atmosphere."

This is why the documents that are now being elaborated will be published, he emphasised.

"To think that transition to market relations will create opportunities that will be absolutely equal for everyone is wrong," Ryzhkov said. "A system should be created to ensure the social protection of pensioners, students, children, low-income families and those with many children."

As far as other parts of the population is concerned, i.e. those with the potential to earn more, a system should be set up for them to be stimulated to work, earn more, and be able to fully use all that money, Ryzhkov emphasised. □

This idea, the declaration notes, captured the imagination of a cross-section of people, "liberals and conservatives, democrats and republicans, representatives of the army and industrial circles, politicians, poets, Nobel Prize winners, people in art, athletes, former government members as well as practically all directors of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) since it was founded."

The 'Martian Declaration' was sponsored by Carl Sagan, a prominent US astronomer, and Roald Sagdeyev, an eminent Soviet astrophysicist. They suggested that the two countries' presidents put an item concerning a joint space mission to Mars on the agenda for their summit meeting, which will be held at the end of May and early in June.

The two researchers believe that such co-operation is not only desirable but necessary, since both the United States and the Soviet Union consider it a priority in space research to study the 'Red Planet'.

The two scientists recommended that joint steps be immediately taken with the framework of international space research, including an unmanned flight to Mars in order to sample its soil and bring samples back to Earth. Such thoroughly planned flights could be started under the American 'Mars Observer' and the Soviet 'Mars-94' programmes. "This would be ideal in terms of gauging our resources to plan joint missions," Sagan emphasised.

Scientists believe that the United States could utilise Soviet booster rockets and Soviet experience in the construction of orbital stations during the implementation of its own space programme. The two countries could also fruitfully co-operate in astronomy, planetary explorations and solar studies. □

PRAVDA:

Soviet economic picture bleak

PRODUCTION in the Soviet Union continued to decline during the first three months of 1990 and inflation is set to cut loose, the national daily *Pravda* said on April 29.

Commenting on recent bleak industrial statistics, it blamed the shrinking output primarily on strikes and the costs of economic restructuring programmes.

Whereas last September, at the peak of the miners' strike, work stoppages involved an average 100,000 people daily, in the first quarter of this year, the figure rose to 130,000, the paper said.

Changing the pattern of production also had its costs: while the output of consumer goods during the first quarter grew by 4.7 per cent, that of capital goods plummeted by 3.2 per cent.

In addition, production shortfalls, *Pravda* said, were obviously due to increasingly unstable economic relations and diminishing incentives for efficiency.

"Destructive processes in the economy gathered momentum. The mass of money kept increasing at a more and more rapid pace. Its growth rate now is an estimated six to eight times higher than in the early 1980s.

"Escalating financial crisis took us to the edge beyond which suppressed inflation will break into the open regardless of the government's or trade unions' will," *Pravda* said.

It noted quickly decreasing trade with CMEA countries, a persistent large deficit in trade relations with capitalist nations, which totalled 0.9 billion roubles in the first three months of the year, and mounting foreign liabilities.

The world price of oil, the Soviet Union's chief export commodity, is low again. The country passed up the chance to take advantage of the favourable market early in the year. □

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