

Mikhail Gorbachev's Statement on Afghanistan

Here follows the statement of Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, on Afghanistan —

THE military conflict in Afghanistan has been going on for a long time now. It is one of the most bitter and painful regional conflicts. Judging by everything, certain prerequisites have now emerged for its political settlement. In this context the Soviet leadership considers it necessary to set forth its views and to make its position totally clear.

In the near future, a new round of talks conducted by Afghanistan and Pakistan through the personal representative of the United Nations Secretary-General will be held in Geneva. There are considerable chances that this round will become the final one.

By now documents covering all aspects of a settlement have been almost fully worked out at the Geneva negotiations. They include agreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan on non-interference in each other's internal affairs and on the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan; international guarantees of non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs; and a document on the interrelationship of all elements of political settlement. There is also agreement on establishing a verification mechanism.

So what remains to be done? It is to establish a timeframe for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan that will be acceptable to all. Precisely that — a timeframe, since the fundamental decision to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan was adopted by us in agreement with the Afghan leadership some time ago, and announced at that same time.

The question of timeframe has both a technical and a political aspect. As for the technical aspect, it is clear that the actual withdrawal of troops will take a certain amount of time. There is hardly any need to go into the details of that here.

As for the political aspect of the matter, it is that the withdrawal of Soviet troops is, quite naturally, linked with precluding interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Prerequisites for this have now been created to our mutual satisfaction.

Seeking to facilitate a speedy and successful conclusion of the Geneva talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the governments of the USSR and the Republic of Afghanistan have agreed to set a specific date for beginning the withdrawal of Soviet troops — 15 May 1988 — and to complete their withdrawal within 10

months. The date is set based on the assumption that agreements on the settlement will be signed no later than 15 March 1988 and that, accordingly, they will all enter into force simultaneously two months after that. If the agreements are signed before 15 March, the withdrawal of troops will accordingly begin earlier.

Recently, another question has been raised, whether the phasing of Soviet troops withdrawal could be arranged in such a way as to withdraw, during the first phase, a relatively greater portion of the Soviet contingent. Well, this also could be done. The Afghan leadership and we agree to it.

All this creates the necessary conditions for signing the settlement agreement in the very near future.

This, of course, does not mean that no one could now obstruct the settlement, or push the talks backwards. But we would not like to think that some states or political figures might want to be held accountable by the Afghan nation and other nations for scuttling a settlement. We believe that common sense will prevail.

The question of the withdrawal of our troops from Afghanistan was raised at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

This was a reflection of our current political thinking, of our new, modern view of the world. We wanted thereby to reaffirm our commitment to the tradition of good-neighbourliness, goodwill and mutual respect which trace back to Vladimir Lenin and the first Soviet-Afghan Treaty signed in 1921. Progressive forces of Afghan society have understood and accepted our sincere desire for peace and tranquillity between our two neighbouring countries, which for several decades were showing an example of peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial equitable cooperation.

Any armed conflict, including internal, can poison the atmosphere in an entire region and create a situation of anxiety and alarm for a country's neighbours, to say nothing of the suffering and losses among its own people. That is why we are against any armed conflicts. We know that the Afghan leadership takes the same attitude also.

It is well known that all of this has caused the Afghan leadership, headed by President Najibullah, to undertake a profound rethinking of political course, which has crystallised in the patriotic and realistic policy of national reconciliation. It was an act of great courage and bravery; not merely an appeal to cease armed clashes but a proposal to set up a coalition government and share power with the opposition, including those who wage armed struggle against the government and even those who, while being abroad, direct the rebels' operations and supply them with weapons and combat equipment obtained from foreign countries. And that proposal was made by a government vested with constitutional authority and wielding real power in the country.

The policy of national reconciliation is a reflection of new political thinking on the Afghan side. It is not a sign of weakness, but rather of the force of spirit, wisdom and dignity of the free, honest and responsible political

leaders concerned about their country's present and future.

Success of the policy of national reconciliation has already made it possible to begin withdrawing Soviet troops from portions of the Afghan territory. At present there are no Soviet troops in 13 Afghan provinces — because armed clashes have ceased there. It can well be said that the more rapidly peace gains ground in Afghanistan the easier it will be for Soviet troops to leave.

The policy of national reconciliation has provided a political platform for all those who want peace in Afghanistan. What kind of peace? The kind that the Afghan people choose. The proud, freedom-loving and courageous Afghan people, who have gone through many centuries of struggle for freedom and independence, have been and will continue to be the master of its own country, which, as President Najibullah has said, is built on a tradition of multi-party politics and of a multiple-structure economy.

The Afghans themselves will decide the final status of their country among other nations. Most often it is being said that the future peaceful Afghanistan will be an independent, nonaligned and neutral state. Well, we could only be happy to have such a neighbour on our southern borders.

In connection with the question of beginning the withdrawal of Soviet troops, there is a need to make clear our position on yet another aspect — whether the withdrawal is linked with the completion of efforts to set up a new, coalition government in Afghanistan, i.e. with bringing the policy of national reconciliation to fruition. We are convinced that it is not.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops, combined with other aspects of the settlement, including guarantees of non-interference, is one thing. Various states are involved in it. Speaking of this, we believe that Iran, a neighbouring country, should not stand aside from political settlement.

National reconciliation and the establishment of a coalition government is another thing. This is a purely internal Afghan issue. It can only be resolved by the Afghans themselves, though they belong to different and even opposing camps. When, however, it is hinted to us that the Soviet Union should take part in talks on this issue, and even talk to third countries, our answer is firm and clear — don't expect us to do it; it is none of our business. Or yours for that matter.

But could hostilities flare up even more after Soviet troops leave? It would hardly be appropriate to prophesy, but I think that such a course of events can be prevented if those now fighting against their brothers take a responsible attitude and try indeed to get involved in peace-building. If however they are guided not by the arguments of reason, but by emotions multiplied by fanaticism, then they will be confronted by the greatly increased will of the Afghan people to see their country at peace and by the obligations of states no longer to interfere in its internal affairs. The Geneva obligations will close the channels for outside assistance to those who hope to impose their will on the whole nation by armed force.

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Mikhail Gorbachev's meeting with Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Minister

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, received Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in the Kremlin on Friday.

Welcoming the guest, Mikhail Gorbachev noted the timeliness of the visit and assessed it as an important event in the development of Soviet-Indonesian relations.

He noted with satisfaction the fact that the ties between the two countries have become more dynamic of late, while their content is being enriched. This is promoted by the fact that though the two states belong to different socio-political systems they respect their peoples' historic choice. Basing itself on new thinking the USSR is prepared to build a new world with every state — and has showed this in practice. As far as such a large country as Indonesia is concerned, its contribution to positive processes in the international arena, great as it is, will undoubtedly continue growing. The USSR intends to promote this on the road of equal, mutually advantageous interaction and co-operation. The Soviet Union's attitude to Indonesia is not subject to circumstantial considerations.

Mochtar Kusumaatmadja pointed out that the activity of the Soviet leadership aimed at relaxing international tension, at disarmament and settling conflict situations is welcomed in Indonesia.

Problems of the Asia-Pacific region were discussed in the context of the Vladivostok initiative, which Mikhail Gorbachev emphasised does not infringe on the interests of other countries and has no expansionist inclinations. We prove this by our practical steps, by our entire conduct, by the entire style of our diplomatic

work. Everybody should know that we shall continue acting in this way.

Two aspects determine the Soviet Union's policy in the Asia-Pacific region. First, the principle of peacefulness and recognition of the equality of states as the basis of international relations. Second, the interests that we would like to realise, honestly combining them with the interests of other countries, accepting and taking into consideration their initiatives and their constructive activity. This applies to all states of the region, including certainly such major countries as Indonesia, India, Vietnam, the United States, China and Japan.

The interlocutors assessed the importance of the Treaty banning intermediate- and shorter-range missiles as undoubtedly positive for Asian and Pacific countries.

The proposals on the question of security in Asia and the Pacific advanced in Mikhail Gorbachev's interview to the newspaper *Merdeka* remain relevant.

Mikhail Gorbachev welcomed the idea of turning Southeast Asia into a nuclear-weapons-free zone. This will be a major step in beginning to improve the situation in this vast and promising zone of the world.

Mochtar Kusumaatmadja said that Indonesia is aware of its obligations in the region, in the Nonaligned Movement and in the international arena. It approaches the settlement of regional conflicts from these positions.

The situation in Southeast Asia is the subject of our common concern, Mikhail Gorbachev emphasised. The problem of political settlement in Kampuchea, which is not only of regional but also international importance, was discussed in this context. Mikhail Gorbachev spoke highly of the initiative and role of the Republic of Indonesia in this process, its striving to involve all ASEAN member-countries and ASEAN as a whole into this process and its constructive contacts with Vietnam.

The question of raising the entire level of bilateral relations was posed as an important question during the conversation. Bilateral readiness to promote this in every way was expressed. This visit is called upon to serve as a serious political impulse. As to commercial and economic relations, during the days of the visit it will be possible to elucidate the possibilities for developing trade and establishing its new forms, which is promoted by perestroika in the USSR.

The interlocutors expressed their common interest in solving the difficult problems of world economic ties. Mikhail Gorbachev declared for their international consideration including within the framework of the United Nations Organisation. A serious dialogue in regional frameworks, for instance among Latin American countries, at the level of the Asian-Pacific region and the Nonaligned Movement, will be very useful.

The acuteness of the question connected with the deepening of the development gap in various parts of the world, inequivalent exchange, the growth of debts has surfaced now and threatens an explosion. It seems everybody is aware of this fact. But the approaches to the quest for solutions are far from being commensurate with the scope of that threat. We are in favour of radical solutions on the road to a new world economic order, but this does not mean that we wish to disrupt the existing historic ties. We are against adventurism. Mikhail Gorbachev suggested that bilateral discussion of world economic problems be put on a regular basis.

Mochtar Kusumaatmadja conveyed feelings of respect and friendship to the Soviet leader from Indonesia's President Suharto.

On behalf of the Soviet people and the Soviet leadership Mikhail Gorbachev asked Mochtar Kusumaatmadja to convey good wishes to the President of Indonesia and wish the Indonesian people success and prosperity on their chosen road.

Communique

MOCHTAR KUSUMAATMADJA, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, stayed in the Soviet Union from February 4-7 on an official visit at the invitation of the Soviet Government.

Eduard Shevardnadze, Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and Foreign Minister of the USSR, and Mochtar Kusumaatmadja exchanged views on questions of the international situation.

The talks revealed the unity of views of the sides in respect of the need to press for the strengthening of universal peace and security, for averting the militarisation of outer space, for stopping nuclear weapon tests and for concluding an international treaty on their general and complete prohibition. The sides noted the importance of vigorous efforts within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to achieve the speediest conclusion of the convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their destruction.

Eduard Shevardnadze welcomed the constructive initiatives and practical steps of Southeast Asian countries directed at normalising the situation and asserting stable peace and good neighbourly cooperation in this area. The sides are convinced that the

Kampuchean question can be solved only by political means, by the Kampuchean people themselves by way of talks between all the interested sides. They stated their approval of the policy of national reconciliation in Kampuchea.

The ministers were unanimous that it is possible to achieve an all-embracing and just settlement in the Middle East only on the basis of convening the international conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and all interested sides — including the sole lawful representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO.

They stressed the need for the speediest ending of the armed conflict between Iran and Iraq and switching it into the channel of political settlement, taking due account of the lawful interests of both sides in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 598.

The ministers stressed the need for finding a political solution to the Afghan problem. It was explained to the Indonesian side that the recent initiatives of the governments of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to achieve an Afghan settlement create the necessary pre-conditions for working out final accords at the Afghan-Pakistani talks in Geneva.

On calling on the international community to coordinate efforts in the struggle to liquidate the system of apartheid in the Republic of South

Africa and for the speediest granting of independence to Namibia, the sides stressed the need for the speediest introduction of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against the Republic of South Africa.

The ministers noted the growing role of the Nonaligned Movement in the struggle for a nuclear-free world and for ensuring universal peace and security.

Realities and Guarantees for a Secure World

Mikhail Gorbachev's article published in *Pravda* on September 17.

Price 30p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

Apartheid Unmasked

This Novosti booklet is available from Soviet Booklets, 3 Rosary Gardens, London, SW7 4NW (01-373 7350). Price 40p.

At the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee

AT its meeting on Thursday the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee approved the results of Eduard Shevardnadze's official visits to the FRG and Spain. Note was made with satisfaction of the mutual readiness to open a new page in relations between the Soviet Union and the FRG and to fill it with constructive content. This refers both to the field of political cooperation, including problems of security and disarmament, and to questions of further developing business and other ties and contacts along all directions of bilateral relations.

The talks and conversations in Madrid confirmed the existence of favourable preconditions for expanding political contacts with Spain and building up mutually advantageous cooperation in the economic, scientific, technological and cultural spheres.

It was stressed that collective efforts to create a climate of trust and cooperation in Europe, the deepening of dialogue and interaction with West European countries with the aim of consolidating healthy tendencies towards a new phase of detente in the continent, lowering the level of military confrontation, reducing armaments and promoting disarmament are of special importance now.

The Politburo approved the results of Andrei Gromyko's, Yegor Ligachev's and Eduard Shevardnadze's conversations and talks with Member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the GDR Oscar Fischer that took place during his official friendly visit to the USSR.

The Politburo discussed questions connected with the holding of the next plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee which will study the course of restructuring of the secondary and higher schools.

The meeting summed up the results of the work done in 1987 to reshape the organisational structures of the central economic bodies,

ministries and agencies of the USSR, and to draw up the general patterns of administration in the union republics.

The Politburo studied and approved the government's proposal to organise in the USSR wholesale trade in production and technical goods for transferable roubles acquired by enterprises as a result of external economic activity with CMEA member countries.

On hearing a report on the course of preparation of proposals connected with perfecting the criminal legislation of the USSR and union republics, the Politburo noted the importance of consistently implementing in this work the principles of democracy, ineluctability of responsibility for a crime, justice and humanism. It determined the main directions to be followed by further work to change criminal legislation with the aim of achieving a more precise delimitation of crimes in accordance with the degree of social danger presented by them.

The Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee discussed also some other questions of Party and state development and of implementing Soviet foreign policy and adopted decisions on them.

Communique

THE following communique was published in Moscow under the title "At the Commission of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee for additional study of material connected with repression which took place in the '30s-'40s and the early '50s":

The Commission at its meeting on 5 February 1988 heard information by the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Court on the results of considering a protest filed by the General Procurator of the USSR in the case of N. I. Bukharin, A. I. Rykov, A. P. Rozengolts, M. A. Chernov, P. P. Bulanov, L. G. Levin, I. N. Kazakov, V. A. Maximov-Dikovskiy, P. P. Kryuchkov and Kh. G. Rakovskiy, who were

brought to criminal responsibility for being allegedly part of an "antiSoviet right-wing trotskyite bloc".

Those people were convicted by the military collegium of the USSR Supreme Court in March 1938 on charges of having organised a conspiratorial group, on an assignment from the intelligence services of foreign states hostile to the USSR, with the aim of overthrowing the socialist, social and state system existing in the USSR and having engaged in wrecking-sabotage, terrorist or other hostile activities.

As has been established, the pre-trial investigation of the case was conducted with gross violations of socialist legality, with facts being falsified and the admissions of guilt wrung from the accused through unlawful methods.

Note was taken of the announcement by the Chairman of the USSR Supreme Court that the

Supreme Court's plenary meeting on 4 February 1988 passed a ruling repealing the military collegium's verdict with regard to N. I. Bukharin, A. I. Rykov, A. P. Rozengolts, M. A. Chernov, P. P. Bulanov, L. G. Levin, I. N. Kazakov, V. A. Maximov-Dikovskiy, P. P. Kryuchkov and Kh. G. Rakovskiy and dismissed the case for the absence of crime in their actions.

Earlier the USSR Supreme Court fully rehabilitated for the same reason N. N. Krestinsky, G. F. Grinko, I. A. Zelensky, V. I. Ivanov, S. A. Bessonov, A. Ikramov, F. Khodzhaev, V. F. Sharangovich, P. T. Zubarev and D. D. Pletnev, who were tried in the same case.

The Procurator's Office of the USSR did not lodge a protest concerning G. G. Yagoda who was tried in the same case as well.

The Commission of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee is continuing its work.

Congratulations to fraternal Romanian people

THE Soviet leadership has congratulated the fraternal Romanian people on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Soviet-Romanian Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.

The telegram addressed by the CPSU Central Committee, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the USSR Council of Ministers to the Romanian leaders Nicolae Ceausescu and Constantin Dascalescu stresses that the Treaty of 1948 laid the solid foundation for qualitatively new relations between the two countries — those of full equality, mutual respect, comradely solidarity and all-round cooperation. "The past decades have convincingly borne out that the fruitful ties and fraternal friendship between the Soviet and Romanian peoples accord with their vital interests."

"At this crucial stage in the development of the international situation, special significance attaches to the joint efforts of the USSR, the Socialist Republic of Romania and the other socialist countries in the struggle for building a nuclear-free and non-violent world."

Changes in the USSR Council of Ministers

Nikolai Talyzin, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, has been relieved of his duties as Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee by a decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet has appointed Yuri Maslyukov First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee.

The USSR Council of Ministers endorsed Nikolai Talyzin as Chairman of the Social Development Bureau of the USSR Council of Ministers.

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Yuri Maslyukov, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee, was born in the city of Leninabad, Tadzhikistan (Soviet Central Asian republic) in 1937. He is Russian. A member of the CPSU since 1966, he received higher education at the Leningrad Mechanical Institute.

Yuri Maslyukov started work in 1962 as engineer at the Scientific and Research

Technological Institute, then as senior engineer, deputy chief of a department, chief engineer and deputy director for scientific work of the Institute. In 1970-1974 he worked as chief engineer at a machine-building factory and since 1974 in the Ministry. First, as head of a department and member of the Collegium, then as Deputy Minister. In 1982-1985 he was First Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Planning Committee, and since November 1985 Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

Yuri Maslyukov is a Deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet and Member of the CPSU Central Committee.

The Russian Federation — The Public Education System

This Novosti booklet is available from Soviet Booklets, 3 Rosary Gardens, London, SW7 4NW (01-373 7350). Price 50p.

At the USSR Supreme Soviet foreign affairs commissions

A JOINT meeting of the foreign affairs commissions of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet was held in the Kremlin yesterday. In accordance with a decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR the commissions started a preliminary study of the Treaty between the USSR and the United States on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles that was submitted for ratification by the USSR Council of Ministers.

The meeting was chaired by **Yegor Ligachev**, Member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, who is Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of the Union.

In his opening remarks Ligachev stressed that for the first time in the many years of their existence the USSR Supreme Soviet, its commissions and deputies are considering an international treaty on real nuclear disarmament. There is no precedent in world practice. A question of special political importance has been submitted for consideration by the foreign affairs commissions. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR has instructed the commissions to study and to present their conclusion on the Treaty between the USSR and the United States on eliminating intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan in Washington on 8 December 1987.

As we begin the fulfilment of our lofty duty we feel pride for our motherland, for the peace-loving foreign policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, Yegor Ligachev pointed out. At the same time we all feel our big responsibility for the country's defence and international security. The drafting and signing of this document came as a result first of all of the Soviet leadership's persistent and imaginative efforts. But neither could there have been any treaty without steps taken in the same direction by the United States Administration, without the support of realistically thinking politicians in other countries and the world progressive public.

The signing of the Treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles is a practical step towards restructuring international relations based not on confrontation but on vigorous peaceful coexistence and international cooperation.

What should serve as the bearings for us in evaluating the Soviet-American Treaty?

Equal security both for the USSR and for the United States. The starting point in the work of our commissions when studying the Treaty should be, of course, the attitude to it of the Soviet people which has always been characterised by love of peace and striving for good relations with all countries and peoples. This was brilliantly confirmed by Mikhail Gorbachev's statement on Afghanistan on Monday.

The CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Supreme Soviet as well as newspapers, television and radio are receiving many letters in which Soviet people approve and support the historic aims and meaning of this document. At the same time Soviet people ask many questions. They want to get more information on what the Treaty

offers us and the whole world, how it bears on the Soviet Union's defence capabilities. Soviet people also want to know whether the Treaty will be approved by the U.S. Senate and whether there are guarantees that the United States will honestly and consistently abide by it. One cannot but admit that these are not chance questions. We see, in particular, that in the course of the Treaty's discussion in the Senate of the United States along with desire to seriously comprehend the essence of this document there are attempts to smear the Treaty and frustrate its ratification.

The United States Administration is trying to circumvent the ABM Treaty and create strike space weapons. The Soviet Union's stand on the so-called SDI is universally known and remains unchanged. A 50% reduction of strategic offensive arms is possible in conditions of strict observance of the ABM Treaty. On our part we proceed from the premise that after its ratification by both sides the Soviet-American Treaty should be not only most strictly obeyed but should also start the process of disarmament along all directions. Along with this we hope that the conclusion and implementation of the Treaty will be accompanied by an expansion and deepening of international economic, scientific and cultural ties, an improvement of Soviet-American relations.

But one should not think that now the cause of disarmament will proceed by itself, Yegor Ligachev emphasised. In the United States and Western Europe there are mighty forces which are bent on militarising the economy and public life. Here efforts by both sides are needed, Soviet and American, by forces of peace in the whole world.

It is our task to analyse the content of the Treaty, to weigh the consequences of its implementation. In the end the commissions will formulate their conclusion and submit it to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Present here besides deputies of the Supreme Soviet are representatives of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the USSR Ministry of Defence, the Committee of State Security of the USSR and other interested agencies, public organisations and journalists of the printed and electronic media. Attending the meeting are representatives of the fraternal German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.

Also present here are representatives of the embassies of a number of foreign countries in the USSR and foreign newsmen.

Then the floor was taken by USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs **Eduard Shevardnadze**. For the first time in the history of the nuclear decades, he stressed, which announced their existence by the tragic turning of Hiroshima to ashes, two great powers have agreed on a genuine reduction of some modern types of weapons. The three Soviet-American summits held after the April 1985 plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee in Geneva, Reykjavik and Washington became events of monumental importance and decisively contributed to ensuring the attainment of accord. The programme of nuclear disarmament put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev on 15 January 1986 is of fundamental importance for working out the Soviet approach to the talks. Soviet diplomacy was provided with a clearcut guideline for vigorous actions to achieve the set aim.

The Treaty is a product of the joint creativity of the entire socialist community, first of all the Warsaw Treaty member states. The accord was helped also by other countries and public movements.

The difficulties encountered on the road to the Treaty were connected both with objective causes (unprecedented subject of the talks) and subjective ones (the attempts of the United States to get unilateral advantages).

The Treaty is a carefully weighed political and military-technical compromise, a balance of interests, a balance of security. In the obtaining circumstances it is the maximum realistically possible that could be achieved, the Foreign Minister said. Yet an analysis of public opinion, of the sentiments of Soviet people shows that reactions to the Treaty in our country vary.

The discussion of the Treaty that has begun in society should be welcomed. Absence of indifference to the decisions that are being made is an expression of real power by the people, a sign of the changes taking place in the country and pointing to the assertion of the process of democratisation and atmosphere of openness in our society.

Without doubt the elimination of two classes of modern nuclear weapons is a step of tremendous importance. But it would be a serious delusion to think that this already gives an answer to the main question of the nuclear age — whether mankind's survival is now guaranteed. The historic weight of the 4% of all nuclear weapons that are to be eliminated is not that they give such a guarantee — they do not give such a guarantee — but that these are the first 4% by which the nuclear arsenals of the USSR and the United States are to be reduced. But neither should the significance of this step be belittled.

The Treaty, as is known, provides for the elimination of a dissimilar number of missiles of the USSR and the United States. The Soviet Union, and the figures have already been given, will destroy more missiles than the United States. Concern is being expressed whether this fact does not institutionalise the inequality of the sides. No. This is not so because elementary arithmetics is not always capable of correctly reflecting a military balance, especially one in motion. The true ratio will be gauged by the final outcome of the reductions. The following outcome is envisaged — not a single missile of the stipulated classes in the possession of the United States, not a single missile of the stipulated classes in the possession of the USSR. Equal "zero" levels will be set for both sides as a result of consecutive reductions.

Is it that NATO will gain more than Warsaw Treaty countries because the Soviet Union has consented to the Treaty while leaving aside for the time being the nuclear potentials of Britain and France? No. Firstly, we take into account that Britain and France have stated their readiness at a later stage to join the process of nuclear disarmament when the nuclear arsenals of the USSR and the United States will have been substantially reduced. At the present level of armaments it proved possible for us and the Americans to agree to very substantial reductions without fear for our own security and that of our allies. Neither side will gain military superiority as a result.

Eduard Shevardnadze dwelt on the question of verification. There should be no ambiguity in questions of observing a treaty when matters concerning the nerve centres of the security of a state are involved. That is why we made a special effort to provide the Treaty with a thoroughly worked out and maximum reliable system of verification without precedent in the practice of international relations.

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Andrei Gromyko's talks with Moussa Traore

ANDREI GROMYKO, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, received in the Kremlin on Monday Moussa Traore, General Secretary of the Democratic Union of the Mali people and President of the Republic of Mali, who was on an unofficial visit in the Soviet Union.

Views were exchanged on a wide range of international issues and first of all on the subject-matter of African policies. The sides also discussed bilateral Soviet-Mali relations.

In Moussa Traore's opinion the task of African countries situated in eastern, central and western Africa is to extinguish all seats of conflict existing between the countries of this region and to direct all efforts at the development of their economy. Moussa Traore described the Soviet Union's relations with African countries as excellent — the USSR respects their independence and tries to assist their economic development.

The President of Mali described how explosive the situation in the south of Africa is. The Republic of South Africa openly threatens Angola. African states are continuing the struggle to protect Angola's independence, to

prevent any linkage whatsoever between the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and the granting of independence to Namibia. The people of this African territory should be given a possibility to shape its own destiny.

It was noted from the Soviet side that the sending of the contingent of Cuban troops to Angola is a noble act by that Latin American state. As to Namibia, the question of its independence indeed has an importance of its own. But because of the geographical closeness of Angola and Namibia their political problems turned out to be organically connected. The Soviet Union invariably comes out for the independence of Namibia and the inviolability of Angola's borders.

Concluding the discussion of the African theme, Andrei Gromyko stressed that it will be good if full agreement on all-African problems is dominant in relations between the continent's countries.

The interlocutors exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East and expressed their common view that the only correct way to solve the crisis in this region is to convene the international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all interested sides, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation as a full-fledged participant.

A common view was expressed also on the Iran-Iraq war. This is a senseless war and the sooner the sides stop the bloodshed the better it will be for the peoples drawn into the conflict and for all adjoining countries.

Moussa Traore said that his country welcomes the signing of the historic Soviet-American Treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles.

Andrei Gromyko stressed that the ratification of this treaty should be the next important step. The Soviet Union hopes that the United States will approach this act with all responsibility and that the forces of reason will win. The accords that have already been reached point to the existence of genuine possibilities to find new mutually acceptable decisions, including on a 50% reduction of strategic offensive arms.

Andrei Gromyko told Moussa Traore about the big work done to fulfil the CPSU's plans to develop the Soviet state. He stressed the organic link between the plans of internal development and Soviet foreign policy directed at strengthening peace and improving the life of peoples in all countries.

Andrei Gromyko and Moussa Traore expressed satisfaction with the state of the friendly Soviet-Mali relations.

Yuli Vorontsov's meeting with Rajiv Gandhi

THE Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi received USSR First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov in New Delhi on Monday.

On Mikhail Gorbachev's instructions the Prime Minister was informed of the new initiatives of the Soviet Union with respect to the political settlement of the issue relating to Afghanistan.

India and the Soviet Union have been in close and continuous touch on developments with regard to Afghanistan. India has consistently stood for the resolution of the issues in a manner that will ensure the status of Afghanistan as an independent and nonaligned country. The Soviet leadership has always shown sympathetic understanding of India's point of view.

In this context the Prime Minister welcomed the new Soviet initiative and expressed the hope that it will pave the way for an early resolution of the issues in Afghanistan. The two sides will remain in close contact regarding future developments and further steps to be taken.

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Soviet-Indian political consultations

SOVIET-INDIAN political consultations were held in Moscow on February 2-5. They were conducted by Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov and Secretary for External Affairs of the Indian Foreign Ministry K. P. Shankara Menon.

The following officials took part in the consultations:

From the Soviet side — Deputy Foreign Ministers A. A. Bessmertnykh, V. F. Petrovsky and A. I. Rogachev;

From the Indian side — Indian Foreign Ministry secretaries A. Asrani, Mukhund Dubey and Indian Ambassador to Moscow Triloki Nath Kaul.

The two sides discussed all major problems of the present-day international situation.

The consultations confirmed the identity of the Soviet Union's and India's approaches to the solution of such vital tasks as averting the nuclear threat and securing reliable security for all states, on the basis of equality and reciprocal consideration for each other's interests.

Much attention was given to issues of the consistent implementation of principles of a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world contained in the Delhi Declaration signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi.

It was stressed that the ideas of that document are evoking responses in an ever bigger number of countries and facilitating the improvement of the international situation.

The Soviet and Indian foreign ministry representatives expressed the common view that the Soviet-American INF Treaty is an historic milestone which marks the real beginning of nuclear disarmament.

They described as an especially important landmark along the path of nuclear disarmament

the elaboration of the Soviet-American treaty on the 50% reduction of strategic offensive arms given the sides' compliance with the ABM Treaty in the form it was signed in 1972 and non-withdrawal from it for an agreed-upon period.

It was noted that the initiatives of the Group of Six nations greatly contribute to the cause of nuclear disarmament.

Much attention was given during the consultations to the situation in Asia and adjoining areas of the Indian and Pacific regions.

The Soviet and Indian foreign ministry officials expressed confidence that there are effective prerequisites for establishing cooperation among all countries of the Asian-Pacific region irrespective of their socio-political system and peculiarities of their historic development, and for defusing regional conflicts and seats of tension as soon as possible.

They reaffirmed the readiness for active work jointly with other interested parties to achieve that.

The participants in the consultations were unanimous that international economic relations should be restructured on principles of equality and justice.

The sides noted with satisfaction that the results of the 42nd Session of the U.N. General Assembly reflect the peoples' striving to back and consolidate the process of renewal of international life which was manifested in the document on issues of establishing a comprehensive system of international peace and security.

In considering issues of bilateral Soviet-Indian relations, the sides reaffirmed their reciprocal desire to press for implementing all accords reached at the Soviet-Indian summit meetings in 1985-1987.

The consultations were substantive in essence and were held in a friendly atmosphere characteristic of Soviet-Indian meetings.

Nikolai Ryzhkov's meeting with Tareq Aziz

NIKOLAI RYZHKOV, Member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, had a meeting in the Kremlin last Tuesday with Tareq Aziz, Member of the Revolutionary Command Council, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Iraq, who was staying in Moscow on a brief visit.

During their substantive exchange of opinions mutual satisfaction was expressed with the state of relations between the two countries in various fields, based on the solid foundation of the bilateral Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.

As international problems were discussed, the Soviet side stressed its readiness to press for a radical change for the better in world affairs and work to realise the idea of a comprehensive system of international security, settle regional conflicts and remove hotbeds of military confrontation around the globe.

The Iraqi side expressed full support for this policy.

The meeting focussed on the Iran-Iraq conflict and the situation in the Persian Gulf.

Ryzhkov said the Soviet leadership is feeling serious anxiety about the continuing Iran-Iraq war. In the present-day world existing contradictions can and must be settled only by peaceful means, by way of talks, through a display of political will and reasonable compromise.

The Soviet Union stands firmly for an early settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict on the basis of the U.N. Security Council's Resolution 598 which has all the essential ingredients for a fair and comprehensive resolution of contentious problems. He added that the U.N. Secretary-General's peace-making mission is continuing to play a substantial and important role in efforts to put an end to the war.

The Soviet side once again stressed the inadmissibility of the massive naval buildup by the United States and other Western countries in the Persian Gulf.

The attention of Tareq Aziz was called in this connection to the proposal for replacing the ships of the nonlittoral countries by a single U.N. naval force for the Persian Gulf, forming which will defuse the situation in the conflict zone in a significant measure and create more favourable conditions for action towards ending the Iran-Iraq war.

Aziz set out his country's approach to the issue of settling the Iran-Iraq conflict and briefed Nikolai Ryzhkov on activities of Iraqi diplomats in the search for peace and stability in the region.

On behalf of the Iraqi leadership he spoke highly of the achieved level of Soviet-Iraqi relations and reaffirmed his country's desire to continue developing and strengthening them in every way.

Taking part in the talks, which passed in a friendly atmosphere, were also Konstantin Katushev, Foreign External Economic Relations Minister of the USSR, Yuli Vorontsov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, and Saad Abdul Majid al-Faisal, Iraqi Ambassador to the USSR.

Eduard Shevardnadze's talks with Tareq Aziz

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE held talks with Tareq Aziz last Tuesday.

Shevardnadze confirmed the Soviet Union's stand of principle about the need for the early switching of the Iran-Iraq conflict to the road of peaceful political talks with a view to its fair, comprehensive and honourable settlement. The U.N. Security Council's Resolution 598 remains the basis for the start of the process of transition from war to peace. The Soviet side welcomes Iraq's statement about its readiness for a political settlement and

compliance with Resolution 598.

When the situation in the Persian Gulf was discussed, the Soviet side noted that the dispatch of large naval units of the USA and other Western countries into the area, no matter what pretext was used in an attempt to justify it, has actually led to destabilising the situation. All this creates additional blocks on the road to the settlement of the conflict between Iran and Iraq and has a negative effect on the situation in the region.

Eduard Shevardnadze explained the essence of the Soviet proposal for the creation of a United Nations naval force in the Persian Gulf.

The sides expressed support for the Palestinian people's struggle and emphasised the need for the early settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict

through convening the international conference on the Middle East. Tareq Aziz supported the Soviet Union's proposal to hold consultations on this matter in the framework of the United Nations Security Council.

During the exchange of opinions on the Afghan problem, Shevardnadze spoke about the Geneva process of political settlement of the situation around Afghanistan. He emphasised that the signing of the Geneva agreements shortly will make it possible to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan within a short period of time. At the same time it was noted that certain statements of the Pakistani leadership of late, in which attempts are made to avoid signing agreements with the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan, do nothing to promote progress at the Geneva talks.

USSR Supreme Soviet deputies visit Iraq

A DELEGATION of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR headed by Vice-President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Gaibnazar Pallayev paid an official visit to the Iraqi Republic from January 31 to February 7 at the invitation of Iraq's National Council.

The delegation was received by Saddam Hussain, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council and President of Iraq and had conversations with members of the Revolutionary Command Council and the Chairman of the National Council Sa'adoun Hammadi. The sides expressed much satisfaction with the level of friendly relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq and declared for continued contacts at various levels, including between the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the National Council of Iraq.

When topical problems of the present international situation were discussed the common view was expressed of the pressing need

to build up efforts in order to avert the nuclear threat, stop the arms race and prevent it from spreading to outer space. The Iraqi side spoke highly of the Soviet-American Treaty on eliminating intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, and stated its support for the USSR's firm and consistent course directed at improving the international political climate and deepening the process of detente.

The Soviet side welcomed Iraq's readiness for a political settlement of the conflict with Iran on the basis of the U.N. Security Council's Resolution 598. The Soviet side confirmed that the USSR will further work, including within the framework of the United Nations Security Council, for the implementation in full volume of Resolution 598 and will take all the necessary practical measures to bring about a termination of this tragic war.

The Chairman of Iraq's National Council dwelt on the question of the causes of the Iran-Iraq conflict and confirmed Iraq's right to protect its sovereignty, independence and national choice. He noted that Iraq opposes all foreign interference and patronage, and firmly keeps to its

principled, peaceloving course of settling regional conflicts by way of talks on the basis of mutual respect for national sovereignty.

The Soviet and Iraqi Members of Parliament firmly condemned the mass repressions of the Israeli authorities against the peaceful Palestinian population in occupied territories and expressed solidarity with the just struggle of the Palestinian people under the leadership of the PLO — its sole lawful representative — against the occupation and for the implementation of its inalienable national rights.

The sides supported the idea of the speediest convocation of the plenipotentiary international conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations with the equal participation of all interested sides, including the PLO and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

The sides said it is necessary to overcome the Lebanese crisis on the basis of a rational accord of the Lebanese people themselves in conditions of preserving the unity, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

Dmitri Yazov's article in *Pravda*

THE signing of the Treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States on eliminating their intermediate- and shorter-range missiles became one of the chief results of the Soviet-U.S. summit meeting in Washington, writes General of the Army Dmitri Yazov, Alternate Member of the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Minister of Defence, in Monday's *Pravda*.

In an article headlined "On Military Balance of Forces and Nuclear Missile Parity" the Minister expresses concern over the fact that "the opponents of detente and cooperation stand in the way of changes of the international situation for the better and urge the U.S. leadership not to go 'too far' and to stop the disarmament process. They seek urgent measures of 'compensation' for the American intermediate- and shorter-range missiles being eliminated under the Treaty, and suggest various versions of NATO's rearmament by bringing new U.S. nuclear forces into Europe and closer to Europe and by increasing the rate of build-up of the nuclear and conventional arms of West European countries."

"All this is being presented on the plea that the Warsaw Treaty countries ostensibly have 'overwhelming' military superiority over NATO in conventional arms, and that the INF Treaty allegedly upsets the strategic balance in favour of the Soviet Union."

"In actual fact the military balance is not upset either in the world as a whole or in Europe in particular," the article says. "The existence of strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States was repeatedly verified and confirmed during the process of

elaboration of the SALT-2 Treaty and subsequently during the Soviet-U.S. talks."

"The meeting in Washington brought the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States closer to a solution to the central problem of Soviet-U.S. relations — a radical cut in the strategic offensive arms of the sides in the conditions of compliance with the ABM Treaty. An agreement envisaging a 50% cut in strategic offensive arms was virtually outlined."

"After we agreed on the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles, and, it seems, constructively approached a solution to the problem of a radical reduction in strategic arms," the Soviet Defence Minister goes on. "the importance of issues concerning a reduction in the armed forces, tactical nuclear and conventional arms in Europe became increasingly manifest."

Having pointed out that the state of the armed forces and armaments of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation gives an opportunity considerably to lower the level of military confrontation in Europe on a mutual basis with the observance of the principle of parity and equal security, Dmitri Yazov writes "There is much talk in the West about the so-called 'overwhelming superiority' of the Warsaw Treaty countries in conventional arms. The West maintains that they should agree to one-sided reductions. Such statements do not correspond to reality."

"The numerical strength of the armed forces of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is approximately equal," he points out. "Three-million-strong armies confront each other in Europe now."

"The number of large combat-ready units (divisions and brigades) of NATO is 50% greater than that of the Warsaw Treaty countries. U.S. divisions number 16,000-19,000, army divisions

of the Federal Republic of Germany number up to 24,000 servicemen whereas divisions in the armies of the Warsaw Treaty countries are 11,000-12,000 strong at most."

"As far as tanks are concerned, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation has approximately 20,000 more than NATO but NATO has almost 50% more combat helicopters, including those provided with anti-tank systems, and approximately twice as many anti-tank missiles systems."

"We are told that the Warsaw Treaty countries have an edge in central Europe. They have an edge, if French troops are counted out. But NATO has an edge on the southern flank of Europe: the ratio of personnel and strike-aviation aircraft there is 2.6 to 1; the combat helicopters ratio is 5.8 to 1, and the artillery ratio is 1.9 to 1."

"Taking the problem of correlation of forces in Europe as a whole, the picture is as follows — NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation have approximately equal total numerical strength and amounts of artillery. The Warsaw Treaty Organisation has an edge over NATO in tanks while NATO has an edge in the number of combat-ready large units and fighter-bombers. On the whole, there is a rough balance and approximate parity in conventional arms," Dmitri Yazov concludes.

He emphasises that the Soviet Union is prepared to consider ways to eliminate the above-mentioned disbalances at the level of the military alliances but so as not to upset the overall correlation of forces which is now characterised by approximate balance.

"Future European talks on this issue stand all chances for success if they deal with mutual and simultaneous reductions and mutual elimination of asymmetry and disbalances."

Chemical weapons — the Soviet view

by Armen Oganessian, *Novosti Press Agency*

PRESIDENT Reagan has given the go ahead to the production of a chemical bomb known as 'big eye'. The bomb will go into full scale production two years from now after a special facility has been built. The bomb is a binary weapon, that is, filled with two chemicals which become lethal when they mix upon explosion.

The decision to go ahead with the production of binary weapons has clarified Washington's stand on the issue of chemical weapons. In his address to the U.N. Disarmament Conference President Reagan said that drafting details of the appropriate convention to ban chemical weaponry will take considerable time. The signs are that the United States is not going to use that time to bring the stands taken by the two sides closer together, although President Reagan has called for more understanding on that issue.

Immediately after the INF Treaty was signed in Washington the United States decided to go ahead with the production of binary artillery shells. These weapons are designed for the European theatre of operations. In spite of the fact that the British Government has in the past called for banning chemical weapons on many occasions it has now supported Washington's move and even made a gesture of solidarity with the United States.

Addressing a new conference last week spokesman for the Soviet Foreign Minister

Gennadi Gerasimov described as puzzling a statement by British Defence Secretary George Younger that the Soviet Union shows no signs of being ready to take any action to reduce chemical weapons. The Soviet spokesman recalled that last April the Soviet Union said that it was stopping the production of chemical weapons and that it favours a convention at an early date to impose a total ban on chemical weapons and scrap them. Mikhail Gorbachev underlined this during his recent meeting with Mrs. Thatcher.

The position of the United States and its NATO allies has come as something of a surprise to many participants in the U.N. Disarmament Conference. At the end of last year, as you may recall, U.S. representatives came to this country to inspect facilities designed for scrapping chemical weapons. Soviet experts paid a reciprocal visit to the United States. Both sides were satisfied that there are reliable technologies for scrapping chemical weapons and many scientists and experts called at the time for an early ban on chemical weapons which in their opinion can be readily verified.

Some Western authorities acknowledge now that having begun by advancing proposals for very strict verification measures the Western powers have now decided to back down. Hugh Mitchell of the *Economist* points out that in the past the Western powers thought that they could propose anything at all as far as verification was concerned, because, they reasoned, the Russians would not accept it anyway. Well, now the Russians have proposed very strict

verification measures themselves and, it appears, the West has reviewed its tough stand on verification. One problem that arose in the U.K. and the United States is whether it would be in keeping with the law to allow Soviet inspectors to visit privately owned facilities producing chemical agents. This of course puts a barrier in the way of verification by on-site inspection without which there can be no question of balanced verification, because the Soviet Union does not deny Western inspectors the right to visit chemical factories. The intensification of the production of chemical weapons in the United States will surely further complicate the verification issue. It may even torpedo the process of chemical disarmament.

Nevertheless, speaking last Tuesday at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva the Soviet delegate Yuri Nazarkin stressed the need to draw up the convention on banning and scrapping chemical weapons at an early date.

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The Treaty means first of all that the increased hopes for finding a way out of the vicious circle of the arms race are real. It will help release certain manpower resources and also technical and financial means for new production activity.

Eduard Shevardnadze expressed the hope that the study of the Treaty by the Soviet Parliament in conditions of openness and by way of a democratic discussion will result in a responsible state decision — to ratify the Treaty and impart the force of law to it.

Mikhail Gorbachev's message to Maltese pacifists

THE leaders and activists of a Maltese pacifist organisation were received on February 2 at the Soviet Embassy in Malta.

A verbal message from Mikhail Gorbachev to participants in a mass rally devoted to the results of the U.S.-Soviet summit meeting was conveyed to them.

Priest D. Minto, director of the Peace Workshop, expressed his sincere gratitude to the Soviet leader for his attention and warm wishes.

He emphasised that his organisation and the progressive public of Malta support the Soviet Union's efforts for a nuclear-free world.

The ceremony at the Embassy was attended by members of Malta's Parliament, Foreign Ministry officials and representatives of public organisations and mass media.

Pravda on Palestinian people's uprising

IN the Middle East the hour hand of history ever more persistently moves to the only right course — a solution to the urgent problems of the region within the framework of the international conference with the participation of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and all the parties directly involved in the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

This conclusion is drawn by Sunday's *Pravda* in an international review in which it analyses the situation in the Middle East where the uprising in the Israel-occupied Palestinian territories has not been subsiding for two months.

"The people's current uprising in the occupied lands," said Naif Hawatmeh, General Secretary of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), who visited *Pravda's* editorial office recently, "from the very outset has been and is taking place under the leadership of the PLO and of specialised organisations which act within the PLO's framework. The uprising involves all sections of Palestinian people — students, young people, workers, peasants, employees, tradesmen, Moslems and Christians."

"Working people organised into trade unions are the principal motive force of the current movement," the DFLP General Secretary emphasised.

The uprising in the occupied territories has serious influence on the entire situation in the Middle East area, *Pravda* continues. It has already shattered the myth that the conflict in the region is limited to contradictions between Arab countries and Israel, contradictions which ostensibly can and must be solved under separate deals between Tel Aviv and its Arab neighbours.

The events in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip have shown again and again that underlying the conflict is the Israeli ruling circles' expansionist policy, of which the Palestinian people, deprived of their native land, became the first and main victim. *Pravda* emphasises. The current dramatic developments in the occupied territories have irrefutably proved complete bankruptcy of the policy and pointed out the great dangers it is fraught with both to the peoples of the region, and to the cause of peace throughout the world.

Vienna CSCE meeting discusses Mediterranean

THE Soviet delegation is prepared for the quest for mutually acceptable arrangements on the entire complex of burning Mediterranean problems and urges the Western colleagues to join it. This was said on Friday at a plenary sitting of the Vienna meeting of representatives of the participating countries in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, by member of the Soviet delegation Viktor Shikalov.

The Vienna meeting can and must make a weighty contribution to the normalisation of the situation in the Mediterranean. Shikalov emphasised. The CSCE participating countries can play an important role in this. We urge the delegations from NATO countries to have a more responsible attitude to the consideration of Mediterranean problems and correct their essentially negative stand which they have so far been holding in the editorial group on matters related to security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. We regard as unacceptable the line of those delegations at deliberately narrowing the Vienna arrangements on the Mediterranean as compared with what is envisaged in the Helsinki Final Act.

Viktor Shikalov said that the work of this editorial group on extremely important problems of security is not progressing, even though there is a solid basis for formulating appropriate provisions for the Vienna meeting's final document. The editorial group is clearly not keeping abreast of the rates of development of the world situation, and with the overall positive tendency for confidence-building, security and disarmament which is starting to manifest itself in Europe.

Over many years the Mediterranean has been an area of armed clashes and continued conflicts, one of the sources of the destabilisation of the international situation. The USSR has for a long time advanced the proposal for turning this region into a zone of stable peace, good-neighbourliness and cooperation, for spreading

(from front page)

And, if necessary, consideration can be given at that stage to using the possibilities available to the United Nations and its Security Council.

And now about our boys, our soldiers in Afghanistan. They have been doing their duty honestly and performing acts of self-denial and heroism.

Our people profoundly respect those who were called to serve in Afghanistan. As a matter of priority, the state provides for them good educational opportunities and a chance to get interesting and worthy work.

The memory of those who have died a hero's death in Afghanistan is sacred to us. It is the duty of Party and Soviet authorities to make sure that their families and relatives are taken care of with concern, attention and kindness.

And, finally, when the Afghan knot is untied, it will have the most profound impact on other regional conflicts too.

Whereas the arms race, which we are working so hard — and with some success — to stop, is mankind's mad race to the abyss, regional conflicts are bleeding wounds which can result in gangrenous growth on the body of mankind.

The Earth is literally spotted with such

confidence- and security-building measures to it. We propose to withdraw nuclear-capable ships of the USSR and the USA from the Mediterranean on a reciprocal basis, to agree on the non-employment of nuclear weapons on the territories of non-nuclear Mediterranean countries, and on nuclear powers' adoption of the obligation not to use such weapons against any Mediterranean country that does not permit the deployment of nuclear weapons on its territory. The Soviet Union expresses its readiness to go even further — it proposes that the Soviet and the U.S. navies be withdrawn from the Mediterranean. All our proposals remain valid.

The conclusion of the Treaty between the USSR and the USA on eliminating intermediate- and shorter-range missiles has made the problem of consolidation of security and stability on the flanks of Europe, including in the Mediterranean, even more topical. Its topicality is specifically shown by the fact that in the framework of measures intended to 'compensate' for the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles from Europe, certain persons would like to equip U.S. naval ships with long-range sea-launched Cruise missiles. Meanwhile NATO has an obvious advantage in the region as it is and we cannot overlook this. The situation in the area has a bearing on many countries including the Soviet Union. The USSR has understanding for the nonaligned Mediterranean countries' initiatives aimed at turning the region into a peace zone. We hold that a useful role in the comprehensive solution of problems can be played by a conference on the Mediterranean similar to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe — as Malta, Cyprus and Yugoslavia propose.

The fact that the Soviet delegation has now concentrated its attention mainly on the problems of security in the Mediterranean does not mean that we underestimate the need for the development of cooperation in the economic, scientific, technological, cultural and other areas. All this is certainly important and will require considerable joint efforts. We are prepared to promote the drafting of the necessary arrangements to this effect.

wounds. Each of them means pain not only for the nations directly involved but for all — whether in Afghanistan, in the Middle East, in connection with the Iran-Iraq war, in southern Africa, in Kampuchea, or in Central America.

Who gains from those conflicts? No one except the arms merchants and various reactionary expansionist circles who are used to exploiting and turning a profit on people's misfortunes and tragedies.

Implementing the political settlement in Afghanistan will be an important rupture in the chain of regional conflicts.

Just as the agreement to eliminate intermediate- and shorter-range missiles is to be followed by a series of further major steps towards disarmament, with negotiations on them already underway or being planned, likewise behind the political settlement in Afghanistan already looms a question — which conflict will be settled next? And it is certain that more is to follow.

States and nations have sufficient reserves of responsibility, political will and determination to put an end to all regional conflicts within a few years. This is worth working for. The Soviet Union will spare no effort in this most important cause.