

Mikhail Gorbachev talks to the media after casting his vote

The newspaper Pravada published on March 5 Mikhail Gorbachev's interview with Soviet and Foreign journalists at a polling station after he cast his vote in Sunday's elections.

QUESTION: Each candidate has a particular position and platform, as well as various inclinations. Sometimes these positions do not converge. What was the deciding factor in your vote today?

GORBACHEV: I view this question as all important. There is no other path for me other than the path of perestroika, on which we embarked together.

I think the number of people committed to this great cause is increasing. There is a real movement, a movement for perestroika, for changes, for renewing all facets of life in our society.

We said that we appreciate the positive accomplishments of the previous generations. But we also see a lot of things that were not realised. Moreover, we are aware of the painful mistakes.

We should solidly rely on everything positive that had been achieved by our grandfathers and fathers, and go forward, accomplishing our own deeds and making our own contribution to the country's advancement.

It seems to me that this elevates a man. You know why you are living. Man comes into this world not to consume but for something greater. Perestroika gives everyone his own chance to participate in history.

The present elections are very important. They will possibly introduce new pro-perestroika forces into political and state activity.

We should be mindful that we are electing republican and local soviets, which are the most mass bodies. These people's deputies will be directly engaged in matters of real life, the life of people and their concerns. Society awaits changes with great impatience.

It seems to me that the soviets will gain strength now. New people will come, people whose character and views were formed in a new atmosphere.

This, in turn, will be complemented by the efficient laws that we will adopt for the soviets. They are in their final form now. The new laws, which were enforced and are due to be passed, will transform the soviets themselves.

The people who are deeply committed to our

policy, with the mind and the heart, and are highly responsible are closer to me. I do not recognise the positions of those who try to prove that nothing should be changed, that everything is fine as it is.

No, perestroika is life itself. If we had not launched it ourselves, it would have been manifested in forms in our huge and diverse country, that could have been very painful to society. Even now, we witness a great many unexpected processes. Everything should be comprehended and withstood. It seems to me that people are beginning to realise this now.

I also do not accept the positions of those who are calling to rush headlong. We must be extremely responsible. Everything should be expedited, but it should be done with prudence. **Do you consider, Mikhail Sergeevich, that these elections will bolster the positions of communist candidates for people's deputies or weaken them?**

I look at this calmly. First, we should not put the Party and non-party people against each other. This should be ruled out. In general, how can the Party be opposed? We can speak about some Party officials of various ranks who may be unsuitable or whose time is past.

Yes, people want to see other leaders. But the Party itself is part of the people and not the worst part. I can say this because I have been linked with the Party since 1952.

By the way, I was admitted to the Party here, in Moscow, in the Leninsky district. The Party is sacred to me. Everything should be done to help to acquire a second wind, find its place in the country, which is being rebuilt, and in this atmosphere, which is being renewed. This process is under way.

This is the first thing I want to say: we should not put the Party and the people against each other. It is good that people are joining the Party, although some members have left it. Possibly, this is also an objective process. Some are withdrawing from the Party, but many are joining it. The people who associate their future

with the Party are joining it now.

The Party, not individuals or separate communists, is moving towards society, towards the people with an open stance. This movement is evident in the draft platform. I think that this is a progressive platform. But it has yet to be completed. This is only a document for discussion.

Ahead is the Party Congress. I think it will enrich the platform, and we will receive a document that will fully meet the requirements, the challenges of our time.

The time requires a responsible attitude. Much will depend on how we understand each other, how we act now, not over the next few years but over the next few months, because time is very limited. The future of perestroika will hinge on our actions now.

I have no doubt that it will be accomplished, because life itself dictated the changes. It is very important how perestroika proceeds. It may travel bumpy paths, through painful reforms and confrontation. It may likewise go through accord, through the unification of forces. I am committed to this path.

We should shun extreme positions and close ranks, because this is our common cause. Should we put part of society on one side of the barricade and the other - on the opposite once again? Should we spur them to fight each other? No, this was the case in the past. I think that, ultimately, perestroika is in the interests of all, although the way it affects the interests of everyone now is a painful process.

All of us need perestroika. It is the basis for closing ranks. It is time to listen to each other. I think that the time of rallies is past. We need serious and competent work. We have a solid legal base for this work now.

Measures are needed to be taken by the Supreme Soviet and the governments to bolster the new restructuring processes and support the new modes of life. But it will be difficult to go forward.

We are the children of our time. We did not
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Presidium of Supreme Soviet approves bill on presidency

A SESSION of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium was held at the Kremlin on March 3 under the chairmanship of Mikhail Gorbachev.

In keeping with the instruction by the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet considered the proposals, remarks and specifications, made by the committees of the USSR Supreme Soviet and commissions of its chambers, on the bill to create the post of the president of the USSR and make respective amendments and supplements to the USSR Constitution.

The bill will be submitted for consideration to the extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR.

The Presidium approved the bill. It will be published in the press.

The session also formed a commission to prepare for the extraordinary Third Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR.

The session heard a report by the Rafik Mischanov, Chairman of the Council of Nationalities and discussed the draft resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet 'On the Situation in the Azerbaijani and Armenian Soviet Socialist Republics and Measures to Normalise the Situation in that Region'. It was decided to table the draft at the next meeting of the Supreme Soviet.

The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet recognised as unlawful the actions by the Central Commission on the election of People's Deputies of the Armenian SSR to create constituencies for the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR in the territory of the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region of the Azerbaijani SSR. These actions conflict with article 76 of the USSR Constitution, under which a union republic exercises state authority only in its own territory. □

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Soviet Parliament discusses presidency

Gorbachev calls for regrouping of forces at the top

Mikhail Gorbachev described the issue of instituting a Soviet presidency as an essential aspect of perestroika.

Summing up a parliamentary debate on the question on February 27, he said the presidency is needed to "press forward with perestroika, to propel and expedite reform, protect democracy and effectively help the revolutionary transformation of our federation, which is indispensable to the success of the restructuring drive. We must remember that we are heading not only for a greater diversity of opinions but for greater political pluralism as well."

"Life itself," he added, "has confronted us with the need to carry out a substantial regrouping of forces in the upper echelon of power. It is imperative to enhance the mechanism of executive authority in order to ensure that the laws work."

Gorbachev reserved sharp criticism for those eager to torpedo the presidency issue, first of all the interregional deputies' group, describing it as 'organised opposition'.

"Those who clamoured for a presidency at the top of their voices just three or four weeks ago," he said, are claiming today that "the presidency will lead to a dictatorship, to the end of democracy and perestroika, to their burial."

Only "those unwilling to see the situation change for the better" can argue for the postponement of solutions to major issues to a later date, Gorbachev went on.

He noted that some of the interregional group are convincing everyone that the stumbling block is the nation's incapable leadership. "These are all blows to the same target, and well-coordinated and well-aimed blows at that,"

Gorbachev:

Deputies in pain over Caucasian events (Moscow, March 1)

SOVIET President Mikhail Gorbachev gave the following reply to a TASS question about today's closed-door sitting of the national parliament:

"This was the second sitting of the Supreme Soviet dealing with the situation in the Transcaucasian region.

"Due to the fact that the sitting was held behind closed doors, I can only remark that deputies analysed with utmost concern the complex problems that have emerged in the region and spoke with pain about the tragic events that led to human casualties.

"Taking advantage of the situation, I would like to express once again my sympathy to the dear and near ones of the victims, to all who suffered grief and misfortune during those January days.

"The discussion was not free of emotional statements and outbursts. But the deputies were primarily concerned with looking forward, hoping that the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians would make moves towards each other.

"And I think that the first moves have become apparent.

"We agreed to devote more time to this issue in the same spirit, and then adopt a corresponding decision at one of the sittings.

"I sincerely hope that the efforts by the Supreme Soviet and People's Deputies of the USSR, expressing the feelings of the Soviet people, will evoke a response from the hearts and minds of the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"I want to believe that changes will soon be for the better." □

he added.

"Despite appeals for unity in the interest of perestroika, a split is taking place. It is being felt in the Party, its Central Committee, and here, in the Supreme Soviet. This is not a tragedy, but a reality," the Soviet leader said. He dismissed as "cheap demagoguery" hints by a deputy that presidential powers are only needed by Gorbachev, saying that he even considered refusing to run for president but then quickly rejected the idea. "It would have been a case of cold feet," Gorbachev explained. □

Presidency debate

AFTER the report made by Academician Kudryavtsev on the establishment of an executive presidency in the Soviet Union, a discussion of this problem began in parliament, which immediately revealed a polarisation of views.

Many speakers supported unconditionally the proposed structure of presidential power and the idea to elect a president for the first time at the Congress of People's Deputies.

Politburo member and Deputy Alexander Yakovlev, explained in detail why he supported an executive presidency. He stressed that the collective power, along with numerous advantages, "invariably reduces dynamism, brings about certain bureaucratisation of working processes and criteria of their evaluation, and makes it unclear who is responsible for what..."

"We have the authority to control the leader of the country, but have no leader. The President of the USSR Supreme Soviet cannot be the leader, because his powers are too narrow," Yakovlev said. "There is an obvious contradiction between the need to speed up perestroika and the weakening of government systems on all levels, especially in the centre."

The Congress should be held early in March, because the introduction of an executive presidency cannot be postponed, said Deputy Yevgeni Velikhov, Vice President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He believes that without the presidency it is impossible today to ensure the country's domestic and international security, the stability of legislation and the implementation of the economic reform.

Armenian Party chief and Deputy Suren Arutyunyan described the presidential post as a guarantee of the unity of the federation. "Power capable of quick and resolute actions to protect the lawful rights of people of all nationalities is needed in the present complicated situation.

"Delays with the introduction of an executive presidency may put society totally off balance. Presidential rule will not mean a 'strong hand', but a strong executive power accountable to the people and the law," he said. Arutyunyan, together with many other members of parliament, supported the proposal to hold the next Congress of People's Deputies as soon as possible.

At the same time, some deputies did not reject the idea of presidential power in general, but put forward a number of conditions for its implementation. For instance, Sergei Stankevich, research worker of one of Moscow's research institutes, is sure that the post of president should be introduced only after the creation of a counterbalance for it, specifically, a strong parliament.

Anatoli Sobchak, a Leningrad lawyer, also opposed the proposal. He believes that it is necessary to adopt a new constitution defining a new national and state set-up before introducing the presidency. According to Sobchak, instead of electing a president it is necessary to expand the authority of the President of the USSR Su-

preme Soviet who actually performs the function of a speaker.

Deputies from the Baltic republics - members of popular fronts and Sajudis - took a different position. They announced that they would not take part in the formation of new institutions of power, because their prerogatives are "confined to the preparations of talks" on the "restoration of the independence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia." Deputies from Georgia also put forward a number of conditions for their participation in the voting.

A total of 26 people spoke during the morning sitting. □

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Law on land passed by USSR Supreme Soviet

THE basic principles of legislation on land in the USSR and union republics were passed by the Soviet Parliament on February 28.

The law will be used by each union republic to draw up its own law on land in consideration of local specificity.

The basic principles of the legislation on land, to come into effect on March 15, is one of the basic documents of the Soviet economic reform. Land now belongs to the people residing on a given territory. The powers to dispose of it have been vested with local government bodies, but not central departments, as was previously the case.

In accordance with the document, land plots can receive the status of inheritable property. Peasants will thereby be able to choose between being a collective farm member or an individual farm owner. This is actually the right to land as property, however the land cannot be sold, granted or mortgaged.

The current opinion in society is that the new law will not lead to the disbandment of collective and state farms, at least in most of the republics. Collective labour form traditions are strong in the country and there are many profitable collective farms.

The law passed today envisages the transfer of land to collective and state farms as a permanent possession (they had a user right before), creating conditions for higher profits.

The law was passed by 349 votes, with 7 against and 12 abstentions. □

Mikhail GORBACHEV

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Eduard Shevardnadze meets leader of Council of Europe

Here follows the full text of the official report of Eduard Shevardnadze's meeting with representatives of the Council of Europe in Moscow on March 2:

On March 2, Eduard Shevardnadze, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet Foreign Minister, met with Joao de Deus Pinheiro, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and Portuguese Foreign Minister and Catherine Lalumiere, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe who arrived in the Soviet Union for a working visit.

The sides had a conversation about relations between the Soviet Union and the Council of Europe. It was noted that these relations were given a positive impetus by the visit to Strasbourg by the Soviet Communist Party Chief, President of the USSR Supreme Soviet Mikhail Gorbachev and as a result of his speeches in the parliamentary assembly and meetings with the Bureau of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The sides arrived at a consensus in assessing the visit as an event of importance for the whole of Europe.

A business-like and specific conversation on the development of mutually-advantageous ties between the Soviet Union and the Council of Europe was held. It was agreed to continue contacts and establish co-operation first of all in such areas as law, including human rights, cul-

ture, education, environmental protection, information, and health services, also by the Soviet Union's joining a number of conventions of the Council of Europe and participation in specialised institutions of the council.

The Soviet side was officially invited to join eight European conventions. The importance of a political dialogue as a catalyst of the development of the entire complex of relations between the Soviet Union and the Council of Europe was emphasised.

It was noted that the implementation of agreement in principle about opening the Soviet Union's Consulate-General in Strasbourg is called upon to promote the development of the Soviet Union's versatile ties with the Council of Europe.

Much attention was given to the situation in Europe from the viewpoint of using practical experience accumulated by the Council of Europe and its ability to become one of the load-bearing structures of a 'common European home', first of all in creating its legal structure, a European legal space.

The growing role of the European process as a most important factor of stability in Europe was emphasised during a thorough exchange of opinions about the development of the European process.

The Soviet side declare that changes underway in Europe, also in relations between the two Germanies, should be synchronised with the European Process which began with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Shevardnadze on relations with the Council of Europe

THE Soviet Union is prepared to forge links of broad co-operation with the Council of Europe, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze said in an article published in the latest issue of the weekly *Moscow News*.

"We consider our relations with the Council of Europe to be directly linked to the task of overcoming the rift in Europe, which has been a Soviet foreign policy priority since April 1985," Shevardnadze said, in advance of the forthcoming visit to Moscow by Council of Europe Ministers' Committee Chairman Joao de Deus Pinheiro and the council's Secretary General Catherine Lalumiere.

Several European forums, whose results were to a great extent predetermined by the policy of new thinking and the corresponding stance of the Soviet Union, gave co-operation on the continent new substance, Shevardnadze said.

There has been marked progress on a broad range of European security issues. However, developments in Central and Eastern Europe, mainly the new state of the German question, require a more intensive search for European co-operation and security structures, he said.

"We appreciate the efforts of the Council of Europe in improving relations and mutual adaptation between Eastern and Western Europe and becoming a bridge between East and West," Shevardnadze writes.

Having underlined the Council of Europe's potential for building a "common European home", the Minister said it is necessary to coordinate co-operation mechanisms developed and tested by the council with the future institutions of the European processes.

Shevardnadze believes the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly could well become a future European parliamentary forum, while its Foreign Ministers' Committee could serve as a basis for a corresponding body in a unified Europe.

In order to achieve this, the Council of Europe will have to expand the sphere of its activities and cover both the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia - who received "special invitation" status last summer - and other East European countries, Shevardnadze goes on.

Every state should be free to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system and preserve its national identity, he writes.

Generally accepted universal legal values, devoid of any ideological bias, should serve as a common denominator, he writes.

The Soviet Union is working on several issues linked with its signing a whole package of conventions and accords of the Council of Europe, the minister said.

The Soviet Union is prepared to raise the status of relations with the Council of Europe to a higher level and believes there are no obstacles preventing it from becoming a full member of the council, he said. □

The Soviet side declared that the emergence of any elements destabilising the situation in Europe is impermissible.

In this connection the sides arrived at the consensus about the importance of convening in 1990 a summit conference of European countries, the United States and Canada.

Discussing European problems, the participants in the meeting agreed that a number of permanent structures of the Council of Europe could be linked up with the Helsinki Process and assume all-European character with the passage of time.

It was noted that the present favourable situation in Europe, the establishment of philosophy of co-operation between Eastern and Western Europe necessitate constant increase of the potential of interaction between the Soviet Union and the Council of Europe and put on the agenda upgrading their relations.

Shevardnadze also had a separate conversation with Pinheiro. They discussed Soviet-Portuguese relations in a specific business-like way and prospects for their further development.

It was noted with satisfaction that a political dialogue between the Soviet Union and Portugal goes hand-in-hand with the advance of the international community to a higher quality of relations and interaction in the interests of peace and progress.

A dinner in honour of the guests was given on the same day. □

USSR Deputy Foreign Minister addresses UN commission

PEOPLE may have different opinions of the changes that swept the world, especially Europe, but one cannot fail to see that a real breakthrough towards democracy is taking place, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoli Adamishin said on March 1st at the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. This democratic revolution is fully supported by the Soviet Union.

Adamishin said that the Soviet Union favoured the development of constructive elements in the work of the UN Human Rights Commission. This calls for the universalisation of the basic norms and agreements. This is why the Soviet Union again urges the countries which have not signed international human rights agreements to join the majority of the world community.

Universalisation has one more aspect, Adamishin stressed further. An urgent need has emerged to analyse all international problems - from disarmament to ecology - from the point of view of ensuring human rights and the right of the freedom of choice for all nations. The Soviet Union is ready to co-operate in the sphere of human rights, but it is also open for criticism, advice and visits. However, we do not recognise anybody's right to ultimate truth.

According to Adamishin, the USSR supports the work of the commission which opposes gross and massive human rights violations on occupied Arab territories, in the south of the Africa and in other parts of the world. Progress in the protection of human rights is the main meaning of international co-operation in the humanitarian sphere. The Soviet Union proposes to consider confidence-building measures in the humanitarian sphere, because they can play a positive part there no less than in the military sphere. □

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Steps towards normalising the national economy

THE results of last year's economic development, published by republican statistics committees on March 3, make clear that restructuring of the national economy, its social reorientation and financial normalisation are among the leading trends.

Last year's economic and social development targets were not reached in many key fields in the Caucasian republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Baltic republic of Latvia, the Central Asian republics of Turkmenia and Tajikistan. Labour discipline declined in many industries and losses of work time increased, as did work-power fluctuations.

In a number of republics, including Azerbaijan, Moldavia and Latvia, the consumer goods production growth rate was greater than that of means of production. In Latvia, for instance, the volume of industrial products went up by 2.5 per cent as against 1988, while the production of consumer goods increased by 4.6 per cent.

In other republics, including Moldavia, the plan targets for profits were reached in the econ-

omy as a whole. Thus, profits grew in the economy of Kirghizia as a whole, while every fourth industrial enterprise failed to fulfil financial plans, and six per cent of enterprises ended the year with losses.

Housing construction plans were not fulfilled anywhere. In Armenia, for instance, only 46 per cent of housing were commissioned. In Estonia, the figure is 15 per cent less than in 1988.

Agricultural indices were also lower than in 1988. In Lithuania, for example, labour productivity on publicly owned farms went down by one per cent. In Moldavia the volume of farm produce grew by four per cent as against 1988. This can be accounted for by the fact that more than 60 per cent of collective and state farms, as well as inter-farm enterprises benefited from leasing relations. In Latvia, two per cent of farm land were transferred to nearly 3,000 newly formed individual farmsteads.

The agro-industrial complexes in Kirghizia, Tajikistan and Armenia showed little stability last year. Armenia's agriculture suffered a setback following the 1988 earthquake and the blockade by Azerbaijan. □

(continued from front page)

GORBACHEV TALKS TO THE MEDIA

come from another planet, did not land on some island. We have lived this life for years, for decades. Each of us and the country as a whole has gained one's own experience.

All of us have recognised that this life should be changed and changed for the better. We need to foster such an atmosphere in which a man can feel happy and well. This is all-important.

Don't you see a contradiction here: you say that things should be changed for the better and, at the same time, that it will be difficult, more difficult than now.

Everything is dependent on us. If we do not change, nothing will change. Man is the key point. Perestroika was conceived and is being accomplished in the name of man. It can be implemented if people themselves change. This is the relationship. This concerns everyone, academicians and journalists alike.

Not everything is ideal in your work either. As for the Party, it is under the close scrutiny of the whole of our society. This is not bad. It is not bad that people are paying so much attention to the Party, looking at how it operates, what plans it puts forward, and which people are heading Party organisation today.

This concern demonstrates that people associate the success of perestroika with the Party's activity. I am at one with these people. I share their position.

Can a non-journalist ask a question?

CPSU Platform envisages technological progress

"ONLY a prompt and decisive breakthrough in the application of scientific and technological achievements will make it possible to implement economic reform in the Soviet Union effectively," said Academician Nikolai Laverov, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers and Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Science and Technology.

This approach is reflected in the platform of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for the 28th Congress of the Party, he told TASS.

The Soviet Communist Party aims to speed up scientific and technological progress, while taking into account the economic, ecological and social effectiveness. The prompt application of

Certainly.

What is your prediction about specific economic results for Muscovites, considering everything that is taking place in the country now?

This question could be asked by residents of any other cities. The general situation in the country is reflected in Moscow, although there is a difference. Moscow has advantages as compared to other regions, but other regions, too, have their benefits as compared to Moscow, and Muscovites should know this.

We need to accomplish a good deal this year in order to achieve a breakthrough in the socio-economic situation. This is crucial. Both easy and difficult times will be encountered. Perhaps, we will also have to take some unpopular steps. But we need to join forces and move. I think we will talk about this.

Mikhail Sergeyevich, perestroika was launched almost five years ago. How do you, personally, evaluate those five years?

I think that, as these years have not passed, it is too early to evaluate them. In general, the substance is as follows. What will put our country on the the new road, enable it to move forward and develop new forms of life has acquired its general form over these five years.

We will not live as we lived before. We will never go back. Both answers and solutions to a great many problems in our contemporary life need be sought without turning back, by decisively moving forward □

Soviet-US medical consortium to be set up

NEGOTIATIONS to set up 22 Soviet-US medical joint ventures have reached their final stage. The investment by the US firms will amount to about one billion US dollars, the president of the American medical consortium Dennis Sokol told TASS.

A joint group of lawyers is now at work in Moscow to elaborate on the agreement, which will determine priorities and the structure of the joint venture. The agreement is scheduled to be signed in May.

Two plants will be built in Kazan to produce medical appliances and disposable syringes. One of the US participants in the consortium may decide to build two pharmaceutical enterprises in the Soviet Union, with capital investments amounting to 150 million US dollars.

An agreement will be signed soon to set up a joint pharmaceutical venture in Riga. A US hospital will be opened in October in Moscow where specialists from the United States will work. Other projects are also being discussed.

A mechanism to allow the US side to change profits in roubles into convertible currencies has become the decisive factor of the quick progress in the consortium's activities to set up joint ventures, Sokol said.

The mechanism's advantages and the vast potentials in the Soviet market attract a large number of US medical companies to the consortium. But the main condition to enter the consortium is the companies' consent to make long-term investments in the USSR, Sokol said.

It is very important that many members of the consortium are going to set up joint ventures on Soviet territory not to export their products but to sell them in the USSR, the president said.

At the first stage, the American consortium will limit the number of its members to 20 to 30 of the best US medical companies. Their investments could amount to two to three billion US dollars, Sokol said. □

(Moscow, March 1)

The Soviet Parliament: First Steps

Conversations with the chairmen of the USSR Supreme Soviet's committees and commissions.

MOSCOW, 1989

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scientific and technological achievements in every area of social life is essential, he said.

The state should ensure everything necessary for the development of fundamental and applied research.

The Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party believes that this task cannot be fulfilled without diverse forms of scientific organisations and the spread of knowledge. It is gratifying that this stand is in general supported by Soviet scientists.

At the same time, a number of scientists hold that the platform of the Central Committee should treat the speeding up of scientific and technological progress and the development of education in the Soviet Union in a separate

chapter. This would emphasise the importance and of these problems to the implementation of large-scale plans for the comprehensive restructuring to the country, Laverov said. □

TASS COMMENT:

NATO stand inconsistent

By Vladimir Chernyshev, TASS military writer

NATO countries have evidently assumed an inconsistent stand on troop reductions at the Vienna talks on conventional armed forces in Europe. This attitude does nothing to promote a fair solution of disputes in Vienna.

Representatives from NATO countries have rejected out of hand the Warsaw Treaty countries' proposal to limit Warsaw Treaty and NATO forces in Central Europe to 700,000-750,000 men on each side.

The *Washington Post* reports that a member of the NATO delegation described this proposal as perfidious and said that "debates on it would drag out the talks."

This is a serious accusation, but does it have any grounds?

Two important steps taken by Warsaw Treaty countries towards a compromise on troop strength deserve to be mentioned.

They consented to the Western proposal that the US and the USSR would not have more than 195,000 land forces and airforce personnel on foreign territory in Central Europe (in addition to that, the United States would be permitted to keep not more than 30,000 men outside Central Europe).

Due to the goodwill of the Warsaw Treaty countries it would be agreed not to impose at present the common ceiling for NATO and Warsaw Treaty forces personnel in the whole of Europe – from the Atlantic to the Urals.

What would happen in Central Europe if the Warsaw Treaty countries' proposal for the reduction of the troop strength of both sides were not taken into consideration?

Following the reduction of US forces, by approximately 80,000 men, and of Soviet forces, by approximately 300,000, and with taking into account intended deep cuts in the armed forces of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation will keep 600,000-700,000 men in Central Europe, whereas the numerical strength of forces of Western countries will total nearly one million.

Can this situation be regarded as stable and conducive to confidence? It may be recalled how during the negotiations on the reduction of forces and armaments in Central Europe, Western representatives had been giving priority for over 15 years to the reduction and levelling out of the strength of NATO and Warsaw Treaty forces in the area. They asserted that servicemen play the main role in the seizure of lands.

They emphasised that, with taking into account the initial data on the numerical strength presented by Warsaw Treaty countries, the

East, following reductions, might have an edge of 190,000 men, which is unacceptable to the West.

They why is it regarded as quite normal in Western capitals for NATO to have a preponderance of over 300,000 men in Central Europe?

This is clearly a case of double standards in the approach to security matters. Perhaps, the Western approach can be described more fittingly as 'perfidious', and, maybe, the dragging out of the Vienna negotiations is in the plans of the North Atlantic Alliance? □

Telephone conversation between Gorbachev and Bush

PRESIDENT Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union and President George Bush of the United States had a telephone conversation on February 28 within the framework of the regular exchange of opinions.

The official statement says that the two leaders "discussed some pressing international issues, including the situation in connection with the outcome of the recent elections in Nicaragua and problems of European security including its German aspect. Questions relating to the preparations for the Soviet-US summit meeting also came under discussion." □

Soviet Interior Minister on links with Interpol

"THE Soviet Union favours joining Interpol," Vadim Bakatin, Soviet Minister of the Interior said on March 2. "The only hitch is that new members are admitted at annual congresses of the International Criminal Police Organisation, we must wait until the congress meets in late 1990 – I hope that everything will have been prepared by the time."

The minister commented on the results of the international gathering in Moscow devoted to the strategy of preventing crime.

"Our country has begun co-operating with United Nations agencies for combatting crime, and it is only natural that a seminar of this kind should be held here," he said. "The subject is most topical. When building a law-governed state, the prevention of crime is a very important matter."

"The initiative to hold a seminar in the Soviet Union came from the UN European Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

Its head Margaret Anstee proposed it during her visit to the Soviet Union and we agreed."

"A constellation of scientists working in the field assembled in Moscow for the first time. Just to hear them, see their methods of work and study their experience was of immense practical value. It is hard to amass experience without contacting people."

"If we had been asked to hold a seminar on ways to combat theft, we would not have turned that down either. Any international experience is now of interest and importance to us."

The minister expressed the hope that Soviet participants had benefitted from the seminar. The problem now is how to apply this information – theory must provide an impulse for practical work. The minister said he would report the results of the seminar to the government. Recommendations will be issued.

Bakatin noted that law enforcement agencies often come across situations that require contact with respective agencies in other countries, interaction with another country. The Soviet Union lacks legal basis for this work.

An appropriate international agreement would set in motion the respective legislative mechanism, and Interpol headquarters would be established in this country. Then problems will be resolved with the help of direct contacts between, for instance, two officers. In this way we could either set tasks for our partners or carry out operations at their request. However, the mechanism is not in place yet. It will happen when we join Interpol.

"Until recently we thought it would be impossible to set up a mechanism of this kind in this country, but times change. Criminals have proved to be more mobile – they travel throughout the world, and what we do lacks efficiency. Contacts have yet to be adjusted between the customs, the KGB and the Interior Ministry. Programmes of co-operation are now being drawn up on a firmer legal basis," Vadim Bakatin noted. □

Soviet MP comments on visit to US military establishments

"ENDING distrust" headlines the interview with Vladimir Lapygin, Chairman of the Soviet Parliament's Committee for Defence and State Security Matters, printed in the March 6 issue of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.

Lapygin led a Soviet parliamentary delegation which recently returned from the United States after familiarising themselves with the American Armed Forces.

"Both my colleagues and I believe that the United States has up-to-date technology and weapons," Lapygin said.

"However, there were no surprises when we were shown hardware and facilities. In some types of armaments we are on a par with the Americans and even somewhat excel them as regards some types of conventional arms and heavy inter-continental ballistic missiles."

The Soviet side is not as advanced in naval and naval aviation, Lapygin believes. He thinks the US Navy is much stronger than reasonable defence sufficiency requires.

Talking about the results of the visit to the United States, Lapygin emphasised that the right path was chosen, namely, "to establish personal contacts and to directly socialise with our American counterparts."

This path "makes it possible not only to mutually gain experience and get to know each other better, but able to discuss problems of mutual concern," Lapygin concluded. □

EXPERT OPINION

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The focus of perestroika

HOW TO CHANGE PROPERTY RELATIONS IN THE USSR

Vadim Medvedev, Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences

IN ORDER for socialism to acquire a new quality more in keeping with its social potential, radical, and not peace-meal, changes to the entire social system are essential. Otherwise it has no future.

As demonstrated by the CPSU Central Committee's policy document for the forthcoming 28th Congress, perestroika represents the transition from an authoritarian and bureaucratic model of society to a socialism that is democratic and humanitarian and puts the individual first; pure, self-reforming socialism.

Concepts of socialism cannot be immune to change, as socialism itself cannot stand still. As it develops it constantly absorbs lessons from its own and universal history. Thus socialist principles and theories have to move with the times.

I.

During the current phase of the debate over perestroika, property ownership has moved to centre stage, and wholesale changes to the system of property relations will undoubtedly have a major impact on the economic reform and on the economic development of the entire country. Events have shown that it is illogical to think that there can be a thoroughgoing restructuring of the economy without similar treatment being given to the system of public ownership.

At the same time, ownership is much more than a purely economic issue. As Mikhail Gorbachev set out in his work *The Socialist Idea and Revolutionary Perestroika*, changes to property relations and the acceptance of a variety of forms of them under socialism signifies a change to the very way in which we approach socialism and predetermines the future development of our society and its theoretical grounding. This truly is the central issue of perestroika.

The essence of the present revolution in property relations is the overcoming of the individual's long-standing alienation from the means of production. It is precisely such alienation that led our country's development into stagnation.

So what went wrong? Was not socialism itself supposed to achieve just that? From the very beginning, Marxist theory envisaged that socialisation of the means of production would renew the bond between the individual and the means of production, a bond destroyed by capitalist expropriation of independent producers. Suffice to recall what Marx himself wrote in *Das Kapital*, in the section on capitalist accumulation: "The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a Law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation. This does not re-establish private property for the producer, but gives him individual property based on the acquisitions of the capitalist era: ie, on co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production."

Thus, Marx unambiguously identifies socialist production with the restoration of individual property, but, of course, on an enhanced basis. Quite probably I was not alone in asking, puzzled, after reading the above passage: but why individual property? Yet this phrase conceals a profound meaning, and concerns in fact the direct involvement of every member of society in ownership of the means of production and of the end product, involvement in the management of production.

Socialisation of the means of production was also understood by Lenin as being directly and permanently associated with full democracy and self-management, cost-accounting, co-operatives, leasehold, ie, with those forms that overcome the alienation felt by the individual from the means of production, the end product and power.

Yet subsequent development took a different route, as the state gradually took over control of industry. In theory and in practice, state control of the economy was taken to be more or less the main criterion of socialism, and co-operatives and other forms of joint ownership were frowned upon. Meanwhile, the state lost its democratic foundations, detached itself from the individual and the requirements and interests of the broad public and metamorphosed into something akin to a self-contained and independent power, not part of but above society.

Hence the historical paradox: although intended to do away with the alienation of the individual from the means of production, socialism in our country has in fact reproduced it, with all the ensuring consequences.

How to overcome these distortions in socialism, and restore its original mission? How to overcome this alienation from economic life?

I am convinced that our task is to re-establish individual and collective motivation to work, swept aside by a state run riot. For this we need modern, effective and flexible ways of organising social production that allow socialist ownership to coexist alongside individual and collective interest and initiative (which are in no way inferior to those that arise from private property). The important thing is to refuse to bow to the clichés of the recent past and to move forward in the interests of getting things done, of accelerating our economic development and tailoring it to meet the needs of the individual.

Some consider that the only way out is a return to private ownership – the prospect of which has led to rejoicing among certain circles. But look at the facts and you will see that even in the developed capitalist countries private property in its classic form in the main areas of social production has become a thing of the past. We might say that it has been overcome by capitalism itself. This has been achieved in various ways; in particular, some spheres of production are switching (others have already done so) over to shareholding, which, as Marx noted, means that private ownership negates itself. In strict socio-economic terms this is no longer private but collective property, albeit still of a capitalist nature.

We need to move forwards, to turn into reality the advantages of ownership by society and give it a form that would provide the working people with a specific and tangible bond to public ownership, one that would give them an economic interest in the end results of their labour.

Indirect, and sometimes direct, claims that the only radical way out is a return to private ownership are sometimes backed up with references to the law of the correspondence of production relations and forms of ownership to the form of productive forces. And it certainly is true that we should take a much closer look at the way this classical law operates, rejecting a too literal interpretation for one that takes more account of the entire spectrum of social, organisational and other factors.

If we do so, it becomes clear that a return to private ownership in its classic manifestation would be unjustified at least in the main areas of the economy, since this would represent regression to something that society has already

progressed from. And in any case, it is probably not feasible. We need to distinguish between the outcome of the form of ownership and that of economic and labour practices, political stability, and so forth. We should proceed from the specific requirements and actual conditions of the current stage of economic and social development. Only then will it become clear that the return of large-scale traditional private ownership not only has neither theoretical nor economic grounds, but is completely impracticable.

This does not mean that private ownership in our specific conditions is out of the question. It is not only capable of taking its place within a system incorporating numerous property forms, but also of playing a considerable and positive role in stimulating worker enterprise and initiative and improving industrial efficiency. Given that a variety of forms of ownership is needed, it is nonetheless a radically-altered type of public, rather than private, ownership that holds the key to the future development of society.

Such an approach requires a radical overhaul of state ownership, to exclude the bureaucracy in favour of democratic management at the level of the working people themselves.

This primarily means leasehold of a new socialist type, rather than the traditional. A group of people receives specific public assets, land included, in order to use and manage them independently and in a socialist way to produce goods. It pays society for the use of these assets and resources, is taxed in the appropriate way, and keeps what's left for itself. This is a genuinely socialist form of leasehold that excludes the exploitation of man by man, and could become the chief way of socialist allocation of means and resources, and also stimulate collective and personal interest. It is the most advanced form of *khozrashchot* (cost-accounting).

For the system of state ownership to be thoroughly overhauled and democratised, specific economic and social requirements have to be met, otherwise neither leasehold nor other new forms of economic activity will be able to fulfil their potential. This means economic autonomy for state-sector enterprises as producers of goods, and democratisation of their management.

As far as autonomy and democratic management in society is concerned, understanding and agreement has been achieved. But the concept of the market still meets with rejection. But scientific logic and historical fact force us to admit that the market is one of mankind's age-old values. The market in itself is not necessarily automatically accompanied by exploitation and capitalism, anarchy and the absence of control; it is a finely-honed method of rational economic management.

It's a different matter altogether that the development of a market does not mean full decentralisation. The economic imperative of the 20th century is not just any market but one that is regulated and will facilitate certain social, structural and fiscal policies. Such policies should be energetic and effective.

Socialist public ownership can also take the form of collective ownership by way of shareholders' companies and also enterprises built along co-operative or stocks-and-shares lines. The important thing is to release initiative from below and learn from lessons drawn elsewhere in the world.

Effective forms of ownership and management in a number of economic spheres are represented by individual smallholdings on leasehold.

ed public land and closely linked to public management forms. This also includes private businesses, based on the labour of the proprietor in various parts of the economy, and especially

Thus we can and must seek a way not in a return to capitalist relations, but in incorporating into socialist property relations flexible and effective contemporary forms.

II

Comprehensive and absolute state ownership, which governed our economic theory and practice, came to be regarded as the essence of the socialist state as a whole, and took the place of a real state structure. The state became an obsession.

Now we're moving away from this, and national ownership is accepted to mean not only the state as a whole but also its various levels and components – the state as a union of republics, and the republics themselves, and regional administration at various levels.

Of vast importance is the principle that republican and local authorities should manage socio-economic development in their own areas, but without intervening in the affairs of independent cost-accounting enterprises and associations.

The enterprise should become the primary link in the production chain, and direct equal relations between enterprises (irrespective of their location) should become the foundation on which a national market can be created; this in its turn will create the economic foundation for all integration processes, and for the renewal and strengthening of our federation.

This interpretation of the concept of ownership provides the theoretical underpinning for economic independence and cost-accounting for republics and regions. Moreover, at the heart of the new economic relationship between the central and republican authorities should be a clear-cut division of their term of reference in the management of various elements of the national economy, including in planning, fiscal policy, taxation and credits, price formation. Thus the concept of a multi-level system of ownership acquires shape.

Numerous elements of the national economy, such as the infrastructure, many primary sectors and natural resources, are managed by central and republican authorities, and sometimes by local Soviets of People's Deputies as well; this has led to frequent proposals not to stop at vetting ownership in the republics but to go further still and exclude the state at federal level altogether. Such proposals have little to do with common sense, and are far removed from economic and political reality and world development trends.

Take natural resources. The term "state ownership" should not be misused in respect of land and natural resources. But the environment is a single, indivisible whole, and the greater the socialisation of production and the more natural resources are exploited for the sake of the economy, the stronger the environment will show itself to be an integral whole and the more important will be public supervision to ensure the rational usage and storage of such resources. It's no accident, therefore, that an international public environmental movement has come into being and has proved its indispensability; its importance is set to grow still further.

All the more reason for our federal state to take note of this and continue forwards. For example, it would unnatural to attempt to carve up the Dnieper between three republics or not to coordinate efforts to manage the Baltic. And what about the water resources of Central Asia? Or other natural resources of significance for the entire country? Should control over them be monopolised by union or autonomous republics? Would this be sensible or just?

Thus a multi-level approach to defining ownership of natural resources is quite realistic,

providing, naturally, that it takes account of all special requirements and features, and establishes show and in what quantities such resources will be distributed among the centre and the republics, and also local authorities as well, who should not be excluded from this process. Otherwise, the federal structure will be rendered devoid of economic content.

As far as ownership of land is concerned, it will be remembered that according to Marxist theory and political polemic nationalisation of land in Russia and elsewhere was considered the most radical way for developing capitalism in agriculture. Nationalisation sweeps away the remnants of feudalism and patriarchalism and clears the way for enterprise to freely develop. Once completed, it provides something else as well under the conditions of a new system – the greatest social justice and rationality in land usage. Why place this measure under doubt? In my opinion, declaration that the land belongs to the people in no way hinders any promising forms of agriculture, including the right to indefinite usage and even of inheritance. There's no need to put up private-ownership barriers in the way of land relations. The ideas contained in Lenin's Decree on Land retain their relevance and value to this day. While declaring that the land belonged to the people, he called for the widest range of forms of ownership of it. We also need to support the state farms and collective farms where they are effective and where the rural populace has an interest in their continued development. At the same time, however, every peasant should have the right to leave a collective or state farm, receive a plot of land and bequeath this plot and its means of production to his successors.

Also, over extended state ownership, a past obsession that now weighs heavily upon us, has been rightly criticised. We now take a much more pragmatic and specific view of what state ownership should mean: involvement in appropriate and management at central, republican and local Soviet level, etc. This is most likely the correct way as far as land and natural resources are concerned, but during debate of its various problems of a more political than economic hue have surfaced.

If we peel away the layers of emotion that usually dominates in debate, then economically speaking the whole matter of ownership of land and other natural resources boils down to two issues of practice. Firstly, who receives the ground-rent, and secondly, who should be entitled to control the way that land and natural resources are used. The question today is whether or not the country as a whole, in the person of the central authorities, should receive all or even part of ground-rate paid. I think that not only it should, but it must. In exactly the same the centre should to a degree be involved in overseeing the usage of natural resources. It is along these lines that we should legislate.

The existence of a variety of forms of ownership and management is not a tactical step but a serious and long-term strategy. It is unacceptable to allow one form of ownership to prevail over all others. Each form should be applied to that sphere of the economy in which it performs best, and only if all ownership forms are able to operate on equal terms in conditions of healthy rivalry and integration will they be of most benefit to society as a whole. Any form of ownership is socialist if it excludes the exploitation of man and proves in practice that it is effective and can meet the needs of the people.

III

The adoption of varied forms of ownership also means creating the economic basis for society's democratisation, ensuring civic freedoms and the choice by citizens of which form is best for them.

Having removed the previous forms of exploitation, total state monopoly of property ownership restricted citizens' social and econ-

omic freedoms; in the absence of such freedoms democratic institutions withered, and a new atmosphere for the individual emerged. This stunted the further development of society, in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all and of true socialist democracy based upon genuine personal freedom.

Fitting in with total state ownership was a highly-centralised political system that prevented the growth of the institutions of a civic society, of true democracy. In any likelihood, Max Weber was right when he claimed back in the 1920s that state ownership of the means of production invariably leads to a bureaucratic economy and a "dictatorship of clerks".

The processes of state monopolisation of property and power in our country proceeded hand in hand, as if feeding off each other. The creation of a policy personifying "unity of will and deed" required the alienation of the people from all specific interests connected with ownership and belonging to a certain social class or group. Total state ownership and the planting in the public mind of ideological clichés about how this would rid society of all social and class contradictions and problems removed all the obstacles in the way of the cult of the all-powerful state masquerading as the natural expression of the common good.

As the human factor disappeared from the economic sphere, so did it from the political. Omnipotent central authorities corresponded to the weakest of federal links and maximum political centralisation, rendering the authorities in union and autonomous republics, regions, etc, irrelevant.

The experience of the first years of perestroika clearly confirms the inadmissibility of forgetting that society is an integral whole and that all spheres of public life are closely intertwined. The attempt to accelerate socio-economic development encountered not only an archaic and inefficient economic system (the main vice of which was that it deprived the worker of any sense of being in charge) but also bureaucratic resistance in state and other political structures designed to operate according to the old administrative-command system. This led to top priority being given to synchronising and coordinating economic and political reforms.

Political reforms have already brought forth tangible results, yet the state of the economy has deteriorated further and the vaunted changes are out this one sidedness, to accelerate economic reform without halting political.

Given the current situation, the task is to iron out this lopsidedness, to accelerate economic reform without halting political.

Both in political and economic affairs priority must be given to public interests in all their variety, manifestations, frameworks, views, styles, etc. A natural and in fact essential feature of society is the conflicts of views that is resolved in a democratic way; this is the most important component of political freedom, social balance and economic efficiency. □

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Bonn coalition split over Polish border policy

By Lev Volnukhin, TASS correspondent:

THE Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democratic Party, members of the ruling coalition in Bonn, found themselves deeply split over guarantees of the inviolability of Poland's western border.

The split was caused by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's attempt to link German acceptance of its post-World War Two border with Poland to Polish agreement to drop claims for compensation for war damage.

Kohl was attacked by the Free Democratic Party leadership, whose Chairman Otto Lambsdorff made it clear that Kohl was undermining the basis of the ruling coalition.

The Polish border policy and the situation within the ruling coalition were discussed by the presidiums of the Christian Democratic union and the Free Democratic Parties behind closed doors on March 5.

Kohl's conversation with journalists revealed no changes in his stand. He paid lip service to Poland's right to have reliable borders and assured the journalists that Germany would make no territorial claims, but ended by reiterating that only the freely-elected parliament of a unified Germany could eventually recognise the inviolability of the Polish border.

At the same time he again condition the treaty-based inviolability of the Polish borders on Poland's dropping wartime reparation claims as well as guaranteeing minority rights for Germans living in Poland.

Speaking about specific ways for German unification, Kohl favoured the spread of the West German Constitution over East German territory and the de-factor entry of the German

Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany in keeping with article 23 of the West German fundamental law.

The Chancellor declined the other way to reach unification - through the convocation of a constitutional assembly, as envisaged by article 146 of the West German Constitution, saying that way was risky.

Kohl likewise declined the idea of signing a peace treaty between Germany and the countries which were victorious in the Second World War.

The session of the Presidium of the Free Democratic Party failed to modify the 'junior partner's' sharply critical attitude toward the Chancellor's Polish border policy. Party Chairman Otto Lambsdorff told a news conference after the session he was amazed at Kohl's approach, "especially after Poland gave up all its reparation claims in a written declaration on August 23, 1953."

As for the specific forms of German unification, they must be decided by the East German Volkskammer (parliament) after the March 18 elections, Lambsdorff said.

At the same time, Lambsdorff sharply criticised the government's attempts to decide major foreign policy issues without consulting the Free Democrats. He was critical of the Chancellor's talks with President George Bush of the United States without the participation of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

The split in the ruling coalition was discussed during a conversation between Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher later in the day. They decided not to publish the content and the results of their conversation, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said later. □

Pravda comments on Soviet-Chinese relations

FAVOURABLE opportunities to build multi-sided relations of a new type between great powers are now taking shape, *Pravda* writes on March 1, commenting on the normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations.

These new relations will be based on mutual trust, openness and the recognition of the value of relations with each partner instead of "shuffling cards" and making other manipulations within geo-political "triangles" and "polygon", *Pravda* noted.

The newspaper described the Sino-Soviet normalisation as a "turn towards common sense and taking account of modern realities."

As a result of the Sino-Soviet summit meeting, the two countries have turned their backs on the negative past of bilateral relations. It is evident that "under present conditions the return to the military-political union between the Soviet Union and China as it was in the 1950s is impossible."

The 1960s-1970s model of Sino-Soviet relations would even less correspond to current demands, as "totally inadmissible in relations between any civilised and, what's more, socialist states."

Pravda's noted "consonance" in present So-

viet and Chinese approaches towards the solution of many problems of social development and strengthening the renovation of socialism.

Progress in military detente between the two countries, the adjustment of a normal political mechanism of interaction and the normalisation of relations and expansion of ties between the two communist parties are evident.

The development of economic relations is quite feasible as well.

It is no secret that for decades the structure of international relations in Asia was forming (or, to be more exact, deforming) under the influence of former Sino-Soviet confrontations, *Pravda* writes.

That is why the change of character of Sino-Soviet relations is "an important stimulator of the creation of a different order in Asia, which will be based on new, more favourable for the cause of peace and international security balance of forces and interests."

The possibility of this very course of events "is substantiated by conceptual pronouncements by the new political leadership" and "the similarity of Soviet and Chinese approaches towards many topical issues of the international life," noted the newspaper.

Pravda stressed that the Sino-Soviet normalisation will not be accompanied by the infringement of interests of third countries. □

Soviet President meets Hans Modrow

A ONE-TO-ONE meeting took place between Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Hans Modrow, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic, in the Kremlin on March 6. Modrow had arrived in Moscow the previous day for a working visit at the invitation of the Soviet leadership.

"There is nothing fundamentally different in our approach to the solution of the German problem," Gorbachev told journalists before the meeting.

"I think that neither the German problem nor other problems on our continent can be understood outside the context of deep changes taking place in Europe and the world, which have been promoted by many countries, including the two German states.

"Therefore we must act very attentively and circumspectly in order to preserve our achievements during this period, which is crucial for the destiny of many peoples.

"In short, we must act so as to take into account and duly realise the interests and aspirations of the peoples of the two German states with due regard, of course, for the interests of other countries and peoples of the continent, primarily those who are particularly close to this process.

"Naturally, the inviolability of post-war borders is the main issue in this respect. To use German reunification to reanimate revanchist plans would be to pursue an irresponsible policy fraught with very serious consequences.

"It seems to me that the peoples of the GDR and the FRG are well aware of this, as are all the other European peoples," Gorbachev emphasised.

The talk to the press was followed by the Gorbachev-Modrow meeting. □

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