

THE SOVIET UNION'S FIRST PRESIDENT Mikhail Gorbachev's acceptance speech

Newly-elected Soviet executive President Mikhail Gorbachev made the following acceptance speech in Moscow on March 15 after being sworn-in at the extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR:

Esteemed Comrade Delegates,

I would like to express my deep gratitude for the trust you have placed in me, by electing me the Soviet Union's first executive President.

I am aware that I am accepting my duties at a difficult time for the nation. I agreed to run for the presidency because I am convinced of the future of our fatherland and also because perestroika has become the meaning of my entire life.

I understand that special demands will be made on me now. I realised this acutely once again when I was listening to deputies discuss my candidacy. And I do not want to evade my duty to the people.

Perestroika, I believe, is the only possible way for this country to peacefully proceed to a fundamentally different society, from an authoritarian bureaucratic system to a humane and democratic socialism.

It is only natural that as President, I am expected to present my view of the path we've covered and my programme of action for the future.

The principal achievements of perestroika are democracy and glasnost, and this is all-important for the entire course of further reform.

Despite the present complex situation and the mass of difficulties and problems in social and economic fields, it can be said that even in that sphere, there are signs of a strategic turn towards popular interests.

We all can feel the first real results of political change. A system of genuine people power is being created and the groundwork laid for building a rule-of-law country. A hard, yet vital transition has been started from a unitary state to a fully-fledged federation.

Having launched perestroika in this country on the basis of new thinking, we have also come up with a new foreign policy. It alerted the perception of the Soviet Union's role in the present-day world. Most importantly, this was done, one can say, right at the point-of-no-return, when the world was on the brink of global catastrophe.

That perilous march of events has been halted and international relations have begun to be put on the right track.

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In short, comrades, the turn being executed is of historic significance. It is important that each one of us realise this. Otherwise, it would be difficult to have a correct understanding of many, sometimes painful problems accompanying perestroika.

With changes coming thick and fast and our personnel and public opinion being, frankly, unprepared for them, we have not had enough time, of course, to do everything properly.

The adverse coincidence of the Chernobyl accident, the Armenian earthquake and other natural calamities and the dramatic worsening of our situation on the world market have all told negatively.

Blunders in our investment policy and in the anti-drink drive caused a lot of damage. Enormous costs, including those in human life, have been paid as a result of criminal negligence and actions to stir up ethnic strife, which are an even graver offence.

★ GORBACHEV SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, 59, the man who launched the perestroika reforms, was sworn in as the first Soviet Executive President in the Kremlin on March 15.

Gorbachev was elected to the new post in a secret ballot at the extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR late on March 15.

At the inaugural ceremony, Gorbachev, dressed in a dark-blue suit and laying his hand on a copy of the Soviet Constitution, read out to the deputies:

"I solemnly pledge to faithfully serve the peoples of our country, strictly abide by the USSR Constitution, guarantee citizens' rights and freedoms and diligently fulfil the high duties of President of the Soviet Union placed upon me." □

★
We have been hampered by ingrained dogmatic views, the habit of taking a passive attitude, sitting idle and only doing what the boss tells us. All these handicaps are still making themselves felt. I would even say that despite all the economic and social difficulties and other thorny problems, inflexible mentality remains the biggest stumbling block to change.

I cannot sidestep the issue of the various anti-perestroika, destructive forces that are impeding reform. Their actions promote further difficulties and require cohesion and firmness on the part of all those seeking to renovate our society.

I understand how dramatic the situation is, how complicated and unusual the problems are, and how emotionally charged society is, but I do not see any grounds for panicking, let alone replacing perestroika with another policy.

It is obvious, however, that perestroika should be radicalised. And I shall use my presidential powers above all towards this end.

Let me stress that I shall use them to promote reforms and make decisive headway on a demo-

cratic basis.

I believe it essential to say this because both previous to the Congress and also here, at the Congress, some people have expressed fears about the President being able to usurp power.

There is no reason for such fears. This is guaranteed by the Constitution, which is now guarded by the powerful, elected agencies of supreme state authority with real rights – the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet.

This is guaranteed by carefully-designed checks and balances, which rule out the possibility of power being arrogated by one person.

This is guaranteed by public openness and political pluralism, which have become realities here.

A top priority is to carry out a package of measures to defuse social and economic tension.

One can hear a lot of talk about 'indecision', 'foot-dragging' and 'delays' in taking required measures. There is a grain of truth in this. I would like to say at the same time that we have lived through an essential preparatory stage.

Without trying out cost-accounting and such unaccustomed arrangements as leaseholding and the contract system, without reviving the co-operative movement, streamlining administrative structures and taking many other steps, we would not have developed our current understanding of existing problems and optimum ways of resolving them through economic reform.

And it would certainly have been impossible to draft the fundamental bills which have either been enacted or are about to be passed by the Supreme Soviet.

Society had to go through all this. We simply were unprepared for the sweeping changes, and even now we still are not quite prepared for them. To cut a long story short, the preparatory phase was really indispensable.

A thorough-going economic restructuring, of course, also proved unmanageable without first dismantling the authoritarian-bureaucratic system. In addition, we lacked the legal prerequisites for effecting really radical economic reform.

But now we have them and it is possible, at long last, to overcome the situation where the old and the new forms of economic management – the command system and the economic leverage system – coexist in antagonism, weakening each other. This impairs the efficiency of both, destabilise the consumer market, circulation and finances even further, and hinders economic progress in many ways.

The need to expedite economic reform is also dictated by the disquieting situation as regards the fulfilment of the government's economic recovery programme.

Nothing less than a breakthrough is needed. Otherwise, negative trends will mount even faster than before. I think we need decisive moves to radicalise economic reform.

First of all, it is imperative to bring out the immense constructive potential that is inherent in the laws on ownership, land, and leaseholding and in other legislative acts in the same package, which are now close to being adopted. I see their

enforcement as a prime presidential task.

The laws cannot work all by themselves and grassroots initiative and enterprises will die unless we foster the appropriate economic environment. We must get down to creating a full-blooded domestic market.

This is an uphill economic, political and psychological problem. It cannot be tackled at one fell swoop, but we should start dealing with it consistently right away, shedding any fears and complexes.

Price, supply and marketing reforms, changes in the way state orders are placed, and steps to create first commodity and then stock exchanges will become necessary in this respect.

A changeover to a tax in kind on basic kinds of farm produce and raw materials, combined with free trade in surplus agricultural products, will be a major step.

Laws and decisions to demonopolise the economy brook no delay.

Once it has a viable market, the state should have reliable leverage to influence economic processes. This includes, in the first place, a rational profit tax system for enterprises and an income tax system for the general population, financial controls, the state bank's regulation of money turnover as a single whole, and an active crediting policy, including lending rates corresponding to actual economic conditions.

Most importantly, we need to cut government spending by a considerable margin in the near future to plug the state budget deficit and arrest inflation.

Simultaneously, we need to work out dependable social guarantees for the entire population, especially for those in the low-income bracket, and various social security measures, including special subsidies to make up for rising prices.

The farmer deputies and the country people they represent should know that as President, I see everything related to the life of Soviet farmers and food supply as priority issues.

The brunt of responsibility for the practical implementation of all these measures will, of

Presidency debate

THE Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR completed nominations for the new Soviet presidency late on the evening of March 14.

The plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party nominated Party leader Mikhail Gorbachev for the new post.

The nomination was seconded by a group of agrarian deputies, and representatives from Soviet war and labour veterans, trade unions and other bodies.

The Soyuz group of deputies, who want to preserve the Soviet Union's territorial integrity within a new federation, nominated Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and Interior Minister Vadim Bakatin for the post, but they both withdrew in Gorbachev's favour.

Seventeen speakers took the floor to comment on Gorbachev's nomination. The debate on the presidency featured some of the sharpest public criticism of a Soviet leader in Parliament.

"I ask you not to vote for Gorbachev under any circumstances," Teimuraz Avaliani, a Deputy from Kemerovo, told the Congress, saying Gorbachev had brought the country to the brink of collapse. In the past five years, the Soviet Union made no progress in the economic and social sphere, he said.

Alexander Shelkanov of Leningrad accused Gorbachev of taking wilful and unfounded decisions.

Ukrainian Deputy Nikolai Kutsenko said Gorbachev should withdraw his nomination.

However, most deputies supported the nomination, praising him for launching the perestroika reforms.

A total of 1,702 deputies voted to leave Gorbachev on the ballot paper, 156 said no and 36 abstained.

The Congress then began a secret ballot to choose the new president. □

course, be on the government. But presidential decrees will be required on key issues to formulate tasks clearly, set deadlines, and name those responsible for meeting them.

Let us be totally candid: the realisation of these far-reaching measures will put society in new conditions and may initially be accompanied by painful problems and badly affect some interests.

This is why we must reach mutual understanding and accord in society on all crucial issues. Comrades,

The fate of perestroika will be largely determined by the way we reshape our federation. I reaffirm in the capacity of President my commitment to the country's integrity.

At the same time I proceed from the premise that the adoption of measures to strengthen the sovereignty of the union republics and their economic and political independence and to enhance the status of autonomous republics and other national-territorial entities should become a special concern of the presidency.

Sharing remarks made here on these issues, I believe it is necessary to start without delay the elaboration of a new union treaty, which would meet the realities and requirements of the development of our federation and each ethnic group.

It is necessary to envisage a differentiation of federation ties with due account for specific conditions and each republic's potentials.

To confirm the republics' sovereignty and their right to self-determination, including secession, as specified in the constitution, the Supreme Soviet should consider and define a lawful mechanism for secession from the union as soon as possible.

Together with the federation council, the President will handle all these issues in co-operation with the Supreme Soviet.

Emergency measures are required to resolve painful problems that have emerged on the basis of inter-ethnic strife, above all the refugee problem.

The governments of corresponding union republics and, if required, the union government should adopt decisions on this issue.

Today, we have the right to raise the issue in this way. The union republics, while strengthening their sovereignty and acquiring extensive independence, should also assume full responsibility for securing the civil rights of people of all ethnic backgrounds living on their territories – in keeping with our – Soviet – and international standards.

This responsibility should be political, legal and material.

Lately a threat of the dissemination of nationalist, chauvinistic and even racist slogans has emerged. One should ruthlessly counter this by applying the full strength of the Constitution and the laws of the country.

In terms of other issues of political reform, the President, as I see it, faces the top priority task of facilitating the earliest establishment of a revamped structure for the Soviets, making them fully-fledged bodies of public self-government.

The new republican and local Soviets have acquired the necessary rights and possibilities, thanks to the laws on land and ownership. A law on local self-government and local economy is to be adopted soon.

An end is being put to the Party's patronage of the Soviets and to the Party's direct interference in the solution of specific state and economic issues.

Under these conditions, it is especially important that the Soviets master their new role as soon as possible and start working at full capacity. Otherwise, a dangerous vacuum of power could emerge.

I believe it is necessary to emphasise the following: a mechanism is emerging, as a result of the establishment of a new system of Soviets, on which the national President will be able to rely in performing his functions. □

How do I envisage the role of President within the system of bodies of state power and management?

His most important task is to be a guarantor of the irreversibility of perestroika and to work firmly and consistently for the formation of a law-based statehood and a self-government socialist society.

The division of powers presupposes a clear differentiation of functions but does not in any way rule out the possibility of and even necessity of their interaction.

I regard this as one of the main tasks of the Soviet head of state and his presidential council. This body is being designed as a collective of major political figures, experts on key spheres of state and public development, who will work out recommendations on basic issues of domestic and foreign policy and suggest, if need be, prompt solutions.

I will also stress that, as I see it, the President should feel and act as a representative not of a separate section or political trend, but as an accredited representative of the entire people.

This, naturally, does not mean that he should abandon his own political convictions but implies his readiness to take into account the entire range of views and legitimate interests existing in society in the most objective and impartial way.

He should act in accordance with the oath, placing above all the good of the country and the people.

In this connection I would like to clarify the issue that became here, at the Congress, a subject of lively and at times heated debate.

I am referring to the combination of the posts of President and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. I share the viewpoint of deputies who believe that this combination – today and in the immediate future – is dictated by the interests of perestroika.

The current Congress of People's Deputies began a new stage in the development of democracy in our society by changing articles six and seven of the Soviet Constitution.

From now on the Soviet Communist Party will participate in elections on an equal footing with other political organisations, working by democratic means for the right to form union and republican government and local bodies of power.

One of the most important functions of the office of President and its bodies is, in my view, to consolidate political trends and public movements.

I am convinced that the democratic character of the presidency presupposes dialogue and co-operation with representatives of various trends of public thought and their participation in the *(continued on next page)*

The vote

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV was elected President of the Soviet Union by 1,329 votes to 495. Academician Yuri Osipyan, Chairman of the Election Commission, told the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR this morning.

A total of 2,000 deputies received ballot papers, he said.

The total number of deputies is 2,245, but several did not attend because of illness and for other reasons.

Ballot boxes were found to contain 1,878 ballot papers, he said.

Fifty-four ballot papers were invalid. Gorbachev won the votes of 59.2 per cent of the total number of deputies, Osipyan said. Fifty per cent was needed for election.

Gorbachev received the support of 70.76 per cent of all the deputies who took part in the vote, he said, explaining that this figure was unofficial.

The Congress confirmed the Election Commission's protocol. □

Anatoli Lukyanov elected chairman of Supreme Soviet

ON March 15 the extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR elected Anatoli Lukyanov Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet (Parliament).

Lukyanov acted as first deputy to Mikhail Gorbachev, who held this post until his election as President.

Lukyanov defeated seven other candidates for the position. A total of 1,202 people voted by secret ballot in favour of Lukyanov, while 682 voted against.

Functions of the Supreme Soviet Chairman have changed with the institution of the presidency. Lukyanov will be the speaker of the Soviet parliament.

The following is a brief biography of Anatoli Lukyanov, elected Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet on March 15.

Anatoli Lukyanov was born on May 7, 1930 in

Smolensk. In 1953 he graduated from Moscow State University. He has been a member of the Soviet Communist Party since 1955. He is a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Anatoli Lukyanov is a Doctor of Law.

Lukyanov started work in 1943 as a worker at a defence factory.

Upon graduating from university and completing postgraduate studies he worked as senior consultant at the Legal Commission of the USSR Council of Ministers.

From 1961 to 1976 he worked as a senior adviser and deputy chief of the department for the work of the soviets at the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Since 1976 he has been a consultant to the Department of Organisational-Party Work at the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

Between 1977 and 1983 he was chief of the Secretariat of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

From 1983 he was first deputy chief, and from 1985 chief of the General Department of the Soviet Communist Party.

From January 1987 he was Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist

Party and from November 1987 he was concurrently chief of the Department of Administrative Bodies of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Since October 1988 he has been first Vice President of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

From 1981 he was a member of the Central Auditing Commission of the Soviet Communist Party, and from 1986 a member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Lukyanov was a delegate to the 26th and 27th Party congresses and the 19th All-Union Conference of the Soviet Communist Party. In September 1988 he was elected alternate member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

Lukyanov is a USSR People's Deputy, and a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation.

He has been decorated with the orders of the October Revolution and the Red Banner of Labour, and with other medals.

On May 29, 1989 he was elected first Deputy Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

On March 15, 1990 he was elected Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet at the Third Congress of USSR People's Deputies (extraordinary). □

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elaboration of presidential initiatives and projects.

Naturally, this applies primarily to People's Deputies of the USSR. In my opinion, the presidential council should include special officers for liaison with the Congress, the Supreme Soviet, public organisations and associations, artistic unions, establishments of science and culture and mass media bodies, which play an immense and important role.

Finally, the President should be a guarantor of the stability of public order and the security of citizen and the state.

We all now feel the need to overcome the weakness and amorphousness of administrative and executive power. As a matter of fact, this circumstance has become a strong reason in favour of introducing the presidency.

Anxiety is accumulating in society in connection with the threat of destabilisation. I mean the attempts to achieve one's objectives by way of violence, intolerance and ethnic strife and pressure on state and public institutions by all kinds of preemptory demands.

Some groups and people obviously hope to foist their views on us by provoking fears of a civil war, a coup d'état, national disaster and what not. But society as a whole does not accept such attempts at influencing state policy and rejects these methods, which are completely at odds with the objectives of perestroika and dangerous for our young, fledgling democracy. These practices must be resolutely rebuffed.

Another presidential mission is to vigorously counter crime, including encroachments on people's lives, property, dignity and security and illicit profiteering and shady dealings in the 'grey economy', which have assumed an intolerable scale.

With this aim, it is essential to establish exacting control over compliance with respective laws, to issue required decrees and, of course, to bolster law-enforcement services. I think it is necessary to accelerate reform that concerns courts, investigators and public prosecutors, in order to bring their status, rights and responsi-

lities into line with the tasks facing them.

While saying this, I do not relieve state and economic agencies and all our cadres of their responsibility to remove the causes that provoke crime. In many cases, crime is rooted in mismanagement, wasteful attitudes, disregard for property, lack of proper inventory accounting, and disruptions of public order.

Using the new possibilities of local governing councils and getting the public and the press actively involved will be of tremendous significance to achieving the desired order.

No system of power can replace morality, which is necessary in any human society.

In the past, the inner development of individuals in this country was denigrated as idealism. But now, we have to pay a dear price for this. We need a different, conscientious attitude to work, science, education and the arts, to culture the broadest sense of the word.

We need to create conditions for all spiritual values to be appreciated in society as a vital conditions for full-blooded life and progress.

Relying on the rich culture created by our peoples during their long history, including the Soviet period, and on the values of world civilisation, we must ennoble the entire atmosphere of relations among people in our society and unite all those wishing the Fatherland well.

It seems we have not yet become really aware of this. The public here is torn apart by group-based disputes, which every now and again escalate into a scandalous settling of accounts, this is especially true among intellectuals, from whom we expect a great deal at this critical watershed in the nation's history.

Some people question the very possibility and expediency of social cohesion. I disagree with them. At a time of trial, the people always brace up in order to hold out and prevail. Those viewed by people as their spiritual stewards are duty-bound to facilitate this unity in every way.

Cohesion is needed today, of course, around perestroika and its ideas, in order to overcoming everything that stands in its way.

Let me now turn to foreign policy. Over the

past few years, it has stood the test as a policy of realism and common sense, making it possible to do away with the cold war and lift the direct threat of war. The Soviet Union has taken a place in the world community that is worthy of its peaceful nature. And I strongly reject attacks on our foreign policy by dilettantes or irresponsible people.

By passing a resolution on foreign policy, the First Congress of People's Deputies has become its guarantor on behalf of the Soviet people. All presidential actions should be strictly in line with the letter and spirit of that resolution.

The presidency has been introduced in the Soviet Union at a crucial juncture in world development, when the structure of the post-war military-political equilibrium is undergoing radical change.

The cold war has been done away with, but military confrontation has not been overcome. This is why, while giving indisputable priority to political ways of ensuring security, the President must also, necessarily, guide the national defence policy along the principles of reasonable sufficiency and on the basis of the new military doctrine, showing concern for the armed forces. A different approach is unacceptable. As President, I would like to assure you that this is how I shall act.

We need profound military reform. We need to tackle a package of complex issues in this field and this will be among the principal concerns of the President and the presidential council, acting, of course, in co-operation with the Supreme Soviet.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to reiterate my commitment to the principle endorsed by the Congress of People's Deputies, whereby the use of armed forces outside the country without sanction from the Supreme Soviet or the Congress is ruled out categorically, once and for all. The only exception will be in the case of a surprise armed attack from outside.

What are the next foreign policy goals?

A major foreign policy objective for the near

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Mikhail Gorbachev's first news conference as President

THE final day of the extraordinary Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, during which the first Soviet President was sworn in, turned out to be the longest in its four-day work.

Mikhail Gorbachev once again amazed reporters with his dynamism and stamina, holding a one-hour press conference in the Kremlin late on March 15 after a gruelling day of political debates that led to the creation of the new powerful Soviet presidency.

Journalists were interested in the motives for creating the post of President in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev explained that the decision had been prompted by the logic of perestroika. The critical situation in the country, the need to step up reforms and resolve many urgent problems call for an improvement of the mechanism of the executive power, shorten the transitional period and introduce new elements in economy, politics and other spheres of soviet life.

Gorbachev expressed the conviction that an executive presidency would "make it possible to overcome the amorphous character and diffusiveness of power," as well as irresponsibility caused by references to collective leadership.

Asked about the most urgent tasks of the presidency, Gorbachev said: "We should make

the economic reform more radical, we should renew the union treaty and the principles of federation and take most resolute measures to strengthen the security of people and defend their rights and freedoms."

Speaking about urgent international problems and new Soviet initiatives, Gorbachev said that he will discuss a "great package of problems" and have "major talks" during his forthcoming visit to the United States.

He expressed the hope that a considerable degree of accord about 50 per cent cuts in strategic offensive arms will be achieved by that time.

He said this process intensified again, which imparts hope that it will be possible to outline the contours of a treaty by the time of the summit.

Other subjects to be raised during Gorbachev's talks in the United States include chemical weapons, the cessation of nuclear tests and regional problems.

The Soviet President also said that during his visit to Washington he expects an exchange of opinion about the development of the European Process.

Speaking about the unification of the two Germanies, Gorbachev noted that in this case one should think energetically in order not to upset the existing balance.

As for Sino-Soviet relations, Gorbachev

expressed confidence that relations between the Soviet Union and China will be stable and will make progress. He described the forthcoming visit of the Chinese Premier to the Soviet Union as a major event that will give a fresh impetus to bilateral relations.

Answering a question from a South Korean correspondent, Gorbachev said he regarded positively the prospects of establishing diplomatic relations with South Korea.

Asked about his attitude to Israel's policy of settling immigrants arriving from the Soviet Union on the occupied Arab lands, Gorbachev stressed that he would not avoid dialogue on this issue with the sides concerned. He said the solution should be found on the basis of mutual understanding and co-operation.

The Soviet President was asked many questions and one could feel he was answering them with pleasure.

Gorbachev said that his meetings with the press will now become regular. "I think that I am indebted to the mass media," the Soviet President said. His words were met with applause.

One of the questions to Gorbachev was which of his personal qualities he would like to take with him for presidency. "I will continue to be myself," he answered with a smile. □

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future is the energetic advancement of the negotiating process on all major weapons categories in order to achieve tangible results, preferably this year.

Major decisions that will improve Soviet-American relations and allow our two countries to contribute to positive tendencies in world politics are being prepared for the Washington summit with President Bush.

Historic changes have taken place in all of our six Eastern European allies. Basing relations with them on principles of equality and freedom of choice and getting rid of anything that is inconsistent with new thinking, we must preserve all that is valuable, all that is genuinely progressive and all that has been accumulated over decades of close contact.

The German question, now at the forefront of European politics, is special. I have presented our view on the issue several times over the past few days. It is well known both to our people and to all interested parties. We believe that the Germans' implementation of their natural right for unity should rule out the threat of a new war from German territory.

Everything else stems from this precondition: the rights of the four powers, the inviolability of borders, connection with the European process, the unacceptability of Germany entry into NATO and the need for a peace treaty on the outcome of the Second World War.

The speed of world developments gives new meaning to the European summit, which will include the United States and Canada, in the autumn.

The time has come to think about replacing military pacts with a system of collective security and co-operation bodies, taking into account the emergence of a united Germany in the centre of Europe.

We should orient ourselves towards Helsinki-2, which could become a watershed between the two epochs in international relations.

Joint statements and dozens of agreements in various spheres of co-operation have been signed with several major powers.

Their implementation and mutual reciprocity are a major factor of stability, security and pro-

gress, and of real movement towards a 'common European home', which we have committed ourselves to.

It will be the task of the President to monitor the implementation of these documents, their principled and practical meaning.

New thinking does not mean that our interest in developing countries is waning. Our solidarity with those who are struggling for social progress, democracy and a worthy life remains firm.

In the Asia-Pacific region, we will continue the implementation of initiatives tabled in Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk.

We have a lasting relationship with great India. Our co-operation with China is expanding.

The building of peaceful communities in Europe and Asia should finally result in a united system of security for the entire Euro-Asian continent.

The situation in the Middle East should be tackled and we should resume our active policy in this globally important region.

Latin America occupies an increasingly important place in Soviet foreign policy, allowing us to collaborate in the promotion of positive international developments in this region.

The Soviet President should promote Soviet participation in global economics and international environmental clean-up.

Given the world's increasing interdependence, I must stress the importance of the United Nations. I am convinced that the revival of the UN role and its peace functions is a major step towards peace in human history.

Summing up what has been said, I would like to say that we are all living in one home – sons and daughters of more than a hundred peoples with various ethnic and cultural backgrounds and unique differences. I believe the President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics should promote national accord, the spirit of mutual respect and good-neighbourly relations in the country.

My supreme goal and duty as President of the Soviet Union is to promote the principles of civil peace and to express and protect the interests of the people.

In order to execute presidential power I will rely on the support of our people, their will,

moral qualities, wisdom, intellect and common sense.

I count on the support of the working class, which is playing a key role in promoting perestroika.

I believe in the creative strength of the Soviet farmer – a true master of the land. Having liberated his work, we will resolve the food problem.

I am optimistic as I direct my attention and ideas to workers in science and culture, to all Soviet intelligentsia, who have been and will continue to carry through major tasks of perestroika that are intellectually and spiritually taxing.

I pin great hopes on the young people, on their real participation in the adoption and implementation of crucial political decisions and on the creative energy of youth.

I believe that I will also be able to rely on the wisdom and time-tested concern of the older generation, on that generation's interest in consolidating the prestige of Soviet government.

I am addressing those who honestly fulfil their duty in the Soviet Armed Forces, creating firm guarantees for the peaceful transformation inside the country.

As President, I want to wish the Communist Party – the country's most influential political force – success in implementing its platform for its 28th Party Congress.

The Party's programmatic goal – a humane, democratic socialism – meets people's aspirations and their desire to live in an open, democratic, fair and prosperous society.

Our country is living through hard times. But if we apply vigorous and concerted effort, we will undoubtedly be able to overcome the hardships.

We ought to discard the fears and gloom and acquire faith in our strength and capabilities, which are immense. The Russian and all other peoples who have united into a multi-ethnic state will succeed in reviving their common motherland. And they will achieve this through perestroika and socialist renewal. □

Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at Party plenary meeting

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, summed up the discussion on Party life at the Central Committee plenum on March 16. The text of his speech was released in Moscow on March 17.

"I regard the discussion of the already published Central Committee platform at this plenum as part of the pre-Congress discussion," Gorbachev said.

He viewed the discussion with optimism. "Taking into account the fact that the Soviet Communist Party is not renouncing its role as the political vanguard and is seeking to present through Party papers its programme and its point of view on the outlook for development, society will receive a document of great importance," he said.

Speaking about the discussion of the draft of the new Party rules, Gorbachev stated that a good basis was laid down in the draft but the discussion showed that it required further elaboration.

"Evidently, the preamble needs elaboration, including a clear cut definition of the ultimate goals the Party sets itself and proposes to society, and to the attainment of which it calls the people."

The discussion showed that the plenum wanted the ideas of democratising the Party to permeate all segments of the rules. It also insisted that "the rules should make clearer, should give full expression to the Leninist idea of what democratisation in the Party must manifest itself in – namely, in the assertion of the power of the Party masses."

However, Gorbachev noted, many speakers were against deleting the notion of democratic centralism from the rules.

Mikhail Gorbachev dwelled on calls to define the work to be done by the Party's primary organisations in greater detail and with greater clarity. "The rules are not a letter of instruction," he noted. "We need only principled political and ideological reference points and then let Party organisations act independently."

Gorbachev called the provision about leaving

the Party lame. Of course, the Party is a voluntary organisation and each and every member is entitled to leave it, but the Party should not be turned into "a communicating courtyard."

In closing, Gorbachev noted that many speakers expressed "great dissatisfaction with the way we act at the present historic phase in the development of society and the Party." This is why "there is no time to lose. Not years, not even months but weeks count for much. This is the reason why it is necessary to work with due force in order to consolidate the Party and ensure a good atmosphere in which to hold a Congress which will be of momentous importance for the Party and, on the strength of the role it plays, for the fate of perestroika and entire society," Gorbachev stressed.



Report on plenary meeting

THE report on the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, which ended in Moscow on March 16, shows how heated the discussion was regarding the items on its agenda. It showed that the views of Central Committee members are far from identical. Often they are not even close.

The plenary meeting held three sessions – on March 11, 14 and 16, which dealt with different problems. The first session discussed articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution and amendments to it.

All speakers without exception pointed to the complexity of the situation in the Party, society and the country. Some of them blamed those "who are trying to knock the steering wheel of perestroika out of the hands of the Party." Others said that "the Central Committee and primarily the Politburo and the Secretariat" did not

take appropriate measures to put into practice clear resolutions of the 27th Party Congress.

Some speakers pointed to the signs showing that the crisis of confidence in the Party had aggravated during the perestroika years and said that it was necessary to stop the deterioration of the Party's prestige. Others categorically disagreed with them and said that the Party's prestige had been undermined by many years of the personality cult and the stagnation period and that now, by leading perestroika, the Party is clearing itself and is restoring its good name.

Some speakers expressed the idea that "life is putting forward new demands to Party leaders," that at present determination and persistence are not the most important things needed by a political leader, that today it is more important for him to be able to listen to and assess various points of view, to look for consensus without losing his bearings.

All speakers at the plenary meeting supported the abolition or revision of articles 6 and 7 of the USSR Constitution, but opinions divided over the recording in the Constitution of the emerging multi-party system. Most speakers believe that the Communist Party should be on equal terms with other parties, which have emerged or will emerge in the USSR. Some Central Committee members believe, however, that the Soviet Communist Party should be specially mentioned in the Constitution as a "political ruling force."

As for other parties, most Central Committee members spoke in favour of recording their right to pursue a policy by all legally acceptable means. It was also proposed at the plenary meeting to permit the activities only for those parties which do not set themselves the task to change the Soviet constitutional system and which are not going to struggle for power. Some speakers suggested that a USSR law about political parties should be drawn up and adopted.

At the session, which nominated a candidate to the post of the President from the Soviet Communist Party, all speakers were unanimous in their opinion. They nominated General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev as candidate for the country's top post. □

President Gorbachev – a short biography

The following is a short biography of Mikhail Gorbachev, who was elected President of the USSR on March 14 and took office on March 15:

Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev was born on March 2, 1931 in the village of Privolnoye, the Krasnogvardeisky district of Stavropol territory, to a peasant family.

Starting in his 13th year, he periodically worked on a collective farm. At the age of 15, he worked as a grain harvester operator assistant at a machine and tractor station and combined work in the fields with studies.

In 1955, Gorbachev graduated from the Law Department of Moscow State University and in 1967 from the Extra-Mural Economic Department of the Stavropol Agricultural Institute.

After graduating from university, he worked in Stavropol territory, where he began his law career but was soon promoted to work in the Komsomol.

He worked as a deputy head of the Propagan-

da and Agitation Department of the Komsomol Territory Committee, First Secretary of the Komsomol Stavropol City Committee, Second and then First Secretary of the Komsomol Territory Committee.

In March 1962, he was nominated to the post of Party Secretary of the Stavropol Territorial-Production Collective-and-State Farm Agency, and in December of the same year he was endorsed as head of the Party Organisational department of the CPSU Territory Committee.

In September 1966, Gorbachev was elected First Secretary of the Stavropol City Party Committee. From August 1968, he served as the Second Secretary of the Stavropol Territory Party Committee, and in April 1970 he was elected its First Secretary.

Gorbachev has been a member of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee since 1971. He was a delegate to the 22nd, 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th Party Congresses and the 19th Party Conference.

In 1978, he was elected Secretary of the CPSU

Central Committee and in 1979 an alternate member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee. In October 1980, he was promoted to full membership of the Politburo of the Party Central Committee.

Gorbachev has been General Secretary of the CPSU central Committee since 1985, a Deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet and a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. He has been Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet since 1988. He is also the Chairman of the USSR Defence Council.

Gorbachev was elected Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet at the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR on May 25, 1989.

He was elected President of the Union of Soviet Republics at the Third (extraordinary) Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR on March 14, 1990.

Gorbachev has been decorated with several state awards: three Orders of Lenin, the Orders of the October Revolution and the Red Banner of Labour, the Order of the Badge of Honour, and several medals. □

Soviet Government Statement on Lithuania

Here follows the full text of the Soviet Government Statement on Lithuania: THE extraordinary Third Congress of Soviet People's Deputies recognised as invalid the regulatory enactments, passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, on the 'Restoration of an Independent Lithuanian State' as well as on the annulment in republican territory of the effect of the Constitution of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Constitution of the USSR.

Information coming from the republic shows that plans are being urgently elaborated there to change the status of enterprises subordinated to the union authorities, privatise state-owned enterprises, introduce independent currency, create customs services and the like. In this way, steps are being taken to undermine links between the economy of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and the country's national economic complex. Consequences of these actions can be pernicious for the general socio-economic situation in the republic and the situation of the working people and other strata of the population.

Attaching great importance to the stable functioning of the economy of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and first of all of the installa-

tions connected with the life-support of the population, the USSR Government draws attention to the danger of disrupting the existing links between Lithuanian enterprises and enterprises of other union republics. Normal economic relations require strict observance of mutual contract obligations to supply all kinds of commodities and to fulfil production programmes for 1990.

The Government of the USSR stresses that all installations and projects located in Lithuanian territory and subordinated to the centre are property of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. Their status, specialisation and conditions of activity cannot be changed by unilateral decisions of republican authorities. In this connection all standing bodies of the USSR Council of Ministers, ministries and departments of the USSR have been instructed not to enter into any negotiations about the transfer of enterprises and organisations subordinated to them to the jurisdiction of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Administration of these installations which are part of operating atomic power plants and other vital installations which are part of federal property, the government has entrusted respective agencies with radically stepping up the protection of the mentioned installations.

The Government of the USSR has made it incumbent on the ministries of railways, sea fleet, fisheries and civil aviation to ensure the continuous operation of federal transportation

and communication lines in the interests of the population of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as of the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation, and transit conveyance through the port of Klaipeda.

The USSR Central Customs Administration, the USSR Interior Ministry and the KGB have been instructed to ensure the appropriate customs order on the territory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The USSR Council of Ministers warns that the adoption by republican authorities of decisions capable of disrupting the unity of the country's finance and credit system and foreign economic relations of the USSR will be viewed as contravening the effective legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the interests of union republics and the union as a whole.

Viewing with understanding problems of Lithuania's political, social, economic, national and cultural development, respecting the desire of its people to renew society and strengthen the republic's sovereignty, the Soviet Government believes that the resolution of these problems is possible only under conditions of the strict observance of laws of the USSR, taking into account the mutual interests of the peoples of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and other republics.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR
Nikolai Ryzhkov

Spokesman sets out Soviet stand on German question

"WE respect the expression of free will of the citizens of the German Democratic Republic, a sovereign state which is an ally of ours. Respecting this right we expect that the lawful interests of the Soviet Union, European stability, security and co-operation in the broad context of the development of the European Process will also be respected," Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov said at a briefing on March 19, expressing the Soviet Union's view on the GDR parliamentary elections on Sunday, March 18.

In this connection the spokesman set out the Soviet stand on the German question. Germans have a right to unity, he said, but they should take into account the rights and interests of others. The framework for this is provided by the quadripartite agreements and decisions. The idea of self-determination and of the construction of German unity can be implemented only in a way which would ensure that Germany would never threaten peace again.

The German question should be resolved in such a way as to consolidate positive peaceful tendencies and not to destroy them, Gerasimov said.

Since the process of rapprochement and unification of the two German states is inseparable from the all-European process, there is a need for a stage-by-stage democratic approach. Unity is to be achieved through the stages of shaping mechanisms for co-operation of the new Germany with East and West.

Gerasimov emphasised that a united Germany should not enter NATO. This would disrupt

the military-strategic balance in Europe which is the basis of stability and security, mutual confidence and co-operation.

The Soviet side favours the following road: the military-political status of a united Germany should be combined with the new European structures of security and the stages of its shaping should be synchronised with the stages of the development of these structures, Gerasimov said.

The spokesman said that the military potential of a united Germany should be in keeping with the principle of reasonable sufficiency and measures for its demilitarisation should apply to both parts of Germany.

The Soviet side believes that European realities call for a fresh look at security matters, for overcoming the inertia of approaches based on the existence of alliances, and consideration for European security on the basis of joint efforts and combining concepts.

The Soviet Union believes this can be achieved through a gradual transformation of the military-political alliances and the establishment of a political dialogue and contacts between them.

The European summit planned for the end of the year is to play an important role in this process. German affairs will be on its agenda, Gerasimov said.

Post-war German frontiers should be unconditionally sealed by international law, Gerasimov said. The recognition of frontiers should equally apply to the Oder-Neisse frontier, and to the fact that what was formerly East Prussia became part of Poland and the Soviet Union.

It is very important to conclude a peace treaty with Germany, the spokesman said. The obligation to conclude such a treaty was registered in West Germany's agreements with three Western powers, and in the treaties of the Ger-

man Democratic Republic with the Soviet Union.

These treaty obligations should be fulfilled prior to German reunification and international recognition of this fact by all the states concerned.

Until then, the rights and responsibility of the four powers remain valid. Its basis is the formula recorded in the Potsdam Agreement about the prerogatives of the four powers to take measures now and in the future so that Germany should never threaten its neighbours or world peace again.

Gerasimov said that it was necessary to guard against the danger of the revival of Nazism in Germany. A united Germany should be obliged to observe these provisions of the Potsdam Agreement, he said.

The German question is being discussed not only in the Warsaw Treaty framework, Gerasimov said. A special negotiating mechanism on external aspects of the construction of German unity, negotiations of the six, has been created.

The first meeting of the six at expert level was held in Bonn recently, Gerasimov said. It discussed organisational matters and it was agreed that meetings of experts from the six will be conducted alternately in West Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

The next meeting will be held in Berlin after the new GDR government is formed. It is important that questions in the framework of the six should be decided by consensus, Gerasimov said.

Gerasimov positively assessed the fact that the six took into consideration Poland's wish to participate in the discussion of the matters having a bearing on its interests.

There is an understanding that the arrangements reached by the six should be recorded by leaders of 35 countries participating in the Helsinki Process, he said. □

Soviet Foreign Minister on Soviet policy in Africa

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and Foreign Minister of the USSR, in an interview with a Novosti correspondent on the eve of his visit to seven African countries, noted that Namibia's independence, to be proclaimed on March 21, would crown the historic anti-colonial struggle of the African peoples, struggle in which they invariably felt the sympathy, solidarity and support of the Soviet people.

In the view of Shevardnadze, the Namibian experience had shown that the most knotty problems could be successfully solved by political means if the efforts of the sides concerned and the world community were united by a common goal and free from any attempts at interfering with the choice made by the people of a particular country.

In describing present Soviet-African relations, the Soviet Foreign Minister emphasised that new political thinking made it possible to build equitable relations without ideological excesses, overcome ideological stereotypes and avoid dogmatism. As a result, this policy became both more dynamic and more honest and open. He particularly noted that the Soviet Union main-

tained relations of solidarity and vigorous co-operation with southern African countries, which are at the cutting edge of struggle against the apartheid system, and that these relations would keep developing.

In that connection Shevardnadze declared that the Soviet Union was prepared to establish diplomatic relations with Namibia and to develop extensive and mutually advantageous co-operation with it. Soviet foreign policy horizons were widening, with dialogue being stepped up with such countries as Senegal, the Ivory Coast and some other countries.

As regards the conflicts in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa, Shevardnadze declared for their political settlement and said that the Soviet Union was actively working in that direction.

In reply to the correspondent's question about a possible change of the Soviet stand on South Africa, the Soviet minister welcomed the process of change in South Africa and reaffirmed Moscow's readiness to promote, especially on a multilateral basis, the process of that country's transition to democracy. But at the same time, Shevardnadze said that it was too early to speak of the irreversibility of the movement towards dialogue in South Africa, and the USSR, therefore, considered it appropriate to keep international pressure on Pretoria.

Touching on the forthcoming negotiations with the leaders of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nigeria, Shevardnadze stressed that he would like to discuss

with them his assessments of key problems of our time and approaches to their solution, consider the rapidly changing situation in the southern African region and examine development prospects for bilateral relations.

In conclusion, Shevardnadze emphasised that the world today was not some mutually excluding formations (East, West, North and South), but one whole. According to him, 'rapprochement' between the USSR and Western Europe and the US was not its 'distancing' from the developing world, from Africa.

To normalise East-West relations, Shevardnadze believes, and to overcome political and military confrontation between them was without doubt beneficial for the developing countries. With East-West confrontation preserved, it would be impossible to expect genuine worldwide efforts badly needed to find a way out of the grave economic crisis that has hit many African countries on the threshold of the third millennium, a crisis which – failing coordinated moves – threatens to escalate into a global catastrophe.

Shevardnadze noted that the system of Soviet co-operation with the Third World was now being revised, the aim being to rid it of ideological strings. Partnership, believes Shevardnadze, should be mutually advantageous, and aid, effective. That is an axiom of modern international economic ties and the future lay with new and progressive forms of co-operation. □

(Novosti)

Eduard Shevardnadze's speech in Luanda

ON March 19 Eduard Shevardnadze attended a dinner in his honour in Luanda, the capital of the People's Republic of Angola (PRA). Eduard Shevardnadze, is currently in Angola on a working visit.

In a speech in reply to the opening address by Pedro de Castro van Dunem, the Angolan Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze said: "Having arrived in the land of Angola today for the first time I feel the direct connection between our two countries and peoples and the words that have been said here have strengthened this feeling."

"Angola and the Soviet Union are brought together by the common ideals of peace, freedom, democracy and social progress," he said.

"This visit is to reaffirm our commitment to these ideals as well as our two countries' desire to develop friendship and co-operation," he added.

"We know from our own experience that it is not easy to build a new way of life and are well aware of the importance of efforts being made by the MPLA-Workers' Party and the Angolan State to strengthen national unity, develop democracy and implement an extensive programme for financial and economic recovery.

"We are well aware that the goals that have been set can only be achieved under conditions of peace and fruitful economic co-operation," Shevardnadze said.

"We cannot but be gratified with the qualitative breakthrough in efforts to bring about a settlement of the situation in south western Africa, the breakthrough achieved as a result of active co-operation between the Soviet Union and Angola, as well as Cuba, the United States and South Africa.

"As a result of agreements to this effect signed in New York in 1988, the way was opened to decolonise Namibia and favourable prerequisites were created for the external security of Angola.

"The Soviet Union firmly supports the Angolan Government's consistent course towards establishing peace in the country," Shevardnadze said.

He voiced hope that the new situation taking shape in the region would help the Angolan people resolve their internal problems by political means.

Shevardnadze stated the Soviet Union's readiness to refine co-operation with Angola to make it more mutually beneficial.

Shevardnadze invited Pedro de Castro van Dunem to visit the Soviet Union. "Our meeting and talks, frank and comradely as usual, are serving to strengthen traditional friendly relations between the two countries," he emphasised. □

Nikolai Ryzhkov holds talk with Bulgarian counterpart

SOVIET Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and his Bulgarian counterpart Andrei Lukanov on March 19 discussed a broad range of questions of Soviet-Bulgarian co-operation in new conditions, as well as topical international problems. Lukanov was staying in the Soviet Union on a working visit at the invitation of the Soviet leadership.

The sides agreed on specific ways and possibilities for overcoming difficulties that arose during the implementation by both states of their obligations for mutual deliveries of goods. Special attention was given to problems of a transition to a new system of settling accounts with the use of freely convertible currency on the basis of world prices.

The sides expressed the need for striving vigorously to conduct the radical restructuring of multilateral co-operation within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in the spirit of the decisions of the 45th Sofia session of the CMEA, bringing it closer to the conditions of the world market and deepening mutually advantageous ties with the European community.

The negotiations confirmed a high degree of mutual understanding of the sides on questions discussed, the consistency of the course of the Soviet Union and Bulgaria at the deepening of friendly co-operation between the two countries and at upgrading their interaction on the international scene. □

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Soviet Foreign Ministry Statement on Germany

THE process of rapprochement between West Germany and the German Democratic Republic that started recently and the arising real perspective for German unification again brought the German question to the focus of world politics.

Public attention is concentrated on such key elements as the conclusion of a peace treaty, the military-political status of a future Germany, its borders, the preservation of stability and balance of forces in Europe, and the further development of the European process, including the creation of new structures of collective security.

Because of the scope of these tasks, each of them, or their complex can be solved only on a coordinated basis.

In view of this a conference in Ottawa decided to create a negotiating mechanism, consisting of the two German states, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States and France.

In the framework of that mechanism all the participating sides will be acting in accordance with the character and the volume of their rights and responsibility.

This, naturally, does not preclude the participation in some or other form of any other European state when questions of interest to it, related to a German peace settlement, are being discussed.

Special attention should be given to synchronising rapprochement and possible unification of the two German states with the all-European process.

Work of such scope, approached with due sense of responsibility cannot be carried out at one go even by efforts of many participants.

Therefore, it can only be stage-by-stage development, without artificial stepping up and without adopting an attitude that time is running out for the construction of German unity. Properly speaking, such is the approach of the overwhelming majority of the states concerned.

It seems in Bonn they agree with this. But in reality certain West German circles continue their efforts to keep a number of possible participants in German settlement away from this process and face the international community, including the four powers, with accomplished facts.

Some politicians from the Christian Democrat Union and Christian Social Union see the way to achieve this by applying article 23 of West Germany's basic law, which opens the possibility for the annexation of the German Democratic Republic to West Germany by separate parts, separate lands, or as a whole. In other words, it is thought to annex one German state by the other.

In this case in Bonn they apparently intend to deprive the German Democratic Republic of its sovereign prerogatives to uphold as an equal partner the rights and interests of citizens of the German Democratic Republic, their social gains and the value which were created by persistent work in the period of the republic's existence.

West Germany's practical policy with regard to the German Democratic Republic is in keeping with this attitude. Through massive interference in the republic's internal affairs and encroachment on its economic, property and public structures they would like to take it to the brink of economic chaos.

People in the GDR and not only there declared that this variant would affect vital interests of citizens of the GDR and impose on them the main burden and costs of adjusting to some or other socio-economic and political conditions and orders.

West German taxpayers would also have to make considerable sacrifices.

And what about West Germany's commitments under international agreements? If West Germany intends to apply them to the German Democratic Republic, a military-political status of a united Germany, that is its inclusion in NATO, will be decided.

What is more, article 23 of West Germany's basic law envisages the possibility of making territorial claims on other states, and this directly affects foreign policy aspects.

From whatever viewpoint the use of article 23 is considered, it would be unjustifiable and unacceptable. Matters of truly historic importance for the whole of Europe cannot be decided on the basis of the constitution or other laws of West Germany, cannot be decided by Germans alone.

It should not be forgotten that the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain and the United States preserve their rights and responsibility for Germany as a whole under the Potsdam Agreement. They must ensure that the threat of war should never come from German soil again. It is their direct duty, together with West Germany and the German Democratic Republic, to implement this fundamental provision by reliable guarantees in the context of international law.

It should also be remembered that the Potsdam Agreement proceeds from the premise that German statehood must be restored within a democratic framework, that the procedure and conditions for the unification of the two German states will be decided on the basis of an arrangement of all the parties concerned, first of all, the four powers.

This fundamental provision was also recorded in West Germany's treaties with three Western powers and the treaty of the German Democratic Republic with the Soviet Union. Under these agreements the four powers retain their rights and responsibility with regard to the whole of Germany. This applies also to West Berlin with its special status determined by the quadripartite agreement.

Mutually acceptable and lasting solution to

complex problems of German settlement can be ensured not by the engulfing of one German state by the other, not by hasty unilateral actions prompted by circumstantial considerations, but by coordinated effort of all the parties concerned.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of European states are guided by the preservation and consolidation of stability in Europe on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act.

Many people in the German Democratic Republic and in West Germany are vitally interested in this approach. They are aware that a future Germany will be able to assume a worthy place and be trusted by the international community only if it makes its entire potential serve peace and co-operation in Europe. The lessons of the Second World War oblige everyone affected by that tragedy to do everything so that it should never be repeated.

The Soviet Union's stand in German affairs is motivated first of all by its sincere wish to live in peace and accord with the German people and other European peoples and to make a tangible constructive contribution to European peace structures and to ensuring reliable collective security. □

Soviet military delegation visits London

DEPUTY chief of the Soviet Armed Forces General Staff Colonel-General B.A. Omelichev, who is leading a Soviet military delegation to Britain, met on March 19 the first deputy chief of the British Defence Headquarters General R. Vincent and other British Defence Ministry officials.

During the conversation the sides discussed bilateral contacts between the Soviet Union and Great Britain along military lines and some aspects of building the armed forces in the two countries, the military-political situation in the world and in Europe, including the German question.

The Soviet military leader visited the Land Forces Staff College at Camberley. He delivered a lecture on the Soviet Armed Forces after the reduction of conventional weapons and armed forces in Europe. After the lecture he answered questions from cadets.

In the afternoon Omelichev met British Defence Secretary Tom King. □

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