

Joint Soviet-Afghan Statement

THE newspaper Pravda in its issue of May 15 carried the following joint Soviet-Afghan Statement:

On this day of May 15, 1988, when the Geneva Accords on the political settlement of foreign aspects of the Afghan problem come into force, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan consider it necessary to make the following statement:

The accords signed in Geneva have been received with satisfaction and hope by the Soviet and Afghan peoples and all over the world. Each of the parties, which put its signature to the agreement, should do its utmost to ensure the attainment of the goals, for the sake of which work on the provisions of the Geneva Accords was carried out for six long years.

The pivotal issue of settlement of the situation around Afghanistan remains that of putting an end to interference from the outside in the home affairs of the Afghans. The commitments to this effect contained in the accords are of an absolutely specific and unambiguous character: an end shall be put to interference, the very material basis, which is now used for such interference shall be eliminated. It is necessary to see permanently to the implementation of the important provisions of the agreement on the principles of mutual relations, in particular non-interference and renunciation of intervention between the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

In conformity with the Geneva Accords the return home is starting today of the limited contingent of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. As was determined by the agreement on inter-connection for the settlement of the situation related to Afghanistan, the withdrawal of the troops will be carried out in the course of nine months, a half of the contingent is to be withdrawn within the first three months, i.e. by August 15, 1988.

The Soviet troops came to Afghanistan at the request of its legitimate government with fair and noble aims. The Soviet Union has always unreservedly respected and continues respecting the sovereignty of its southern neighbour. This respect underlies the relations of goodneighbourliness and co-operation between the two countries, which have been maintained for more than one decade. In its turn, Afghanistan has always looked upon the Soviet Union as the country which has more than once come to its assistance in times of difficulty for the Afghan people, guided by the principles of goodneighbourliness.

Now that the Soviet troops are returning home, one can again see the whole absurdity of the speculation on the allegedly "expansionist aims of Moscow" and its striving to use

Afghanistan to reach the "warm seas". If the Geneva Accords had been concluded earlier, which was precisely the wish of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the return home of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan would have also started earlier.

Today that the Soviet troops are beginning to return home, the Soviet Union and the Republic of Afghanistan consider it necessary to stress the significance of the traditional, historical friendship between our countries, which has become particularly strong and tempered in the years of difficulty for Afghanistan, and is sealed by blood, spilled jointly in the name of that country's radiant future by the Afghan patriots and Soviet internationalist soldiers.

Central Committee's Address

ON May 15 the national newspapers published an address by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Soviet internationalist troops returning home from Afghanistan.

"The days of severe trials lie behind you. Your profound faith in the noble cause of assistance to the friendly people of Afghanistan encouraged you in those trials. You have fulfilled the order of your homeland," the address said.

"The names of your comrades-in-arms killed in action will be forever remembered by the people. These losses are irreplaceable, our sorrow is great," it went on.

"Your energy is needed today for perestroika, for the cause of renovating socialism, for the protection of its achievements."

"The Party believes in you and calls you into the forefront of the drive for the revolutionary transformations of Soviet society," the address said. □

The Soviet Union and Afghanistan are firmly convinced that the signing and coming into force of the Geneva Accords can and must facilitate the settlement also of the internal aspects of the Afghanistan problem. The policy of national reconciliation pursued in Afghanistan has already created the necessary prerequisites for such developments. In today's Afghanistan all sectors of Afghan society, all the nationalities have equal political, economic and social rights. Equal opportunities are open to all Afghans to work for the benefit of their country, to participate in her political life on a multi-party basis. The Islamic religion and its traditions and customs are profoundly honoured and recognised by the state. Coalition bodies of power are being set up all over the country. The Afghan leadership says that it is prepared to contribute further in every way possible to that process, to forming in Kabul a coalition government on the broadest basis.

On the day when the Geneva Accords come into force, the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan again reiterates its call to all the opposition forces for a cease-fire, for ending the fratricidal war and bloodshed, and for sitting down to the negotiating table, for building jointly a peaceful and prosperous state. It expresses confidence that the Afghan refugees, for whose

return home as citizens enjoying full rights all the necessary conditions are created, will actively join in that process of construction.

The Soviet side believes that this policy enables the settlement of the Afghanistan problems between the Afghans themselves.

Proceeding from the provisions of the joint Soviet-Afghan Statement on the results of the meeting of Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, and President Najibullah of the Republic of Afghanistan in Tashkent on April 7, 1988, the Soviet Union and the Republic of Afghanistan have reaffirmed their preparedness to strengthen and develop in every way possible the large-scale Soviet-Afghan co-operation in all fields.

The Soviet side will further develop economic co-operation with Afghanistan and broaden trade, contribute to the development of direct ties between the Soviet republics, regions and cities with provinces and cities of Afghanistan. The Soviet side reaffirms its intention to give assistance to Afghanistan for returning to normal life the Afghan refugees returning home from Pakistan and Iran.

The Soviet and the Republic of Afghanistan appeal to all states to contribute to the rehabilitation of the war-ravaged Afghan economy, to the economic and social development of the Republic of Afghanistan both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of multilateral programmes of assistance, including along the lines of the United Nations Organisation. The Soviet Union is prepared to take an appropriate part in international programmes of this kind.

The Soviet and Afghan sides highly evaluate the work done to create a UN control mechanism for the observance of the implementation of the Geneva Accords, and voice the hope that the activities of the UN observers will effectively help towards the implementation of the Geneva process. The Soviet Union and the Republic of Afghanistan are convinced that the conscientious fulfilment in full by all the sides of their commitments under the Geneva Accords is sure to permit reaching the speediest solution to the foreign aspects of the Afghanistan problem, and this will, in its turn, become an important impetus to a full and comprehensive Afghan settlement. They are also convinced that the experience of Geneva will stimulate a quest for the settlement of other regional conflicts with all of their specific complexities and specific features. □

Soviet Deputy Premier receives Lord Callaghan

BORIS TOLSTYKH, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology of the USSR, on May 16 received Lord Callaghan of Great Britain.

They exchanged views on prospects of scientific and technological co-operation between the USSR and Britain.

The British Ambassador to the USSR, Bryan Cartledge, was present during the conversation □

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Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at Central Committee meeting

A MEETING with the workers of contract teams of the agro-industrial complex, first secretaries of Party district committees, government officials and agricultural specialists took place at the CPSU Central Committee on May 13.

Opening the meeting, Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, said: among all important problems, that of food stands out as the top priority problem. It is not good that we have dragged our feet and failed to come to grips with this problem, he stressed.

The main reason why we have failed to tackle the food problem so far is the attitude to this sphere of our economy, he continued. The work of the farmer was underrated, which manifested itself in the attitude to collective farms and to the social development of the village. This told on the general results. But the possibilities of our collective and state farms are truly enormous. Things are changing for the better in agriculture, but we still cannot say that we have attained the required rates, he said.

Such problems as food, provision of the population with goods and housing are the most important. We are currently launching substantial work in all the three directions. In the course of three five-year plan periods the volume of housing construction remained at basically the same level. Nowadays in two years we have increased it by 13 per cent, built 10 million flats.

Providing people with goods poses a very difficult problem. There has been a turn here, too. A major drive to restructure the light industry is currently getting under way. We will implement here large-scale measures. I think that the new co-operatives will also make their contribution, Mikhail Gorbachev said.

Given its large scale, complete perestroika will take a certain period of time, but we can not postpone the solution of problems, the food problem in the first place. The issue can be formulated in the following way: if the country and the people so urgently need the solution of this problem, then the country and the people should turn even more to face this sector. He said that large-scale plans were being implemented in that direction. The material-technical base will continue to be strengthened and the living conditions of farmers will be improved.

Gorbachev said that the country had accumulated a potential that should yield returns.

"We've come to this not just under the pressure of facts. And it is not for the sake of reassurance only that we've advanced the slogan 'The Food Situation in the Country Must be Radically Changed Within Two to Three Years'," he said.

Gorbachev voiced the conviction that such a region as the non-black earth zone, for instance, could become one of the major areas of guaranteed farming.

"As to other regions — Byelorussia, the Baltic republics, the Ukraine, northern Caucasus, the Volga region, Kazakhstan and Siberia — they have an even greater potential," he noted.

On the introduction of new forms into agricultural production, Gorbachev said that the Party demanded of everyone that the way be cleared for contracts and leasing and that people with initiative be helped so that everything in agriculture could be put in motion.

"The task of the entire Party is to support innovators and ensure conditions for an all-round transition to a contract system," he said.

He warned that these efforts should not resemble all-out collectivisation with all its extremes.

"The current situation is fundamentally different," he said.

"Our people are ready to work in a new way, they are in the mood for starting working. Our collective and state farms can use their potentials more fully through creating their own co-operatives."

Summing up the results of the meeting, Gorbachev said:

We reiterate that we have firmly and once and for all taken up the road of developing the potential, inherent in collective and state farms, through various forms of contracts, especially lease contracts, through the creation of a system of co-operatives within state and collective farms, through creating new kinds of co-operatives and establishing links with other branches, including the services sphere.

"Our goal is to use everything that collective and state farms can make, mobilising labour and all other resources to solve the food problem, provide the light industry with raw materials, and develop the services sphere." □

Gorbachev's meet Soviet and American children

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV and Raisa Gorbacheva met in the St George's Hall of the Kremlin on May 11 a large group of Soviet and American schoolchildren who in the framework of the programmes Children — the Creators of the 21st Century (USSR) and Direct Link (USA) are striving to develop contacts and exchanges between the youth of the two countries and strengthen mutual understanding and confidence. Finnish schoolchildren took part in the meeting with their Soviet and American coevals.

On behalf of all participants, Richard Ugard of the USA conveyed to Mikhail Gorbachev the appeal to the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and the President of the United States adopted at a conference of Soviet, American and Finnish schoolchildren in Helsinki early in May. The appeal expresses the support for the efforts of the leaders of the two countries to establish peaceful constructive relations between the Soviet Union and United States.

Addressing the schoolchildren, Mikhail Gorbachev said:

"It is a good thing that you have gathered together in this historic hall of the Kremlin. We shall be welcoming President Reagan here in a few days' time. So you are paving the way for the meeting. I am glad to see you. I remember we have met some of you in Washington.

"I like it very much that you think seriously about the future. I regard your statements not only as the expression of your wishes but also as the wish of the entire youth to save this world and make it better. I wish you success.

"It is the responsibility of the older generation to prepare and create conditions for the implementation of your plans. I am sure that your wishes will figure in my talks with President of the United States of America.

"I want the children from the United States of America and from Finland to feel at home in the Soviet Union. I am sure that you will be met with hospitality and friendly sympathies in our country. I am absolutely confident of this for I know the sincere aspirations of Soviet people. Our vast country has everything to be confident about the future. It needs peace. Our people strive for peace. And you know what a dear price our people have paid so that today should be a peaceful day.

"I wish to remind you of this since we celebrated Victory Day two days ago. That victory over the horrible monster — fascism — was won by joint efforts. When the time posed the question acutely, irrevocably, and that question had to be answered, the Soviet and the American peoples united. The present time is a time of great anxiety and aspirations. It also makes vast demands, above all on our two great

peoples. And we must pool our efforts, overcome all difficulties, all distinctions, with each of us remaining what we are. I noticed in your speech, Richard, that though you had differences, you have arrived at a common programme, and a good programme, too.

"This is a good example for politicians. No matter what differences and fundamental contradictions exist in the world of today, it is necessary to establish what unites people. And above all it is necessary to rally in the quest for durable peace, to put an end to the arms race, to make all resources serve the development of human civilisation.

"I think the participation in this initiative does credit to all of you. It does credit to our countries, to the youth of our three countries you represent here. Young people think about the future, about peace, about the unity of people. Let these feelings you have experienced when you were young always be guiding your lives, bon voyage!"

The atmosphere was friendly and elated. The schoolchildren surrounded Mikhail Gorbachev and Raisa Gorbacheva. They put a great number of questions to Mikhail Gorbachev and were given thorough answers. They wished him success at the coming meeting with President Ronald Reagan. □

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Mikhail Gorbachev receives Martin Bangemann

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV on May 16 received Martin Bangemann, Economics Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany and Chairman of the Free Democratic Party of Germany.

The discussion was relatively brief, but extremely substantive. The main subject was the place and importance of Soviet-West German relations for each side, for present-day European and the world process.

"We are conducting an active dialogue with the Federal Republic, now involving all major political forces of your country," Gorbachev said. "We duly assess this, while the intensity is explained by the fact that one has to catch up on things lost in the past."

"Both sides are following with attention the processes taking place in the two countries. This confirms that Soviet-West German relations are a key to understanding many issues in European and world politics. This understanding is very important for today and especially for tomorrow if we really want to build a Europe without complexes, on the basis of realities, with due account taken of the achievements and specific features of its peoples, given respect to the values they have created throughout their centuries-long and eventful history."

"We regard the Federal Republic of Germany as a major factor, including from the viewpoint of philosophical notions of the present-day international community. Besides, for us it is easier to understand many things you have because the Russian and German peoples have known each other for a long time, their history was closely inter-connected. They can talk with each other with the directness typical of their national characters."

"I can state that we have already turned a page in our relations, and started writing a new one."

"We are prepared to do that with any government in the FRG if we are convinced that the Germans will never allow anything like National Socialism, nor agree to have a revenge-seeking government."

Time and again the conversation went beyond the problems of European process. "No good will come off in the world without Europe," Gorbachev observed. "Europe possesses vast experience, everything that is required for projecting its own future and encouraging constructive processes around the world."

"That is precisely why we have never under any circumstances relegated European affairs to the background, no matter what was said, despite claims that the USSR in relations with the West

has other, more preferable interests. We prove that not only with our statements, but also with real deeds — and more so as we proceed."

Bangemann informed the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee about his party's east policy and about a course towards improving and developing relations with the USSR, characteristic also of other West German parties.

He positively assessed the work of the Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technological Co-operation which met in Moscow recently.

"In bilateral economic relations, not everything is proceeding now in a way that would satisfy both sides. And this is natural," Gorbachev said. "Especially if one considers the changes we are undertaking and the fact how much more our cadres will have to learn in the sphere of foreign policy."

Economic ties

"We take a sober view of that. One should not fear life. This is an inevitable transition period. And we count that the Germans will display their philosophical assets. The matter is not reduced to amassing a nice little sum as soon as possible."

"It is better to build relations on a long-term basis," Gorbachev said. His remark evoked full understanding and support on the part of Bangemann.

Both sides were unanimous that the forthcoming summit and Chancellor Helmut Kohl's visit to the USSR should be prepared along these lines. This would give a chance to sum up everything that had been achieved in the recent years, consider all major Soviet-West German meetings over that period and raise relations to a new level with an eye to the future.

"When I think about the second wind in our relations," Gorbachev noted, "I cannot consider them without developing economic ties. Political alone will not produce reliable

co-operation and impart to them the required dynamism unless our countries become more 'dependent' on each other."

"I don't mean encroachments on the sovereignty of one or the other side. I mean the creation of such a good material foundation for our relations that each side will need the other economically, that the fusion of what both countries have will bring tangible great benefits to both peoples, to European co-operation and the world economy."

"Our relations will then acquire impressive human dimensions. It will then become possible to speak of their complete reliability. And this could be achieved without lapsing either into utopia or illusions, but remaining on the real ground and absolutely independent. All that is not simple and will require time. Anyway, such is the principled stance of the Soviet leadership with regard to relations with the FRG."

The sides exchanged views on the question of shaping relations between the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the European Economic Community. They voiced the mutual desire that this process be completed in the near future. Obviously, linking the economies of the two economic structures was not easy and would call for more time.

Bangemann drew attention to an important event in the EEC's development due in 1992 — the establishment of a single market. He expressed readiness to help the Soviet leadership familiarise themselves with the content and character of that major development in the life of Western Europe.

Similar principled approaches were reaffirmed with regard to the chief problem of the European process relating to disarmament. All peoples in Europe were waiting for its solution which was required for the normal construction of the 'European home'.

The FRG's Ambassador to the USSR, Andreas Meyer-Landrut, and assistant to the minister A. Gerlach took part in the conversation. □

Eduard Shevardnadze receives Edgar Bronfman

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE on May 14 received Edgar Bronfman, head of the Seagram Corporation and President of the World Jewish Congress, at the request of this prominent American businessman who is currently staying in Moscow.

In the course of their conversation they touched upon questions of Soviet-US relations, including trade and economic relations, and some international issues.

Edgar Bronfman said that business circles and the public at large in America supported wider political dialogue between the USSR and USA, the continuation of the process of limiting arms and promoting disarmament, which must include, along with the earliest ratification of the INF Treaty, further progress in drafting the agreement on a 50 per cent cut in strategic nuclear arsenals. On behalf of the World Jewish Congress he also expressed the wish of that organisation to contribute to positive processes in East-West relations in the field of security and in a search for ways of settling regional conflicts, including the Middle Eastern problem.

Eduard Shevardnadze expressed satisfaction with the striving of the business community and the public in the USA to make their constructive

contribution to improving Soviet-US relations and normalising the international situation on the whole.

A principled approach to tackling the most urgent problems of our day, of which that of ridding mankind of the nuclear danger was the key problem, was expressed. Defusing the existing conflict situations in various regions of the world, in particular in the Middle East, remains an important task. The Soviet Union, as was stressed in this connection, consistently comes out in support of the just settlement of the Middle East problem by political means with the interests of all sides involved taken into account. A real way to this lies through preparing and holding an international conference on the Middle East.

Since Edgar Bronfman raised in the conversation some issues connected with certain citizens of Jewish nationality who wish to leave the USSR and freedom of religious worship, Eduard Shevardnadze gave relevant explanations. It was noted, in particular, that in the process of democratisation of all sides of the life of our society, necessary measures are being taken to perfect various legal norms, including those connected with entering and leaving the Soviet Union, and with the situation of the believers. Edgar Bronfman expressed satisfaction with the explanations he received. □

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Mikhail Gorbachev's meeting with Hans-Jochen Vogel

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV met Hans-Jochen Vogel, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), in the Kremlin on May 11. Hans-Jochen Vogel was accompanied by officials of his party.

The meeting marked another step in developing ties between the political forces of countries on which much depends in European and international affairs.

These ties are getting ever more substantive, and exchanges of opinions and thoughts in a straightforward manner and in a spirit of goodwill make it possible to acquire a better grasp of the pressing problems of the times.

Being completely independent, both parties use the evolving dialogue to the benefit of their nations and in the interests of the CSCE process, disarmament, security and improvement in the international situation.

Gorbachev and Vogel expressed satisfaction with this character and quality of party-to-party links.

Their conversation embraced a very wide range of important matters. These were topped by the problems of perestroika (restructuring) in the USSR, in which, according to Vogel, tremendous and keen attention is being shown both in his party and in the Federal Republic of Germany in general.

People, he said, want to have a better idea of the significance of Soviet perestroika to the relations between the two countries and peoples and to the present and future of Europe and the world.

Responding to a request by his interlocutors, Gorbachev told them candidly and in detail about what has made perestroika indispensable and about its theoretical and political logic that determines the phases, methods and pace of change.

He described the problems and difficulties of radical economic reform, the public moods, the role of glasnost (openness) and the pivotal, pervasive significance of democratisation.

He shared the considerations, which led to the conclusion about the need for taking up thoroughly the political system, the formation of a legal socialist state, in the full sense of the word, to which the upcoming all-union Party conference will be chiefly devoted.

The guests asked specific questions in connection with the progress of perestroika. Questions were asked from the positions of the interest of their party and those whom it represents in the success of perestroika in the USSR. Mikhail Gorbachev drew attention to the fact that along with great and sincere interest in various foreign public circles in what is taking place in our country, there are also highly influential forces that would like to hamper perestroika, to foil it.

They examined in detail the topical problems of disarmament in the context of the current talks and the upcoming Soviet-American summit meeting. The lively exchange of views bore out a similar approach to the fundamental questions that the placing of weapons in outer space is inadmissible; any "modernisations" and "compensations" leading to depreciation of the INF Treaty are inadmissible; the importance of the speediest conclusion of an all-embracing convention on a ban on chemical weapons and the advisability to create as an interim measure a corresponding European zone, which, as Hans-Jochen Vogel put it, could be useful also as an experimental field for testing the effectiveness of methods of control for the future; the pressing need to start at last talks on a cut in conventional weapons in Europe along the principles of non-offensive defence at the lowest possible level with the mutual elimination of asymmetries.

The value was stressed of the initiatives

stimulating the general process of disarmament, which were put forward by the Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

The CPSU and the SPD have many points of contact in their views on the idea of a "common European home". And this was reaffirmed once again during the conversation. Gorbachev stressed when speaking of this concept that it covers countries with different social systems, all the nations making up modern Europe.

The common understanding was expressed that despite the difficulties encountered on the way to a secure world and despite disarmament having serious opponents, it is important to remain both optimistic and realistic.

It is essential to see the dangers correctly, reveal their causes and criticise their carriers, but it is likewise essential to see that the great mass of the world public, the peoples are developing, in Vogel's words, a "new mentality" and thus creating prerequisites needed to warrant the irreversibility of nascent positive processes.

Considerable attention was paid to Soviet-West German relations. Gorbachev and Vogel voiced content with their nature and their lately increasing dynamism, as reflected in meaningful contacts between the Soviet leadership and influential West German politicians and in the agreement on forthcoming summits.

With a view to concretising and stimulating bilateral co-operation, Vogel made a number of proposals as regards economic, culture, humanitarian contacts and acquaintance with production expertise and management experience. The proposals were received with interest and will be considered.

Some other issues concerning the further development of interparty bonds were discussed as well. □

Shevardnadze receives Pakistani Foreign Minister

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE received at the Foreign Ministry on May 16 Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zain Noorani.

In a substantive conversation, the sides held a frank exchange of views concerning major global and regional problems and issues of Soviet-Pakistani relations.

Noorani's attention was drawn to the Soviet Union's persistent efforts to improve the situation in the world, strengthen understanding and co-operation among nations, create a comprehensive system of international security and achieve the earliest political settlement of regional conflicts.

Within this context, the need was stressed for constructive efforts by all Asian states, including Pakistan, in consolidating peace, reinforcing stability and establishing broad inter-state co-operation in Asia.

Special attention was attached in the talks to the Afghan settlement issue. The Soviet side stated that a major and fundamental breakthrough had been achieved thanks to the conclusion of the Geneva Accords in putting an end to one of the most painful and protracted regional confrontations.

The future fate of the normalisation process, Shevardnadze said, would now depend on how consistently, fully and strictly the parties to the Geneva Accords carried out the entire package of their commitments.

As regards the Soviet Union, it is resolved to act in strict compliance with the Geneva Accords, to strictly and consistently observe their provisions, Pakistan, whose signature is under the obligation not to allow in its territory the presence, provision of refuge in camps or bases, or in any other way the organisation, training, financing, provision of fighting gear and arms to political and other groups for the purposes of waging subversion against the Government of Afghanistan.

Zain Noorani gave a high evaluation of the contribution of the Soviet Union to the achievement of the Geneva Accords and stressed that the success of that undertaking became possible largely thanks to the persistent, constructive and flexible approach adopted by the Soviet leadership.

He said that in Pakistan there are no training camps or bases of mujaheddins waging war against Afghanistan, and said that Pakistan would not want its territory to be used for the delivery of arms intended for carrying out hostile actions in respect of a neighbouring state.

Noorani said he felt complete solidarity with Eduard Shevardnadze's statement that the solution of the internal problems of Afghanistan, including those concerning the formation of the government of that country, is the exclusive prerogative of the Afghan people itself. The Pakistani minister stressed that Islamabad intends to strictly abide by the commitments concerning non-interference in the internal

affairs of Afghanistan it has undertaken under the Geneva Accords.

In the course of the talk it was noted from both sides that the agreements, signed in Geneva, provided, certainly, strict and scrupulous compliance with them, can become the turning point in the development of Soviet-Pakistani co-operation in the most different fields and lead to the elimination of the accretions that have appeared in the Soviet-Pakistani relations in the recent years.

The two sides expressed the mutual desire to comprehensively promote the early settlement of the Afghan problem so as to ensure durable peace, stability and security in Asia and the whole world.

The discussion, in which Pakistan's Ambassador to the USSR Shahid Muhammad Amin took part, passed in a business-like and constructive atmosphere. □

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Eduard Shevardnadze's Geneva press conference

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze addressed a news conference in Geneva on May 12 on the completion of talks with US Secretary of State George Shultz. In his statement, he said:

The latest meeting with the US Secretary of State, Mr Shultz, is distinguished in many ways in the broad series of Soviet-American meetings at ministerial level.

First of all, this was the last meeting before the Moscow summit between General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan. Besides, it coincides with the concluding stage of the process of the ratification of the INF Treaty in our countries.

I think that any of these events would demand a separate meeting of the ministers.

But the matter is not reduced to that only. Look at the content of the current negotiations. Many issues that had earlier been merely discussed were moved to the stage of decision. Of course, it is easier to exchange views rather than find solutions to complicated political problems. Among them are such as the treaty on a 50 per cent reduction of strategic offensive weapons, a convention on banning chemical weapons, a mandate for talks on conventional arms, limitation of nuclear testing and non-proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons. As always, the agenda of the May round of talks included regional conflict situations, human rights and issues of humanitarian co-operation.

Add the need for working out all aspects of the summit meeting, including preparation of major bilateral agreements, and you will get the impression of how compressed the schedule of the discussions were.

Our attention remains focused on the agreements already signed, on the issues already resolved. We had not expected, for instance, that the Treaty on the Intermediate- and Shorter-Range Missiles would generate a whole chain of problems, but they emerged. There are objective difficulties, but one should say that many difficulties are generated through misunderstanding and often they are real brain-twisters.

It seems that such is the nature of Soviet-American relations at the current stage that we are for long going to pay the price of mutual distrust.

No matter how much time we are given, it is always not enough. Especially now, on the eve of the fourth Soviet-American summit, I think that both sides felt the burden of responsibility connected with the preparation of another summit.

We and our American partners continue to believe that advancement towards the elaboration of an agreement on cutting strategic offensive armaments while preserving the ABM Treaty is a central task.

In this context, you must be interested in the following fact: at the talks here with the Secretary of State we handed over to the American side detailed information about the structure of the Soviet Union's strategic forces, including data on our sea-launched cruise missiles. The aim is to attain the highest possible levels in elaborating the agreement, fix them at the meeting of our leaders and intensively to continue work.

I would like to single out the following aspect: the Moscow summit meeting is not the ultimate goal of this movement, it is an important stage on the way towards a new

treaty. We came to this conclusion and so did the American side.

In the same way, what we have in mind is that the Moscow meeting will provide a strong impetus for progress in other directions of the Soviet-American dialogue.

The discussion of the situation that has emerged at the Vienna meeting of the states-participants in the all-European process was highly fruitful. We presented new, and it seems to us — promising ideas with respect to untying the many knots in the field of the humanitarian co-operation. Both ourselves and the US representatives concurred that by now there are all the necessary prerequisites for completing the Vienna meeting with substantial political agreements.

Substantial progress has been achieved on the question of verification of nuclear explosions and of their subsequent limitation and eventual discontinuance.

As regards the summit meeting, both sides proceed from the assumption that the General Secretary and the President will hold an in-depth exchange of opinions on the entire spectrum of problems of world politics, and examine in detail the principled aspects of the relations between the USSR and the USA.

We have confidence in that the Moscow meeting will also become a major event in our relations, in world politics as a whole, and will enrich them both on conceptual and practical levels.

Now about that part of the journey which we had deemed covered and to which we were forced to return. At issue, you will realise, is the INF Treaty. Here it is necessary to add clarity, to explain what the matter is.

Following the signing of the agreement and without waiting for its ratification, the sides decided to embark on preparatory work on the implementation of the verification functions provided for by the treaty. Reciprocal trips have

been organised for the future inspectors to the objects subject to verification, and the relevant procedures and methods of verification were discussed.

And at that point certain problems cropped up, which is quite natural, since no single treaty, even the most perfect one, and the more so — one with no analogies or precedents, can visualize all the possible variants and life situations. Aware of this, the co-authors of the treaty agreed on setting up a special verification commission called upon to solve possible disputes over particular provisions of the treaty.

In the course of the "rehearsals" held, both sides were left with some questions and claims.

I want you to know certain details. The American side raised questions about the size criteria in inspections: about the inspection of the entire territory of the inspected object; about the verification of the technical data provided for by the memorandum on agreement; about the size and weight of the transport means checked at the time of exit from the factory in the town of Votkinsk; about the nature of inspection equipment; about specifying the data on the length of the stages of Soviet rockets and about exchanging photographs of rockets with their warheads.

We felt concern on a number of questions, including on the matter of verification involving the Pershing-1a and Pershing-2 rockets stationed in the territory of the United States. Considering this to be a perfectly normal phenomenon, we did not dramatise the situation.

Moreover, acting in the spirit of goodwill, the sides took the necessary steps to accommodate the concerns of one another.

In the final analysis it was possible to eliminate the misunderstandings that had arisen, to remove them on the understanding that the criterion in a dispute must be the text of the treaty proper and not something else. We see a positive aspect of what has happened in that

(Continued on next page)

At Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee

THE Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee at its meeting on May 12 considered the results of Mikhail Gorbachev's meeting with Tetsuzo Fuwa, Deputy Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Japan.

The meeting attested to the mutual aspiration of the CPSU and the CPJ to deepen co-operation in an effort to avert the threat of nuclear war and eliminate nuclear weapons and revealed possibilities for broadening contacts and interaction between the two parties.

It was stressed that differences of approaches to some issues should not be an obstacle to deeper co-operation between the two parties.

The Political Bureau also approved the results of Gorbachev's meeting with Takako Doi, Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Japan.

The meeting reaffirmed the proximity of positions of the CPSU and the SPJ on a number of issues of world politics. The two parties would continue dialogue and co-operation in the interests of nuclear disarmament, maintenance of peace and security

in the Asia-Pacific region and establishment of goodneighbourly relations with Japan.

The Political Bureau backed the proposal of the All-Union Council of War and Labour Veterans on extra measures and benefits to improve the living conditions of the veterans.

It approved the measures, worked out by the USSR Council of Ministers and the All-Union Central Trade Union Council, for overcoming the delay in building nursing-homes for the aged and disabled and improving housing for disabled persons, war veterans, families of servicemen killed in action and medical, shopping and social amenities for pensioners.

It is envisaged to extend a number of benefits now applied to war veterans to people who were awarded national orders and medals for selfless work and irreproachable military record in the rear.

The Political Bureau considered the issue of letters and publications in connection with the construction of a Caucasian railway line. It found it necessary to apply expertise and review the design of the railway to take into account proposals advanced by the public.

The Political Bureau discussed and adopted decisions on some other issues of domestic and foreign policy of the Party and state. □

Nikolai Ryzhkov's visit to Tyumen

NIKOLAI RYZHKOV, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, on May 14 met in Tyumen with Party activists and economic executives of the region.

In his speech at the meeting Nikolai Ryzhkov paid much attention to the progress of perestroika in the country.

The Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers emphasised in detail the problems and prospects for the development of the region. The future of Western Siberia, he said, is not to be linked only with the development of fuel and energy resources. This limits its capabilities and further perspective. The region possesses everything that is needed to develop the top-priority directions of the scientific and technological revolution. Processing hydrocarbon resources is to become one of them. There are necessary prerequisites for this: the availability of a stable raw material base, large energy capacities, the level of the development of the construction

industry and free and undeveloped territories. All this will make it possible to build an oil and gas chemical complex in Western Siberia in the near future.

Speaking about the prospects for the economy of the region, Nikolai Ryzhkov pointed out the prospects for developing the economy of the Yamal Peninsula. If today the main increase in production of gas in the country comes from the Yamburg deposit, early in the period of the next five-year plan it will be attained through commissioning the Yamal gas deposits.

Great possibilities

The speaker dwelt upon the tasks which arise in connection with the speeded-up development of productive forces of Tyumen region and Western Siberia on the whole, with the creation of new branches and productions. The questions of radical improvement of the situation in the capital construction assume top priority. One of the tasks facing the region is to create the production facilities for the building industry and a full-blown building materials industry.

The importance of solving social problems featured prominently in the speech. Ryzhkov singled out the problem of provision of the population with foodstuffs, noting that the region, especially its southern areas, had great possibilities to boost agricultural production.

Nikolai Ryzhkov, who visited the Tyumen region on May 10-14, made a tour of the region.

In Surgut he visited condensate stabilisation and gas processing plants and a hydroelectric station. In Novy Urengoi he went to the country's largest gas-condensate field and a plant to prepare gas condensate. He started familiarising himself with Nizhnevartovsk at the construction site of the main building of the Nizhnevartovsk hydroelectric station.

On arrival in Tyumen, Nikolai Ryzhkov visited a plant manufacturing completely prefabricated construction units. In Tobolsk he visited a major petrochemical plant on the Irtysh River.

During the visit, he met the Party activists and economic executives in Novy Urengoi and Nizhnevartovsk to discuss ways of solving the urgent problems of the economic and social development of these regions. □

Ryzhkov — Bangemann meeting

SOVIET head of government Nikolai Ryzhkov on May 16 received West German Economics Minister Martin Bangemann, a co-chairman of the USSR-FRG Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technological Co-operation who has been in Moscow to attend the 16th session of the commission.

During their thorough exchange of opinions Ryzhkov and Bangemann examined first of all issues of bilateral co-operation between the USSR and the FRG from the standpoint of new opportunities opening up for Soviet-West German economic ties in connection with economic reform in the USSR and changes in this country's system of foreign economic activities.

Special attention was paid to co-operation in modernising factories in the consumer goods and food industries of the USSR, on which tentative agreement has been reached lately with West German firms and banks.

Ryzhkov stressed that the FRG is viewed in the Soviet Union as one of its leading partners in the West and the business circles and government of that country are expected to

make reciprocal efforts to broaden and further economic interaction.

Bangemann declared a desire by the West German business community to establish itself more firmly in the Soviet market, tap new forms of economic interaction and use growing possibilities for the international division of labour.

He reaffirmed the interest of West German firms in taking part along with other Western firms in the construction of a complex of hydrocarbon processing facilities in West Siberia and in the development of natural resources on the Kola Peninsula. □

Ryzhkov — Sallinger meeting

NIKOLAI RYZHKOV received in the Kremlin on May 16 Rudolf Sallinger, President of Austria's Federal Economic Chamber.

They held a substantive exchange of views on the present state and prospects of co-operation between the USSR and Austria, including the trade and economic sphere.

The sides expressed the common view that the good-neighbourly Soviet-Austrian relations, based on the principles of the 1955 state treaty and the law on the perpetual neutrality of Austria, were a factor for peace and stability in Europe.

It was noted that the restructuring of economic management and perfection of the mechanism of foreign economic ties, currently under way in the Soviet Union, created favourable opportunities for more effective development of economic co-operation between the two countries at a qualitatively new level.

This was being implemented, specifically, through the establishment of joint Soviet-Austrian ventures.

Ryzhkov and Sallinger came out in favour of broadening the use of available reserves in establishing new forms of co-operation, including co-production and joint construction of projects in the Soviet Union.

The sides considered a number of specific proposals for deepening bilateral economic ties, including those within the context of the accords reached during the July 1987 visit to Austria by the Soviet Prime Minister. □

Message of greetings

ON the occasion of USSR Day at the world exhibition Expo-88 in Brisbane, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, sent a message of greetings in which he said:

The USSR willingly responded to the invitation from the Australian Government to participate in the exhibition Expo-88 since its main subject is of general human significance. A rational use of free time, an improvement of the conditions of work and recreation, health protection, establishment of correct relations with the environment make the list, which is far from being full, of the objectives confronting humanity. They have been reflected in the Soviet Union's exhibition, whose theme is Recreation — a Harmony of the Individual, Society and Nature.

Nikolai Ryzhkov wished the exhibition success and congratulated Australia on its Jubilee. □

EXPERT OPINION

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Sparks or flames?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AND RONALD REAGAN BEGIN DISCUSSING HUMAN RIGHTS?

By Alexander Ignatov, Novosti political analyst

I AM a journalist by profession and crystal-gazing is out of my department. However, I will take the risk of presuming that the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee will be the first to take up the subject of human rights when he meets with the US President in Moscow. I am not sure what the Soviet leader's first question will be, and whether or not there will be points on which he can support or reproach the US leader. As for me, I would begin with the case of Mrs Woodson.

The point is that Mrs Woodson, a citizen of the United States, is now in jail where she will spend 18 years. She was not convicted for burglary or armed robbery, for drug-pushing or attempted hijacking, for some major fraud or even a murder. Mrs Woodson was sentenced to 18 years in prison for taking part in an anti-war demonstration.

She was not alone. A large group of US peace activists was convicted together with her (there were several clergymen who were sentenced to 11 years in jail). Naturally enough, such prison terms cause a feeling of perplexity among Soviet people.

True, some time ago the US Administration announced that prison terms for a number of convicts would be substantially reduced. Was it a result of constant pressure from the Kremlin? Not necessarily. The US has a legal procedure which makes it possible to commute sentences after the trial. So, it's quite possible that the decision was taken independently. And I would congratulate President Reagan on such a decision. For, in the final analysis, it is not important what specific factor alleviated the fate of the convicts (who did not deserve punishment in the first place). It is important that their sentences were commuted, if not annulled altogether.

In my opinion, in discussing human rights, Moscow is not after giving food for another wave of media reports containing accusations against the USA. The Soviet Union's new approach to the exercise of human rights — the way I see it — rests on two main principles: effective assistance and co-operation.

The humanitarian solution of numerous problems of all kinds is a difficult task that cannot be accomplished by somebody's wish. Skill is required as well. By this I mean civilised traditions and experience. And not only that. It is essential to have a special legislative and administrative system that would transform such solutions from accidental and subjective ones into something permanent. Flexibility is of special significance here because, to use Leo Tolstoy's words, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own particular way.

Flexibility implies readiness to correct one's mistake, review one's improper decision and admit that one could be wrong. Of course, the expression "excuse me" is not high on the list of words used by bureaucrats in any country. And still the art of apologising is to be learnt by everyone. The great powers, too, have to learn how to apologise to their own citizens and nationals of other countries.

Humane international relations and civilised contacts between countries imply, among other

things, that the discussion of an instance of injustice committed by someone (naturally if the accusation is justified) should not lead to insulting, let alone a war of words or a smear campaign the way it occurred in the past.

This means that the Americans should react patiently when Moscow hands them a list of Puerto Rican campaigners for national independence who have become political prisoners in the USA.

They should react in the same fashion when the Soviet Union expresses concern over the future of its former citizens who emigrated to the USA and now have trouble adapting to the American reality. It is well known that very few persons in that category could find jobs in the USA according to their former professions. If the US Administration is really concerned over the destiny of Soviet citizens living in the USSR, how does it happen that the same persons no longer merit the State Department's attention as soon as they cross the Atlantic?

Or let us recall the case of the notorious hijackers, father and son Brazinskis, who found refuge in the USA. The country which reacts with utmost apprehension to every case of hijacking

(especially if it entails the loss of life) is harbouring air pirates. And this at a time when every now and then it refuses to let scientists or authors, union activists or journalists from the USSR visit the US. I cannot imagine Washington deliberately encouraging new hijacking attempts if only they are staged by criminals with Soviet passports in their pockets.

We in the Soviet Union criticise a lot of things in our own home and change a lot of things too. We can listen to critical remarks from Washington. For instance, it was suggested that the USSR should change its criminal code. The point is, however, that we were the first to raise the question, we are discussing it, and, I am sure, will soon decide the matter.

Only a short time ago a few words of criticism directed at our problems from abroad sparked off an extremely bitter reaction. In the past the sparks of such reaction sometimes led to bitter arguments, verbal conflicts and hard feelings. The subject of human rights is a delicate one and it should be approached carefully. But I think that sparks will fly in the future too: there is no avoiding it. The important thing, however, is to prevent sparks from kindling flames. □

Reagan to visit Moscow Monastery

Igor Troyanovsky, Novosti religious affairs writer

DURING his stay in the Soviet Union, US President Ronald Reagan will spend one hour at the ancient Danilov Monastery in Moscow on May 30. This was announced at a news conference for foreign journalists at the publications department of the Moscow Patriarchate. The news conference was devoted to the forthcoming celebration of the millennium of the baptism of Rus.

The Danilov Monastery was founded in 1282 by Prince Daniil. Several years ago the monastery was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church which decided to establish its administrative centre there. The residence of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, synodal departments, a conference hall and a hotel will be situated there.

Monastic life has been revived at the Danilov Monastery. Four churches have already been consecrated and regular services are held there. To mark the church jubilee his holiness Patriarch Pimen and members of the Holy Synod will officiate at the evening service in the Trinity Cathedral on June 11.

Speaking at the news conference, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Byelorussia said that President Reagan would be informed about the history of the monastery and about various spheres of the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Byelorussia who heads the department for external ecclesiastical relations of the Moscow Patriarchate also told journalists that during the summit meeting in Moscow the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church and visiting American religious figures would offer joint prayers for the success of the summit talks, for an enduring peace and nuclear disarmament.

A representative delegation of Christian churches from the USA will arrive in Moscow for that purpose. Prayers will be conducted in the churches of the Danilov Monastery, the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Epiphany, the Moscow Novodevichiy Convent and the Church of the Resurrection. Joint services have become a good tradition of the clergy in the USSR and the USA. All previous Gorbachev-Reagan summit meetings were accompanied by such services and invariably attracted close public and media attention.

A Novosti correspondent asked members of the Holy Synod to comment on recent negative pronouncements of the US President on the status of religion and believers in the Soviet Union and on the church jubilee.

Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Byelorussia answered that perestroika and the drive for more democracy in Soviet society applied in full measure to the observance of the believers' rights. Dozens of new churches have been consecrated and monasteries were reopened in the Yaroslavl and Kaluga dioceses. The publication of religious literature is on the increase. Members of the clergy received greater access to the mass media.

Metropolitan Yuvenaliy of Krutitsy and Kolomna, the head of the Moscow diocese, expressed concern that the US President might have received information from unreliable sources. In the run-up to his trip to the USSR President Reagan attended a seminar held in Washington to discuss the rights of believers in the Soviet Union. Several emigres, including one from Paris, addressed the seminar as experts. Oddly enough, not a single representative of the Russian Orthodox Church was invited to the seminar, although that could have been done fairly easily — the Moscow Patriarchate has

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Afghan President's press conference

AFGHAN President Najibullah on May 14 gave a press conference devoted to the commencement of the withdrawal of the limited contingent of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

He said that the Geneva Accords gave the answer to the acute problems that for years had seriously aggravated the situation in the world, and opened up real prospects for peace in Afghanistan.

"We said on many occasions that international guarantees of non-interference in Afghanistan's affairs would allow the limited contingent of Soviet troops to return home," the President said.

"The Geneva Accords ensure such guarantees. This is why the Soviet troops are returning home.

"The Afghan people will forever keep in their hearts the feeling of gratitude to the Soviet internationalist troops who came to our land as friends to help us uphold Afghanistan's freedom and sovereignty and defend our revolution."

Najibullah said that the Geneva Accords ensured favourable opportunities for the return home of Afghan citizens who, owing to various circumstances, had found themselves abroad as refugees.

"The Government of Afghanistan is attaching most serious attention to this problem. A special fund has been allotted in the state budget for the needs of emigrants.

"A series of laws have been passed under which emigrants are given back their property and granted tax privileges. Their civil and political rights are guaranteed," he went on.

"No doubt, the Geneva Accords make sense only if the guarantees of non-interference in Afghanistan's affairs are strictly fulfilled, if the mechanism of control over the fulfilment of the guarantees works," Najibullah said.

Touching on the policy of national reconciliation, the president described it as a policy of common sense and a manifestation of a new political mentality.

"We have declared for national reconciliation on the basis of compromise and dialogue with all political forces.

"Our appeals to the leaders of the 'alliance of seven', leaders of second echelon formations and exile political quarters, including Zahir Shah, are well-known," he continued.

Najibullah emphasised that this policy had yielded tangible results.

All provincial centres and nearly 10,000 villages are under state control. About 50,000 members of armed formations have taken the side of the government. Last year, 130,000 people returned home.

"One of the most important results of the national reconciliation policy is that the process

of forming a new state and political system is successfully going on.

"The first session of the National Council (Parliament) will open in 10 days.

"We know that there are sensible people in the opposition quarters, who can understand the misfortunes and aspirations of the Afghan people.

"We call on the leaders of opposition formations to come to Kabul and sit down at the negotiating table.

"The people of Afghanistan want peace rather than the senseless continuation of the endless clashes bringing so many unnecessary victims," Najibullah said.

In July last year, the president continued, he offered the opposition 28 ministerial posts and positions of chairmen of state committees. We made such proposals on more than one occasion, but received flat refusals in reply. A new state system is being currently formed in the country. We continue to keep the doors to the coalition government open. The question of new compromises and political concessions to the armed opposition is also being considered now.

As of today negotiations have been held with 767 armed opposition groups on the conditions of terminating combat actions and on co-operation in the cause of realising the national reconciliation programme. These groups have more than 60,000 people.

The president said that the government had taken a decision to create a council of minister's office for the north. The office was set up to promptly solve problems connected with the economic and social development of this vital region of the country, which today accounts for nearly half of Afghanistan's entire national product. He refuted rumours alleging that the government itself intended to move to the north and start dividing the country. There is no question of dividing the country, the Afghan leader said.

The PDPA sees its main role today in uniting all political forces of the country in the name of attaining the great national goal — the restoration of peace and unity in Afghanistan. The party renounced the monopoly on power and managed to rise above narrow party interests in the name of national interests. But we are convinced that the PDPA will not only preserve but also strengthen its moral and political prestige under the conditions of the coalition government. The party is growing: over the past six months its membership increased by 30,000 members and has reached a total of 205,000.

Speaking about the role of the Soviet Union in the economic and social development of Afghanistan, the president stressed that the Soviet Union helped build more than 100 projects, which today account for more than a half of the state budget revenues. Afghan-Soviet

relations are based on the 1921 and 1978 treaties. These treaties have withstood the test of time and, naturally, will remain in force after the withdrawal of the limited contingent of Soviet troops.

The leaders of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan recently reaffirmed on more than one occasion the wish to develop and strengthen relations between the two countries. Najibullah continued. The positions of our countries on this issue were more fully reflected in the joint Afghan-Soviet Statement published during the Tashkent meeting, he stressed. The Afghan leader also pointed out the intention to develop co-operation with other socialist countries as well.

Speaking about the foreign policy of Afghanistan, the president singled out relations with India. Friendly India, as one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and major countries of the region, can play an active and effective role in implementing the agreements and developing regional co-operation, he said.

Afghanistan and Pakistan, Najibullah said further, have much in common in terms of history, culture and religion. Both countries take part in the Non-Aligned Movement. After all, our countries are neighbours and we want to have with Pakistan friendly, good-neighbourly relations. We are prepared to start discussions with Pakistan on the entire range of problems of our mutual relations.

We are for establishing friendly good-neighbourly relations with Iran as with all other countries. Unfortunately, however, the official circles of Iran have not only failed to support the Geneva agreements but even resorted to a number of instigatory statements.

Our country gave a positive appraisal to the way the Chinese People's Republic received the peace process at Geneva. But China could play a more active role in the political settlement of the situation around Afghanistan, the president said. □

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

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its representative office and parishes in Washington.

Metropolitan Yuvenaliy added that the US President had not answered a single message addressed to him by Patriarch Pimen.

There is no doubt that the policy of 'boycott' pursued by the US Administration will not succeed this time either. Hundreds of prominent religious figures and representatives of international organisations have already announced that they will visit Moscow.

The speakers at the news conference recalled with appreciation the recent meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and all Russia accompanied by members

of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. The meeting proceeded in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual understanding. Specific needs of the church were discussed. For instance, a request was made for the return of the Kiev Cave Monastery to the church and the revival of monastic life there. The request went to the Soviet Government which decides such matters. Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galicia said that he awaited the decision with optimism.

The forthcoming visit of President Reagan to the Soviet Union, his tour of the Danilov Monastery and conversations with religious figures will enable him to receive trustworthy information. Let us hope that co-operation between our countries will develop in all fields, including the religious sphere. □