

Mikhail Gorbachev's report at Party plenum

Here follows the full text of Mikhail Gorbachev's report at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on February 5:

COMRADES, I think you will agree that we have gathered for a very important plenary meeting, a meeting which communists and all society have been waiting for with immense interest and impatience.

The Central Committee has received thousands of letters with suggestions and yearnings from Party members and non-party people, from Party organisations and committees, from work collectives, factory workers and farmers, intellectuals, scientists, veterans and the youth.

Telegrams continue to pour in. You, too, have seen rallies and meetings at which the most vital problems were discussed often from various positions, in an acute and interested way. Their participants also wanted to make their viewpoint known to the Party Central Committee.

All this combined is a phenomenon that reflects profound changes that have already occurred and are occurring in our society along the tracks of perestroika and in conditions of democratisation and glasnost.

The main thing that now worries communists and all citizens of the country is the fate of perestroika, the fate of the country and the role of the Soviet Communist Party at the current, probably most crucial, stage of revolutionary transformation.

Society wants to know the Party's position, and this determines the entire significance of our plenum. During preparations for the meeting we were faced once again with the question of when to hold the 28th Party Congress.

In December last year the Central Committee considered it necessary to bring forward the convocation of the congress by six months. But the course of developments is so fast that it is necessary to review this issue again.

Having assessed the entire situation and examined petitions from communists and Party organisations, the Politburo submits the following proposals for your consideration: to hold the 28th Communist Party Congress late in June or early in July this year. We are convinced that the proposal will be approved at this plenum.

The congress should be preceded, in our view, with a full report-and-election campaign in all links of the Party with a broad debate on the platform and the draft new rules of the Soviet Communist Party. Overdue personnel issues will be resolved and new elected Party bodies will be formed during the reports and elections. This

will create a totally different situation for holding the congress.

At this plenum we are to adopt the Central Committee's draft platform for the congress. In a month or, better, three weeks from now – not later – we will probably have to gather again for a plenary meeting to consider the draft new rules and have them published for public discussion.

Preparations for the congress are entering the decisive stage. One should clearly understand why it is necessary to bring forward the Party congress and what its main objective is, as we see it.

The Soviet Communist Party initiated perestroika and generated its concept and policy. Profound revolutionary changes encompassing all spheres of life and all sections of the population have been launched on this basis in the country.

This has paved the way for renewing society and tapping Socialism's potential. The Party has succeeded in expressing in theory and policy the country's acute needs and realities of present-day world development.

Rapid changes, unusual in scope and originality, are taking place within the framework of perestroika. This makes ever new demands on state and public institutes and, of course, on the Soviet Communist Party.

As a matter of fact, we have approached the moment when the Party should enrich its policy with due account for changes that have already occurred during perestroika and problems that have recently emerged.

Any delay threatens a lag and the loss of the initiative, which would, in turn, inevitably affect the Party itself and the future of its revolutionary undertakings.

By raising the question in this way, the Politburo does not intend to dramatise the situation and impart a tragic character to these decisions.

We should at last understand well at what time we live and what tasks we are handling, and ensure the draft platform gives a fresh impetus to our struggle.

Let us work hard on the document at this plenary meeting.

Of no less importance is the understanding of the fact – which is the other aspect of the problem that also demands the bringing forward of the congress – is that the Party will only be able to fulfil the mission of political vanguard if it drastically restructures itself, masters the art of political work in the present-day conditions and succeeds in co-operating with all forces committed to perestroika.

The crux of the Party's renewal is the need to get rid of everything that tied it to the authoritarian-bureaucratic system, a system that left its mark not only on methods of work and inter-relationships within the Party, but also on ideology, ways of thinking and notions of socialism.

The platform says: our ideal is a humane, democratic socialism. Expressing the interests of the working class and all working people and relying on the great legacy of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the Soviet Communist Party is creatively developing socialist ideals to match present-day realities and with due account for the entire

experience of the twentieth century.

The platform states clearly what we should abandon. We should abandon the ideological dogmatism that became ingrained during past decades, outdated stereotypes in domestic policy and outmoded views on the world revolutionary process and world development as a whole.

We should abandon everything that led to the isolation of socialist countries from the mainstream of world civilisation. We should abandon the understanding of progress as a permanent confrontation with a socially different world.

We are giving up the notion of building socialism on an earlier construed pattern which serves as a rigid framework for the ingenious creativity of the masses. Much has been said about the decisive role of the masses, but this truly determining force of socialist development has actually been neglected.

The Party's renewal presupposes a fundamental change in its relations with state and economic bodies and the abandonment of the practice of commanding them and substituting for their functions.

The Party in a renewing society can exist and play its role as vanguard only as a democratically recognised force. This means that its status should not be imposed through constitutional endorsement.

The Soviet Communist Party, it goes without saying, intends to struggle for the status of the ruling party. But it will do so strictly within the framework of the democratic process by giving up any legal and political advantages, offering its programme and defending it in discussions, co-operating with other social and political forces, always working amidst the masses, living by their interests and their needs.

The extensive democratisation currently under way in our society is being accompanied by mounting political pluralism. Various social and political organisations and movements emerge. This process may lead at a certain stage to the establishment of parties.

The Soviet Communist Party is prepared to act with due account for these new circumstances, co-operate and conduct a dialogue with all organisations committed to the Soviet Constitution and the social system endorsed in this constitution.

At the same time we openly state that at this crucial period the Soviet Communist Party is able to play the consolidating, integrating role and ensure progress of perestroika for the benefit of the entire nation.

The Party's renewal presupposes its thorough, comprehensive democratisation and rethinking the principle of democratic centralism with emphasis on democratism and power of the Party masses.

This will help consolidate the CPSU as an integrated organisation and raise its prestige among the people. An important step forward in this respect should be taken during the report and election campaign in the run-up to the congress and the election of delegates to the congress.

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We regard as correct numerous demands by Party members that the decisive role in these elections belongs to communists and primary Party organisations.

Comrades, what do we proceed from and what realities do we bear in mind when formulating the tasks for the period ahead. If we are to speak in the broadest terms, both vast opportunities for movement forward and real dangers are typical of the present state of society simultaneously. In fact, they exist side by side.

Opportunities are available because the restructuring processes keep developing, freeing the enormous energies of the people. So far, the most important result of perestroika – the platform also states this – has been the emancipation of society, thanks to which millions of Soviet people have gained civic dignity and are taking the running of the affairs of the state into their own hands.

This tendency will grow and the pledge of the success of the work launched by the Party is ultimately in this tendency. In this there is no cause for panic. The process of forming new economic and political structures is under way. This also creates a favourable atmosphere for people's active involvement, for speeding up and deepening restructuring processes in all areas of life.

At the same time, in moving along the path of perestroika, we saw that the crisis that battered the country was immeasurably deeper and more serious than we expected. Much of what is happening is explained by this. Problems and contradictions, which have been piling within the social organism for decades, have come out into the open.

Regrettably, we could not escape miscalculations and mistakes during perestroika and this, too, has complicated the situation. Social tension and anxiety are typical of it now. Elements of apathy and disappointment have emerged. Such is the contradictory but real situation.

There is the danger, and the Party should be mindful of this, that adventurists will try to exploit the arisen difficulties and speculate on real problems and the working people's dissatisfaction. The signs of this danger are obvious, including in recent days.

Some perplexity, sentiments of defeatism and liquidation make themselves felt. This is just as dangerous for the Party and for the whole of society. We have already heard some allege that we have adopted an overly-steep course, threatening the very foundations of the socialist system, and that there is no way out of the difficulties except by a return to the former order.

Others, on the contrary, allege that reforms aiming to bring out the potential of the socialist system are doomed to failure and the country can be rescued only through capitalisation.

We might not speak about this if these were only abstract theoretical disputes or debates in political circles. But such destructive judgements, penetrating into society, befuddle quite a few people, adversely affect the political atmosphere and stop people seeing the restructuring process in the right perspective.

We should see that the crystallisation of both the conservative and left-radical tendencies has speeded up lately. This is why, comrades, we vitally need now, and I want to emphasise this one more time, a platform of the Party Central Committee that can give clear political guidelines and consolidate all the wholesome forces of society around the goals and tasks of revolutionary transformations.

I want to call your attention to the fact that the pivot of the proposed platform is the approach to solving immediate and strategic tasks of Soviet society along the lines of renewing socialism.

We remain committed to the choice made in October 1917, the socialist idea. But we move away from its dogmatic interpretation, refuse to sacrifice the people's real interests for schematic constructions.

We set the task to translate into life step-by-step the principle of social justice without the slightest illusions in a speedy miracle. We intend to do this by rejecting the prejudices of the past and various ideological taboos, using everything valuable which is available in other societies, in their economies and social sphere, political life, the organisation of production and everyday life, science and technology, culture and intellectual creativity.

Possibly, you have drawn attention to the peculiar construction of the platform. It seemed to us to be of fundamental importance to show even in the arrangement of the material that man and his wellbeing are put in the centre of the Party's policy from now on and for ever, that advances along the socialist path should be measured primarily by this criteria.

The platform begins with setting out the political and socio-economic rights of the Soviet man, freedoms of the individual.

I think that comrades have also noticed that, after human rights in the draft, the need is stressed to adopt a range of measures to enrich the spiritual world of people, to raise society's education and cultural level. Unfortunately, this factor has been in the background for some time now and has been regarded as almost a balance for industrial growth figures.

We had to pay for this by seriously lagging behind and we will be paying for it for a long time. We were nearly one of the last to realise that in the age of information science the most expensive asset is knowledge, the breadth of mental outlook and creative imagination. To make up for the lost time it is necessary today not to spare resources on science, education, culture and the arts – everything that elevates man and at the same time multiplies labour productivity.

Along with long-term matters, the draft platform puts forward urgent tasks connected with the modern situation in the country. This has paramount importance. We hoped to mount the peak of the crisis in 1989, but recent events have shown that there has been no change for the better.

The recently published results of economic performance of the past year revealed once again the contradictory nature of processes in the economy. On one hand, a number of indices posted slight growth despite considerable losses caused by strikes, ethnic conflicts, lax discipline and mismanagement. More foodstuffs and consumer goods have been produced.

On the other hand, we can see further disruption of the consumer market, a growth in shortages and queues, and a fall in the purchasing power of the rouble. The situation is being worsened by the activity of shadow economy dealers and criminal elements.

People are especially dissatisfied with the food situation. The question should be posed squarely. We worked out an innovative agrarian policy and voted for it at the March plenary meeting. We assess it as progressive and pointing to real ways out of food crisis.

The main outcome of the plenum was that it lifted all restrictions on the use of diverse forms of land tenure. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of experience of many collectives. Several regions managed to blunt the acuteness of the situation at the food market.

Nevertheless, on a countrywide scale, no fundamental improvement has taken place. The reason is that many people in localities are still in the sway of old attitudes and methods of management.

Yes, there are shortages of resources and technology. Yes, social transformations must be conducted on a different scale and at different rates. All this is true. But primary importance should be assigned to restructuring relations of production in the village. And the crux of the matter now is the position of our cadre at the centre and localities. This is a political rather than an economic question. All obstacles should be removed in the way of the farmer, he should

be given a free hand. This is how the draft platform poses the problem.

Food is only part of the problem of normalising the consumer market. The draft stresses the importance of a range of measures to improve finances and monetary circulation, and to strengthen the purchasing power of the rouble as an urgent task for the next two years.

True, we had a discussion on whether it is expedient to go into so much detail on these problems. After all, we are speaking about a party platform, political orientation points. Is there a need to repeat what is contained in the government programme considered by the Congress of People's Deputies? Matters of principle absorbed these issues. However they are so acute that people may be dissatisfied not to find certain specifics. Therefore it seems quite in order to change opinions and take a more definite stand on this score.

I think that until now we have lacked resolve and this should be overcome. This, particularly, concerns the main missing link which caused the entire economic reform to stall – the pricing system. It is necessary to speed up the solution of this problem. The Party continues to stand on the principled position: the price reform should not affect the standard of living, especially that of low-income strata.

We can no longer reconcile ourselves with the glaring manifestations of mismanagement. Can we expect any effect from credits that draw ridiculously small interest? Our interest rate is found nowhere in the world. It is such that no one cares to return credits because this interest does not change much, after all. This explains why neither credit nor rouble work. This won't do at all.

Is it permissible that commodity material stocks in the economy are rising by billions of roubles every year? Figures of 200 and 240 billion roubles for excessive stocks at enterprises are already being cited.

At a time when the country is rumbling, there is a shortage of resources. Moreover there is a shortage of basic goods on the market. This means that a mechanism is again lacking that would stimulate enterprises to have as much resources as they need and to get rid of the surplus.

Can we count on the success of economic reform if unfinished construction projects are flourishing? We remember with what stubbornness, worthy of better application, representatives of the state planning committee proved during the discussion of the draft plan for 1990 that no further cuts in capital construction could be made.

In the last year alone, unfinished projects over and above norm increased by 20 billion roubles and absorbed four-fifths of the national income increment. And all this as the market of building materials is experiencing huge hunger and trade orders, even by the most conservative count, are not satisfied by three billion roubles. But this involves direct goods exchange and monetary resources held by the population.

I could continue this list of unused possibilities with examples from the field of resource saving, storage and reprocessing, utilisation of secondary waste, and so on. There the scale of losses is even more staggering. Such a situation simply cannot continue any longer.

We can get rid of these old ailments of our economy only by moving ahead, by introducing cost-accounting relations as part of the economic reform. All attempts to somehow spur on through commands were doomed long ago, comrades. They have not worked for decades. They certainly would not work today. All echelons of economic management and all labour collectives should have specific plans of action in these areas of work.

Comrades, our society is concerned, no less than with the situation in the economy, with a number of complex problems that arose in the inter-ethnic field, which affect the future of the Soviet federation. In working on the draft of the

document that we are now discussing, we drew on the platform on inter-ethnic issues that was adopted at the September 1989 plenum.

We think that the platform on inter-ethnic issues can serve as a departure for transforming our federation.

At the same time, we tried to take into account recent developments. The pre-congress platform points to the possibility of and the need for the further development of the treaty principle of the Soviet federation.

This would involve the creation of legal conditions that would open the possibility for the existence of diverse forms of federative ties.

We stand for the diversity of modes of ethnic life in an integral and united Soviet state.

We all have lately had the possibility to think seriously of the state of affairs and developments in the sphere of ethnic relations.

Searches for ways to better use the potential of the federation have been accompanied by developments that have alarmed the country and that must be given due assessments.

I think the Party and society are coming to understand, although with much difficulty and with clashes of opinions, that one must act in a well-balanced and responsible way in this sphere.

People are becoming more and more aware as to where separatist nationalist, especially extremist, slogans may lead and what they can entail for people, nationalities and the whole country.

We must display principled approaches in opposing nationalism, chauvinism and separatism and, at the same time, understand that ethnic problems are no fantasy, they are real and are waiting to be solved by perestroika.

The sooner decisions are taken to delimit the competence of the union and that of republics, to actually strengthen their political and economic independence, to broaden the rights of ethnic autonomies and to achieve the harmonious development of all languages and cultures, the sooner people will see the enormous advantages of the new Soviet federation.

Separatists, chauvinists and nationalists of all kinds understand this well and are trying to use the growth of peoples' national self-consciousness for their selfish aims. They evidently want to deliver a preventive strike at perestroika, which threatens to thwart their far-reaching plans.

This has been patently manifest in the recent developments in Azerbaijan and Armenia. I don't think I should describe in detail the history of the conflict which is rooted in the distant past.

I would like to draw your attention to the principal aspect of the problem. The conflict is centred round Nagorno-Karabakh.

Serious problems accumulated in the economic and cultural development of this autonomous region and the Central Committee and the government took major measures to solve them.

There appeared hope that this tight knot could be undone and the situation could be improved, but such prospects did not suit certain forces in both republics and in Nagorno-Karabakh itself.

Those for whom perestroika is a thorn in the side and who are afraid of democratisation and glasnost, ignore laws. I am speaking about representatives of the shadow economy, a veritable mafia which is fanning the flames of ethnic strife and putting pressure on state bodies under the slogans of national revival.

The conduct of the authorities and Party bodies in both republics, which yielded one position after another under pressure, does them no credit.

Unfortunately, many representatives of the intelligentsia in Azerbaijan and Armenia failed to correctly assess the situation, to find the real causes of the conflict and exert a positive influence on developments.

Meanwhile, corrupted anti-perestroika forces managed to take the lead and direct misled people's actions into the destructive channel.

I should say that there has been, perhaps, no

other issue in the past two years that has been given so much attention in Moscow.

The initial position of the centre was that the Nagorno-karabakh conflict should be settled in such a way that would leave no winners and no losers. Otherwise, new flare-ups of hostility and violence, new victims and losses would be inevitable.

We continued to adhere to this position also at the height of the conflict. And still, we failed to check the aggravation of the situation.

Late last year, in a difficult situation, the supreme bodies of power in both republics took decisions that aggravated the situation still more. The republics found themselves on the brink of all-out war.

Armed groups from both sides started to clash, they began to seize weapons and attack troops and law-enforcement bodies and tightened the blockade of railways and roads.

Baku became the scene of brutal pogroms. If the state of emergency had not been introduced in Nagorno-karabakh, in some border areas and then in Baku, the blood of not dozens, but of thousands upon thousands of people would have been shed.

The tasks of this plenum do not include a complete analysis of what happened, but it must be said already that there are no easy explanations and easy decisions in this respect.

The main lesson is that all issues connected with the development of nations and ethnic relations must be resolved on the road of perestroika, the renewal of society and democratic dialogue.

Attempts to use force and methods of terror, intimidate the people and pressure authorities directly lead to chaos with all the ensuing consequences.

Everything must be done to rule out the possibility of such developments in any part of the country.

The great and responsible role played by Party, local government and state bodies, our cadres and the intelligentsia, has become more obvious now.

It must be clear that those who depart from principled positions, follow in the wake of obsolete sentiments or fall under the influence of nationalist passions will find themselves outside political life.

It is not only the principled stance of our cadres that matters. Of no less importance is the ability to resolve practical problems that worry people.

We know how hard and painful perestroika processes are proceeding in these two republics. This is one of the reasons why nationalist forces have succeeded in winning over the people.

There is what we ought to consider here. The centre has apparently failed to use all its capacities and authority in order to influence more effectively the course of perestroika in the republics and support its followers.

I have already said that a greater tragedy was prevented thanks to resolute actions. The safety of several thousand people was jeopardised — this was the main motive of the decisions taken.

The key fact is that nationalist, anti-Soviet groups openly encroached on the constitutional system, strove for power and sought to establish a dictatorship — not a democracy — by naked force and through militant nationalism.

This was in fact a coup attempt — nothing more, nothing less. All structures, above all military ones, had been prepared for that.

And the flirtation of some political forces with this wing of the Azerbaijani Popular Front only reveals their own goals.

We express condolences to all Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Russians and people of other nationalities, who lost dear ones or themselves suffered during those tragic days. The Party and the Soviet Government will do everything possible to alleviate the plight of the refugees and help them return to normal life.

Soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army and Interior Ministry troops displayed a lofty sense

of responsibility before the people, courage and restraint, and thus averted the escalation of bloodshed, saved thousands of lives and created conditions for defusing the situation in the region.

It is now up to the peoples of the two republics and their Party and state leaders. Their actions will determine how soon normal life will be restored and the state of emergency lifted.

Surely, everything must be done to resolve as soon as possible the problems of Nagorno-Karabakh — urgent, primary ones — and those problems that have emerged around it — given strict observance of constitutional principles, including Azerbaijan's integrity.

Comrades,

The logic of the struggle for perestroika has led to new major decisions. The USSR Supreme Soviet will soon adopt laws on ownership, on land, on local self-government and local economy, on the tax system, on the delineation of the competence of the union as a whole and of the constituent republics, and other fundamental legislative acts.

The second stage of political reform has been launched, encompassing the formation of governing bodies at republican and local levels.

Real outlines of a new Soviet federation begin to emerge. As a matter of fact, new forms of our entire political, economic and public life are taking shape together with a new system of bodies of power, which are characterised by profound democratisation and the development of self-governing principles.

Indeed, society is acquiring a new quality. But the processes that the Party consciously activated, which will undoubtedly bring forth positive results, have not been insured, as we already see, against manifestations of instability, weakened management and centrifugal tendencies.

The effect is making itself felt on society, causing misunderstanding of these phenomena and anxiety of the people.

At present, from the viewpoint of strategic tasks and in view of current realities, it is necessary to realign forces in the upper echelons of power in order to give more dynamism to perestroika processes and ensure more firmly their irreversibility.

At the same time it is necessary to restrain destructive trends and erect obstacles in the way of everything that complicate and hinders the renewal of society.

At issue are processes in the economy and in inter-ethnic relations, affecting people's security, order and discipline.

It should be added that this question is already widely debated. People welcome what has been done to enhance the role of legislative bodies and divide the functions of Party and state bodies. At the same time, they express clear dissatisfaction with the lack of decisive actions where they are needed.

The question has been raised to form an institute of presidency with all necessary powers to implement the policy of perestroika. The draft platform naturally speaks about this concisely, stressing the need to act without delay. I think this idea deserves discussion by this plenum. We do not have the right to allow the development of perestroika and the implementation of the plans associated with it be put in peril.

I will not dwell now on other issues of the political and legal reform, which are laid down, although in a concentrated but rather full way, in the draft platform. They were formulated in line with the decisions of the 19th Party Conference and, certainly, with account of the experience gained by our society over the time that has passed since then.

Democratisation and creating a law-based state and a self-governing socialist society remain the principal directions of our development.

Comrades, naturally, the draft platform speaks about the international aspect of perestroika, about the modern world outlook which

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defines our foreign policy strategy. The Soviet Union's foreign policy based on new thinking was given a strong impetus at the 27th Party Congress. It became increasingly broad and concrete as the nature of contacts with the outside world changed, and was translated into life.

Its fundamental principles were set out at the United Nations Organisation late in 1988. The new foreign policy is legislatively sealed on behalf of the whole people in the documents of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet.

The draft platform formulates the tasks in all directions of the international activity at present and in future. As the 28th Congress is approaching, we reaffirm our innovative and truly restructuring foreign policy. It drew wide response and gained recognition all over the world, and has already brought about a considerable improvement in the international climate.

This policy meets our internal requirements, strengthens the international positions of the Soviet State, raises its prestige, favours forming civilised relations all over the world, and brings mankind closer to a peaceful period in its development.

The all-important thing for us now is to push forward the negotiating disarmament process, deepen dialogue and mutual understanding on crucial sections of international development, and facilitate in every way efforts to expand and strengthen the ground which was covered in building a common European home.

It is important to upgrade within its framework allied relations with East European countries, which really need this. This approach meets with understanding and reply moves on the part of their new leaders.

The draft platform formulates the CPSU's principled approaches to issues of security and defence, and points to the need to work towards a military reform. I want to dwell now on one or two aspects of this issue.

We intend to pursue the line for disarmament also in future, mindful of the obtained situation and within the framework of negotiations. In realistically evaluating the international situation, we take into account both the positive elements of its development and the existing dangers.

The situation in the world did improve in recent years, but the danger of war is still preserved. The doctrines and concepts of the United States and NATO, which are far from being defensive, remain in force. Their armies and military budgets also exist.

This is why we need well-trained and well-equipped armed forces. Certainly, they need improvement and restructuring. But there should be a more responsible approach to changing the principle of their staffing and their construction as a whole in the context of changes in the world situation.

Some questions have arisen in view of the ongoing and possible reductions in troops and armaments. Specifically, apprehensions are expressed if this does not weaken the country's defence capability. Evidently, additional explanations are necessary here to show that the reduction and reorganisation of the armed forces is being carried out strictly in conformity with the principle of reasonable sufficiency for defence, reliable defence.

Some social problems have arisen, especially those of housing provision to servicemen and persons who retired or were transferred to reserve, and their employment. The Defence ministry alone cannot cope with them. The government passed several decisions which took the heat out of the issue, but, evidently, much still has to be done to rid officers and their families of the feeling that they lack social protection, which has emerged lately.

These decisions should be implemented. It also deems necessary to draft and endorse a special programme of the social security of servicemen and members of their families and also of

officers and warrant officers in reserve service.

And one more serious issue. It concerns mass media coverage of life in the Army and the Navy. It should be truthful and respectful to the Soviet Army, to officers' and soldiers' military service. We cannot agree with anti-army propaganda. Our people will not allow this. The functioning of our Army should be the subject of democratic discussion in society.

Comrades, at the beginning of my speech I set out the reasoning regarding recomprehension of the Party's role in society at the present stage of its development, in conditions of perestroika, the division of functions between Party, state and economic bodies. Evidently, there was the need to record the Central Committee's stance on this all-important issue.

But, in principled terms, we cannot bypass in the platform those aspects of the Party's renewal, which are related to its internal restructuring. Without this it cannot realise its potential of the vanguard political force in present-day conditions.

The draft contains several proposals on this score. Certainly, all that concerns the Party's inner life should be presented in detail in the rules. But since at issue is the new role of the CPSU, we included basic provisions also in the platform.

Comrades, I want to say for one more time that the pivotal ideal of restructuring the Party itself is in asserting the power of the Party masses. In this connection, we are to recomprehend, among others, the role of primary organisations in what concerns admission to the Party and quitting it, using membership dues, and implementing the tasks related to the new role of the Party as the political vanguard.

The role of district and city organisations should be revised and their rights should be considerably broadened. We should change the system of forming Party bodies at all levels.

We need a new, effective election mechanism that should also be sealed in the rules. We agreed that proposals on this issue, after their discussion in the commission for Party issues, will be submitted to members of the Central Committee, participants in the plenum.

The future rules should definitely say that all elective bodies, from top to bottom, must be under control of an accountable to communists and that the apparatus must be under control of and accountable to elective bodies.

We have long been concerned by the fact that inner life of the Party and its functioning do not give Party members the possibility to participate regularly in the formation of its policy.

Much has been said about it but still we have no mechanism to translate this idea into life. This is one of the problems that has to be discussed before the congress during the work on the new rules.

So far I would say that the influence of communists on the work of upper bodies, including the Central Committee, in a decisive measure will depend on how real their possibility to send their representatives, those whom they trust, real leaders and active supporters of perestroika, to these bodies will be.

We should call for the vigorous representation

of the most active advanced workers and farmers, who are well-known in the Party, in all elective bodies of the Party, including the Central Committee.

Glasnost in the work of the Party's leadership, including the Central Committee and bodies elected by it, should be ensured on a larger scale than before. Then communists will know everything and will be able to make conscientious judgements, conclusions and proposals.

We are increasing communists' real participation in the formation of the policy also by giving Party bodies the possibility to develop their own platforms on various problems of social development in the context of one or another region.

Communists should be given the possibility to really participate in the drafting of these documents, in their discussion and adoption.

Of course, these are not all problems of Party democracy. I have set forth some considerations and would like them to be thoroughly discussed before the congress.

The draft platform includes a proposal on changing the structure of the upper Party bodies. The meaning of this proposal is not just to rename them and thus show our readiness for renewal.

They are intended to strengthen the factor of democratism in the Party leadership and simultaneously to create the best conditions for its activity as a working collective.

One may ask, why reduce the Central Committee? Let us discuss it. We proceeded from the need to turn the Central Committee into a body working on a permanent basis.

We should also depart from the principle of electing to the Central Committee mainly people holding certain posts. This principle was actually an expression of the Party-and-state system of power in the country.

We think these changes will help strengthen the Central Committee's ties with Party organisations, because these ties will be maintained not through the apparatus but mainly through elected members of the Central Committee.

In addition, almost all of them will take part in the work of a Central Committee commission, actually becoming politicians of the Party-wide rank.

It would be appropriate to speak here also about the central Party apparatus. It is clear that the change of the Party's role should entail changes in the qualitative composition of the apparatus. It should become an assistant of the Central Committee and work strictly under its control.

The experience of the Central Committee's work in the past few years has revealed the need to give the Central Committee co-optation rights which, naturally, should be limited by the rules.

There is also a proposal to abandon the practice of electing candidate members of the Central Committee.

I will not speak about other issues raised in the draft platform. The Politburo hopes that by joint efforts we will work out a document that will give answers to all questions vital to communists and all Soviet people and that perestroika in the country will thus receive a new powerful positive impetus. □

PLENUM – DEBATES

THE Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party met in the Kremlin to discuss its draft platform for the 28th Party Congress.

The debate was opened by Anatoli Kornienko, First secretary of the Kiev Party Committee, who described the draft platform as "innovatory and meeting the spirit of the times."

"At the same time, much in the draft needs to be thoroughly analysed and seriously worked on."

Speaking about the Party's role in society, Kornienko said that the CPSU "should juridical-

ly have the same rights as other political forces" but, he added, "there is now no other force that could consistently uphold the socialist ideals."

He pointed to the need for the Party to "struggle for its vanguard consolidating role in society, using all means available in democratic society."

This idea was shared by Valentin Mesyats, First Secretary of the Moscow Region Committee.

Yuri Arkhipov, head of the Party organisation of the Leningrad Izhorsky factory, called on the plenum to declare unequivocally for a multi-

(Continued on page 46)

Soviet President's meeting with Gregor Gysi

Here follows the full text of the official statement on the meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and Gregor Gysi:

"ON February 2, Mikhail Gorbachev met Gregor Gysi, Chairman of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany-Party of Democratic Socialism (SUPG-PDS), who is in the Soviet Union on a brief working visit at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

"Their conversation covered an extensive range of questions relating to the processes of democratic transformations in the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, the renewal of both parties and developments in the European region.

"Gregor Gysi briefed the Soviet leader on the radical changes in the content and methods of work of the SUPG-PDS, the party's desire to help maintain the country's stability, the disruption of which would call in question the vital interests of strengthening peace in Europe and, above all, the interests of Germans themselves.

"The Soviet Communist Party," Gorbachev said, "is in solidarity with the like-minded people in the German Democratic Republic. Getting rid of the burden of the past and aware of its responsibility for the fate of the country and the people, the SUPG-PDS is capable of making a big constructive contribution to the much-needed consolidation of all progressive and democratic forces in the German Democratic Republic."

"Gorbachev noted the courage and spiritual power of the comrades who bravely counteracted the persecution campaign directed against the mass of honest party members, who work befittingly for the good of society. In an atmosphere which stimulates anti-communist hysteria, neo-Nazi and pro-fascist groups, on which external right radical forces seek to support in order to strengthen their own positions, are increasingly brazen in their activity in the German Democratic Republic.

"The two leaders were unanimous in their understanding of the importance of democratic changes in the German Democratic Republic, and of the country's unconditional right to decide by itself questions relating to its future development. They described as inadmissible any outside intervention in the internal political life of the republic, which cannot be regarded as anything but attempts to undermine a sovereign state which is acting as a most important guarantor of stability in Europe at the present turning point in its development."

"In the Soviet Union," Mikhail Gorbachev noted, "the striving of German people in the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany for rapprochement and interaction is viewed with understanding. This is a natural fact. It was discussed at a recent meeting with Hans Modrow." Gorbachev said he would like to stress once again that forcing passions and simplified approaches to the problem

could be pernicious.

"We are confident," the Soviet leader said, "that within the framework of the European process, the construction of a common European home, the issue of the German national unity may find its resolution, too. Whether this will happen under the conditions of a European confederation, the idea of which was proposed by President Francois Mitterrand, or in some other form - this is for history to decide. We hope a high sense of responsibility will be displayed in the two German states during the search for ways and forms of possible reunification, which would not be at variance with the interests of all European nations, the interests of peace in the world. The stance of the SUPG-PDS towards these problems, as far as we know, is expressed with sufficient clarity in the statement by the Presidium of its board of February 1, 1990. "Under the conditions of the active development of German problems all countries, all parties and movements, whose interests are involved in this, people in the streets and people in the offices - all should act circumspectly and most sensibly. Otherwise Europe which has just embarked on the path of mutual trust and co-creation, may be placed in jeopardy."

The conversation, with the participation of Alexander Yakovlev, Valentin Falin, R. Fyodorov, H.J. Wellerding and G. Keonig, was held in an atmosphere of comradeship, frankness and mutual understanding. □

Mikhail Gorbachev meets Soviet miners

IF the Party is not renewed, it will recede into the background. It should seek renewal above all of the ways of democratisation. For this, it is necessary for "the mass of communists to influence directly the formation of the supreme and intermediate-level Party bodies, the election of leaders," Mikhail Gorbachev said during this meeting on February 2 with miners representing the country's major coal basins.

The February 5 issue of *Pravda* reports that during the meeting, in addition to matters relating to the solution of social and economic issues of concern for miners, many other pressing problems were discussed.

Gorbachev said that the new provisions concerning the renewal of the Party will be published in the next few days. "Although the old, still effective Party rules do not permit it, the Central Committee is taking the initiative," he explained.

Speaking about political pluralism, Mikhail Gorbachev noted that the Communist Party lays no claim to monopoly and is prepared for political dialogue with all those who favour the renewal of socialist society. "On a principled plane our point of view is that a multi-party system is not a panacea. The level of society's democratisation is of decisive importance, as is the democratic nature of forming all its structures. The Soviet Communist Party is for conducting dialogue with all political movements, and organisations which are practically acting to assist perestroika and renew our life."

Responding to a question about the situation in the Politburo, Gorbachev said that "it is not critical. But the Central Committee and the Politburo are in need of renewal of an infusion of fresh forces. A congress is necessary also from this point of view.

"I cannot say that anyone in Politburo is trying to turn us back. Different points of view are voiced during discussions, but the decisions we make - you can see it - aim to promote perestroika processes."

Gorbachev noted that "somebody regularly, before every plenum, spreads allegations about some 'coup' being prepared."

About the plenum of the Central Committee, which begins its work today, Gorbachev said that it would certainly be marked by a heated debate.

"We, I believe, shall be given support, although some critical remarks will most likely be made."

Stressing that he welcomed all movements that supported perestroika, Gorbachev said that "the workers' movement is called upon to enrich

the restructuring of the Party, the restructuring of the soviets and the restructuring of the economic management bodies. It is here, into them that the best forces representing the workers' movement must come."

When discussing matters relating to the social and economic spheres, Gorbachev pointed out that a point of view existed which called for the immediate plunging into market affairs. "Without the market we shall not solve the problem, I am certain," he stressed.

"But we should approach it along a natural path and control it so as not to let it turn people's pockets inside out and bring all layers of society into a collision."

Gorbachev noted that "others advise us to give up innovations, tighten controls, hold everything tight and return to the old ways. This is not the way for us," he said, "it will keep us forever in the past."

Gorbachev said that he would not be discouraged because the correct choice of a policy had been made and he believed in Soviet people's patriotism, the people's great patience and stamina. □

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Soviet President receives Brazil's president elect

SOVIET President Mikhail Gorbachev had a meeting in the Kremlin today with Fernando Collor, Brazilian President-elect, who will be inaugurated in March.

Gorbachev congratulated Collor upon his election as president of one of the biggest countries of Latin America and the world. He greeted the representative of the people for whom Soviet people have profound sympathy and respect.

Gorbachev and Collor established a similarity of views on the processes in the world. They believe the world community is ushering in a new epoch in which there will be no room for confrontation, diktat or the use of force.

International relations should be based on such principles as respect for sovereignty, non-interference in the affairs of other countries, and balance of interests.

Gorbachev said these processes are just beginning and will not proceed smoothly. It is ever more important that all countries without exception promote the development of positive tendencies and pursue a balanced and responsible policy.

In this sense, co-operation and interaction between the Soviet Union and Brazil is an im-

portant factor of consolidating sound principles in international relations.

Appropriate attention should be given to the role and place of Latin American in world politics. The striving for independence, for overcoming economic backwardness, and the solution of problems caused by the external debt, is growing in all the countries of the vast continent.

Gorbachev said the Soviet Union solidarises with these aspirations of Latin American peoples. The fact that Latin America is embarking on independent development is an important phenomenon of the end of the 20th century.

The Soviet Union respects the choice of Latin American peoples, and is prepared for equal co-operation with all countries of the region, Gorbachev stressed.

"We do not seek advantages in Latin America and we have no intention of developing relations with Latin Americans to the detriment of the ties that have formed in the continent," Gorbachev said.

Gorbachev and Collor exchanged information about domestic problems in both countries. They noted that with all the specific features of historic development and the nature of transformations being made in the Soviet Union and Brazil, there is similarity between these pro-

cesses. The Soviet perestroika and Brazil's dynamic development create favourable conditions for Soviet-Brazilian co-operation.

Collor said that the Brazilian government, which will soon begin fulfilling its duties, and he personally is very interested in the development of relations with the Soviet Union in every direction.

This applies to political contacts, trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural and other ties. The President-Elect declared in favour of specific measures towards this being taken shortly by both sides.

Gorbachev supported Collor's proposal. "Our relations with Brazil are becoming stable. The two countries have huge potentials, and their economies supplement one another. Everything should be done to tap these vast opportunities. The Soviet Union is ready for this," Gorbachev said.

Collor invited Gorbachev to make an official visit to Brazil.

Gratefully accepting the invitation, Gorbachev said that he has a wish to visit that country.

Gorbachev and Collor assessed their meeting as constructive and useful for the development of good relations between the Soviet Union and Brazil.

(Moscow January 31 TASS)

PLENUM – DEBATES

(continued from page 44)

party system and for the annulment of article six of the Soviet Constitution and radical reform of the Party.

Moscow Party chief Yuri Prokofyev supported Arkhipov.

"Society already lives in conditions of an actual multi-party system, acute political confrontation and bitter struggle for power," he said.

Prokofyev called for the growth of independence of primary Party organisations and said the "power of the Party masses" should not just be declared but ensured with the help of a mechanism guaranteeing the real participation of every communist in working out and adopting Party decisions.

He supported Gorbachev's proposal to convene the next Party congress not later than June and called for direct and secret elections of delegates to the congress on a multi-candidate basis.

Uzbek Communist Party leader Islam Karimov spoke about relations between constituent republics. He called for a renewed federation, in which each republic would have genuine sovereignty and independence, and for the organisational and ideological unity of a renewed Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Byelorussian Communist Party leader Yefrem Sokolov called for the independence of republican communist parties but the opposed their isolation and federalism in the CPSU.

He proposed that the draft platform say: "the republican communist parties may have their own programmes and other policy documents." As to the Party rules, they should be the same for all communists of the country, he said.

Latvian Communist Party leader Jan Vagris focussed on the problems of the radical renewal of the USSR, republics' independence on a stable treaty basis, democratisation and perestroika in the Party itself.

Vagris pointed to the need to work out and adopt a law on the union or a new treaty on the union before the 28th Party Congress.

Gennadi Yagodin, Chairman of the State Committee for Public Education, supported the platform's provision concerning the presidential post.

He said it was necessary to specify in a new constitution the terms of presidential office and a mechanism that would help control the president's work.

Boris Yeltsin, member of the Central Committee and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Construction and Architecture, told the plenum that the Party was now at the edge of a crisis to which it has been led also by its present Central Committee, with its adherence to dogma, dragging feet, the lack of determination in democratising the Party and reluctance to restructure itself.

He noted some progressive features in the Party's new draft platform but said his impression was that two hands wrote it – the right one and the left one, and attempts were being constantly made to reconcile them one way or another by making concessions now to one of them, then to the other.

Yeltsin insisted that the Party should renounce the principle of democratic centralism and replace it with universal democratic principles to ensure genuine pluralism within the Party. He called for guarantees of minority rights, the freedom of opinion, the right of a Party member to advocate his own standpoint, and for individual political rights and freedoms. Yeltsin advocated the transition to democratic principles of the Party self-government relying on the forces of elected bodies and councils of secretaries of primary Party organisations.

Having voiced support for a multi-party system and called for the abolition of article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, Yeltsin pointed to the need to recognise a variety of standpoints, trends and platforms as well as independence of factions representable at congresses and in the Party's elective bodies in proportion to their memberships.

Yeltsin called for ensuring direct, secret, equitable elections on an alternative basis of delegates from primary organisations in Party territorial constituencies to congresses, conferences, local and central bodies, as well as of the leaders, including of the Party's supreme bodies.

Speaking about principles of state and Party building Yeltsin called for a transition from the

(continued on back page)

Shevardnadze and Collor converse

SOVIET Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze had a conversation today with Brazil President-Elect Fernando Collor, who was staying in Moscow as a guest of the Supreme Soviet.

The sides set out their approaches to the solution of global problems of the present, prioritising the questions of disarmament and security, of the restructuring of international economic relations on a fair basis, their problems of environment protection and of making scientific and technological changes in the world.

A similarity of philosophical and political stands was established during the exchange of opinions on the main tendencies determining present changes in the world.

The sides noted that in working out decisions promoting the consolidation of positive aspects of world development and suiting the interests of all nations, the Soviet Union and Brazil can step up constructive and fruitful co-operation.

In this context, noting the great importance of the Soviet Union's specific steps towards the easing of tension in the world, the Brazilian side emphasised that this creates favourable opportunities for resolving the vital tasks encountered by developing countries.

Discussing bilateral relations, the sides arrived at the consensus that the dialectic of their development puts on the order of the day the transition to a new stage of co-operation in the commercial, economic, scientific, technological and other areas that would be commensurate with the potential of both countries and help them solve the tasks of their internal development.

It was emphasised that both sides will be guided by this attitude in their approach to specific questions of bilateral relations. The conversation was held in a friendly atmosphere and was marked by openness and mutual understanding. □

(Moscow January 31, TASS)

Eduard Shevardnadze appraises the Modrow concept

THE diplomatic correspondents of TASS, Novosti Press Agency, Pravda and Izvestia asked Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to comment on the concept for the discussion of ways towards achieving a united Germany, set out by Hans Modrow, Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic

Shevardnadze made the following comments:

When Hans Modrow was in Moscow not long ago he advanced a number of ideas for the rapprochement of the two German states and for the establishment of their new relations of co-operation and partnership. They met with due understanding by the Soviet leadership.

We have now an opportunity for the familiarisation with a more integral and specific position of the GDR Government. It should be noted that the position is advanced as the basis for discussion.

Moreover, Modrow addressed himself directly to European countries and the world public with a call to express their opinion with regard to this concept.

We appreciate that the question is posed this way. It shows that the GDR is aware that the problem of German unity has a bearing not only on Germans. It must be decided in the context of the existing European and world realities, with taking into consideration the interests of other countries and, certainly, the lessons of tragic history.

It goes without saying that in this case the Soviet union has very substantial lawful interests and rights. The Soviet Union lost 26 million people. Tens of thousands of Soviet cities and villages were destroyed.

Hardly any family in the Soviet union was spared by war. No one can be against the fact that we treasure the memory of our dead. The question posed in the statement of the head of the GDR Government is not only a political question for us, but also a poignantly human one.

We are far from indifferent observers of this process and we shall, naturally, continue an active dialogue with the governments of the German Democratic Republic and West Germany, with the great powers responsible for German affairs and with all countries concerned.

We got the impression that the concept of the GDR Government contains reasonable, far-sighted ideas and approaches. On the whole it proceeds from realistic premises.

We could agree to many elements, but some elements, we believe, should be further worked out. There will also be a need for more specific explanations. Specific features are everything.

In other words, serious exchanges of opinion and discussion of details are ahead. They are extremely important in such a historic process.

I would like to emphasise at once that we have never had any problems about the principle of self-determination for both German states. This is a natural right of peoples, the right to free choice, independent road of development.

We have on the whole good, versatile, though largely dissimilar, relations with the German Democratic Republic and West Germany. We have not the slightest wish to oppose the national aspirations of the German people in the German Democratic Republic and West Germany. The German people is our close neighbour in Europe.

But we cannot remain unconcerned over the question how the situation in Europe will deve-

lop in connection with the process of rapprochement between the two German states.

First of all, we cannot but recall the basic principle of the United Nations Charter – 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.' We are guided by this principle in our policy.

All peoples, particularly the peoples of the Soviet Union, should have the right to a guarantee that the threat of war will never come from German soil. I believe they will accept and support German unity only if they are certain of this.

I think it would be appropriate to note that the German problem has not only legal, political, military and economic dimensions. It directly affects millions of people in all countries.

This reality cannot be overlooked. Politicians and statesmen should apparently know what people scourged by war and the coming generations think about the current movement towards German unity.

I don't know how this can be achieved, but I think there must be a way to find out public opinion in a most democratic and open way, perhaps through a European referendum with the participation of the United States and Canada or, at least, through broad parliamentary debates.

It is important that Europe's destiny and future be decided not only by politicians but also by peoples. As it happened more than once in history, peoples have had to pay for the politicians errors!

I believe that Germany and the whole world have the need not just the German problem but to achieve ultimate reconciliation to the difficult past. People will ultimately have to say that a line be drawn under the past with their consent and with sufficient guarantee.

This, however, can hardly be expected if the German question is debated against the background of neo-Nazi attacks in West German and the GDR. They undermine confidence more than anything else and call into question the arguments that European peoples will never witness the revival of Nazism again.

It is not the very idea of German unity but the revival of sinister shadows of the past and thoughts of a possible growth of militarism that evoke concern.

I believe it is extremely important that people with Nazi or pro-Nazi views should not get involved with the idea of a united Germany.

This idea should be advanced and upheld by people with noble intentions and clean hands.

If such people declare for a united Germany, all others will readily give confidence to this idea.

We share the opinion of the head of the government of the GDR that the paving of the road to German unity requires special caution and the awareness of what is possible and acceptable for Europe.

In 40 years of separate existence the GDR and West Germany have moved far apart. Therefore the process of their rapprochement should be implemented stage-by-stage.

Apparently, there is logic in Modrow's concept of stages of this advance – a treaty-governed community with elements of a confederation, confederation of the German Democratic Republic and West Germany, federation or German union.

It is important that this process be predictable from beginning to end and that it promote, not shake, stability and security in Europe.

Speaking in the Political Commission of the European Parliament on December 19, 1989, I have already mentioned the questions which inevitably arise when the future of the German nation is discussed.

It is also apparent that many questions which arose as a result of the Second World War and post-war development should be solved on the way towards unity. How can this be achieved? Will the conclusion of a peace treaty be the answer?

In connection with Modrow's plan, I would like to name the problems associated with German unity which still concern us and require elucidation.

There is current opinion among European states that the steps towards the rapprochement of the two German states should be synchronised with the European Process, and should be implemented stage-by-stage and mainly within its context.

European talks on confidence-building measures are now under way in Vienna. Isn't there the need to discuss the German aspect of confidence-building measures at these talks? Doesn't what happens around the two German states show with greater clarity the need to hold a summit meeting of the countries-participants in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe as early as this year.

It would be interesting to learn in greater detail how the governments of the German Democratic Republic and West Germany relate the movement towards unity to the Helsinki Process.

It is also apparent that many questions which arose as a result of the Second World War and post-war development should be solved on the way towards unity. How can this be achieved? Will the conclusion of a peace treaty be the answer?

This question should be pondered profoundly, with taking into consideration the fact that more than 50 years have passed since the war, and people in both German states and the whole of Europe have covered a long road.

Many fundamental things have been decided by the Helsinki Final Act and in bilateral agreements. Some things remained unsolved, and there is also the need to place landmarks for the future and in such a way as not to be ashamed before descendants.

Unless the Germans unconditionally recognise and strictly observe the present frontiers in Europe that formed as a result of the war and keep from making territorial claims on anyone, it can hardly be expected that the idea of German unity will not be opposed by many countries, for whom the question is posed acutely, sometimes painfully.

West German state leaders make reassuring statements, but the known decision of the Federal Constitutional Court asserting the legality of the 1937 frontiers of the Reich has not yet been repealed.

It is justifiable that both stages are urged to proclaim military neutrality and take practical measures towards the lowering of the level of armaments and demilitarisation.

It stands to reason that there will be a need to agree with the four powers on the amount of their rights and responsibility.

There is also apparently the need for the awareness that the 1971 quadripartite agreement on Berlin remains valid during the establishment of German unity, and that the city is not excluded from vigorous international and inter-German exchanges.

The Soviet Union and other European countries are not indifferent what place a new German state would assume in the military-political structures already existing in Europe.

There is another, still more important question, of its place in the new peaceful order in Europe, in the common European home.

In short, there is need for reliable political, legal and material guarantees that German unity will not pose a threat to security of other states and to peace in Europe.

(continued on next page)

The third session of the Supreme Soviet – what's in store?

By Valery Telegin

Active preparations are underway in the USSR for the third session of the Supreme Soviet, due to open on February 14. Its committees and commissions have already spent nearly a month thrashing out the agenda.

The session is scheduled to last for two and a half months, and to debate about 40 items of legislation, half of which have already passed their first reading (i.e. draft or consultative examination). The prevailing public opinion is that these laws will to a large extent determine the future progress of perestroika.

So what do these draft laws entail? Speaking very roughly since their contents constantly overlap, they boil down to three broad-ranging themes. The first is further radicalisation of the economic reform, the second is improvement of the Soviet federal structure, the third – the social policies of the Soviet state.

Concerning the economy there are some eight draft laws, governing, among other areas, taxation of enterprises' profits and incomes, economic and social management at the republican level, and amendments and additions to legislation on co-operatives.

But the highlights of the session is likely to be the adoption of the laws on property and land, which were drafted at the previous session and have been submitted to nationwide debate. The law on property has been dubbed "law number one", and has not only economic but also political importance.

What this law will do is return to the USSR the principles of a mixed-sector economy combi-

ning a variety of forms of ownership. The deputies have to weigh up the outcome of the national debate and finalise the draft, taking account of citizens' amendments and proposals.

The draft law on land is similarly regarded as being of enormous significance for the success of the economic reforms and, like the law on property, has been the subject of particularly heated and lengthy debate at all levels.

Next, the Soviet federation. On the agenda is a package of laws intended to regulate the new nationalities policy of the Soviet state. The Supreme Soviet is to debate during the forthcoming session alterations and amendments to the Soviet concerning administrative functions at the level of republics and local government (soviets), and a law enshrining the right of citizens living outside their national or territorial area, or without one in the Soviet Union, to retain and develop their own ethnic traditions and culture.

The session is also expected to draw up a mechanism and procedure for a union republic to secede from the USSR should its population so desire.

Another package of legislation involves extending and improving human rights in the USSR. One of these is the law on the press, which underwent its first reading during the preceding session of the Supreme Soviet. This law will forbid censorship of the mass media, and bring existing practice into line with accepted democratic principles, by replacing the need to gain permission to found a publication with the constitutional right to do so. Moreover, not only state and public organisations will be entitled to publish, but also religious, co-operative and other associations of citizens, as well as individuals.

Also in the sphere of human rights, and close-

ly connected with efforts to bring Soviet legislation into line with the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, is the draft law on USSR citizens' rights to foreign travel.

Another draft law on the same broad theme is that on the legal requirements for the declaration of a state of emergency, a question of particular relevance now, given the tension in numerous regions of the country and especially in Transcaucasia. Some deputies are calling for this draft to be the priority of the forthcoming session, and for it to jump the queue to be debated first.

Finally, the third major theme. Draft laws concerning the social sector include that on pensions (which has already passed its first reading), and new provisions on holiday entitlements. They both touch upon the interests of the vast majority of Soviet people, and their entry onto the statute books is therefore impatiently awaited.

And still on the subject of public expectations, research by the Academy of Social Sciences' Department of Applied Sociology and Social Psychology shows that 73 per cent of the Soviet public pin their hopes on a better future most of all on the Supreme Soviet. This compares to 59 per cent on the party, and 61 per cent on the government. Obviously, this approval rating depends and will depend in the future on the moves that the Supreme Soviet makes.

So the forthcoming Supreme Soviet session can handle a very full agenda with some tough questions to handle. It is generally thought that it will be helped in getting through the large volume of business by the experience already amassed during its first two sessions, which has helped it make its mark as the supreme authority within a reformed Soviet political system.

PLENUM – DEBATES

(continued from page 46)

unitary principle of building the state and, respectively, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, towards a voluntary union of nations and a voluntary union of republican communist parties.

(Continued from previous page)

Preliminary considerations expressed here, certainly, should not be viewed as exhaustive.

It should be noted that we are for the eventual creation of a united peaceful democratic Germany, which would assume a worthy place in the world community and would become an important strong link in European and world security.

We wish the movement of Germans towards unity to proceed with cataclysms, not to disrupt the European and world balance and not to pose threats to its neighbours. I think this is a natural and legitimate wish. □

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Yeltsin doubted that the present Central Committee would be able to bring about the genuinely democratic, radical renewal of the Party, hold elections and a congress.

He proposed creating an organising committee, on which primary organisations and various platforms would be represented, to prepare and hold the 28th CPSU Congress.

Alexander Dzasokhov, Party chief from northern Ossetia, focussed his attention on the problem of presidential powers. Experience has made imperative the expansion of constitutional prerogatives of the head of state authority in the interests of ensuring the democratic process in combination with stability in socialist society, he stressed.

The need for a theoretical substantiation of the essential traits of socialism's new image was highlighted by Grigori Revenko, chief of the Kiev Regional Party Committee. He called for changing the procedure of forming the Party's supreme bodies. He thought it advisable to delegate representatives of republican communist parties to the CPSU Central Committee in proportion to their membership.

"To all appearances, we are now facing the need to make a practice of such democratic forms of the Party life as the resignation or recalling of Central Committee members," Revenko said.

He also called for electing Party leaders by a direct, secret, alternative ballot and for a fixed representation norm for workers and peasants in all Party elective bodies, including its supreme leading bodies. □

Soviet-Hungarian troop withdrawal negotiations open

Soviet-Hungarian negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungarian territory opened in Budapest on February 1.

The Hungarian delegation is led by Foreign Ministry Secretary of State Ferenc Somogyi and the Soviet side by Deputy Foreign Minister I.P. Aboimov.

The MTI news agency believes that in the course of two-day negotiations the sides will set forth the countries' stands on the troop withdrawal, and discuss the withdrawal time schedule.

Hungary's state assembly is known to have authorised the government to insist in the course of the negotiations on an early elaboration of a time schedule for a full Soviet troop withdrawal, MTI reports. The aim is to see to it that the troops should be fully withdrawn in the current year or in 1991 at the latest, MTI reports.

PERESTROIKA as seen by an ECONOMIST

By Ruslan Hasbulatov

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