

Mikhail Gorbachev's televised address on the Union referendum

On February 7 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev made the following address to the Soviet people on central television:

I would like to talk to you on a matter of crucial importance for the whole country – the forthcoming referendum on the future of our Union. The referendum is to be held in accordance with a decision of the Fourth Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The order of holding the referendum and its date have been set by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Soviet people are to answer one question on March 17. This is how this question has been worded by the Supreme Soviet: "Do you think that it is necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal and sovereign republics in which the rights and freedoms of every citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, will be fully guaranteed?" The answer should be either yes or no. Each and all of us should make a choice.

The supreme authorities of many republics have by now adopted decisions on the preparations for and holding of the referendum. The others are to make a decision in a very short while. Regrettably, the Lithuanian and Estonian authorities have embarked on the course of ignoring the decisions of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. They are attempting to replace the referendum with a public opinion poll. It is crystal clear that such opinion polls are inconsistent with the law. This is directly emphasised in the President's corresponding decree.

A natural question arises: why are the leaders of these republics, who claim that they act under the flag of freedom and democracy and who time and again refer to the opinion of the people, attempting, under a false pretext, to avoid the referendum which could establish the genuine will of the people on the cardinal question for the future of the country?

I think that in the obtaining situation the Supreme Soviet of the USSR should do the utmost so that each citizen is able to express his or her will concerning the future of our Union.

The upcoming referendum is the first ever in our country, which by itself is a tremendous achievement of perestroika. I urge all of you, my dear countrymen, to take part in this national referendum.

Preparing for the referendum and thinking over one's position, every one of us should bear in mind that the issue at hand is the fate of our state and each of our peoples, our common destiny. A great deal has been said on this subject in the past few months. Political movements and parties have made their documents public. I want to emphasise in particular the declarations on sovereignty adopted by the supreme legislative authorities of some republics.

Although debates on this issue go on, we can pretty surely state right now that the Soviet people are for the preservation of the Union as a common asset of our peoples, and their reliable support. They favour, just as resolutely, the renewal of the Union so that all the people living in it could develop freely and feel that they are the masters of their own fate.

A general outline of a renewed federal state, as it should be, is given in the draft Treaty of Union. This draft has been published in the press. What is the most important thing in the concept of renewing the Union?

It is first and foremost the sovereignty of the republics, the subjects of the federation, which ensures the right of each of people to self-determination and self-government.

It is also the joint participation of the republics in the exercise of the federal terms of reference, i.e., all the powers they are delegating to the federal bodies of power and management. Sovereign republics need a viable federation which can really uphold common interests.

At a recent session of the Council of the Federation we discussed with the leaders of the republics a question which is probably of the greatest importance – the division of the terms of reference. We are to hold similar discussions on other issues as well.

Taking into account the proposals expressed, the plenipotentiary representatives of the republics and experts are continuing their work on the text of the Treaty. This is an extremely responsible undertaking, which will require a certain amount of time. But there is an understanding already now that this matter cannot be postponed for much longer.

The absence of such a document is negatively affecting the economic situation, the functioning of the executive authority, the activities of the law-enforcement bodies, and the possibilities for international cooperation. In the final account, it adversely tells on the living conditions of the people.

Now back to the issue of the referendum. I have already said in one of my recent statements that a realistic attitude, free from illusions, convinces us that it is practically impossible for our peoples to go their separate ways after all they have come through together and built up together. What are the grounds for this conclusion of mine?

By virtue of history, a great many peoples, big and little, living on the vast expanse of Siberia, the flatlands and steppes of the Far East and Central Asia, in the valleys of the Caucasus and the Pamirs and on the Baltic, Caspian and

Black Sea shores, have united around Russia. A huge Eurasian state with the world's largest territory and a large multi-language population has taken shape over centuries.

To a large extent this is the result of complex processes that have taken shape over centuries, arising from the assimilation of new territories and from population shifts. Some of these territories were acquired by conquest, as has happened throughout the world, on all continents. Many peoples voluntarily allied themselves with Russia, seeking protection from outside aggression, or to gain access to a vast market and to one of the world's centres of science and culture.

This was largely facilitated by the openness of the Russian nation, its willingness to cooperate on equal terms with various other peoples, its benevolent attitude towards their traditions, and willingness to share its own.

There is now intensive discussion surrounding the union of peoples that formed after the October Revolution, and what it has given us. But in this debate, in the course of criticism of that which truly deserves criticism and condemnation, in the course of analysing the real problems that have accumulated over the years, the positive changes made to the lives of our peoples are blindly rejected.

Yet so much has been achieved! Tens of peoples who have not had, or have for various reasons lost, their own statehood, have received an opportunity to create it. All the republics now possess industrial, research and development and human resources bases, and have accumulated rich experience in organising their own affairs. The Union made it possible to repulse the fascist threat to the independence of all peoples, to enjoy the benefits of mutual understanding and cooperation within a huge economic zone.

There is every justification to say that in this country a unique civilisation has taken shape, the outcome of many centuries of joint effort by all our peoples. And this also is vital in order to understand what we are now going through.

First and foremost, we must take account of the fact that virtually all of our republics are multinational. Millions of people are descended from mixed marriages; 75 million, that is, one in four, live outside of, let us say, "their own" republics. It would be madness to attempt to destroy this natural result of the flow of history.

Yet in a number of republics attempts are being made to turn members of non-indigenous nationalities into second-class citizens, into outcasts, and in the long run force them to leave. Think, comrades, about this: in peacetime, refugees have appeared in our country. And not in their tens or hundreds, but thousands, blameless victims of ethnic strife, political hot-headedness and uncontrolled emotion. Separatism threatens to tear millions of people away from their historical homelands, from the land where their ancestors are buried, and to disrupt the existing pattern of life.

Let us take the economy. It is glaringly obvious that all republics and regions of the country are economically dependent upon each other. This is the result of decades, perhaps even centuries, of sharing and cooperation in labour.

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Mikhail Gorbachev's statement on the Gulf crisis

A statement by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was circulated in Moscow on February 8. It says:

"The developments in the Gulf are taking an ever more alarming and dramatic turn. The war, the largest during the past several decades, is gaining in scope. The number of casualties, including among the civilian population, is growing. Combat operations have already inflicted enormous material damage. Whole countries – first Kuwait, now Iraq, then, perhaps, other countries – are facing the threat of catastrophic destruction. The discharge of an enormous amount of oil into the Gulf could develop into an extremely grave ecological disaster.

"The Soviet leadership reiterates its commitment, in principle, to the UN Security Council resolutions, which reflect the will of the majority of countries and the hopes of nations for new world order which would rule out aggression and infringements on other countries' territory and natural resources.

"However, the logic of the military operations and the character of the military actions are creating the threat of going beyond the mandate defined by those resolutions.

"Provocative attempts to expand the scope of the war, to draw Israel and other countries into it, thus giving the conflict another destructive dimension, an Arab-Israeli one, are also ex-

tremely dangerous.

"Judging by some statements by politicians and those made by influential mass media organs, attempts are being made to condition people, by both sides in the conflict, to the idea of the possibility and permissibility of the use of weapons of mass destruction. If this happened, the whole of the world politics, and the world community in general, would be shaken to the foundation.

"The development of events connected with this war evokes great concern in Soviet society and among the country's leadership, the more so that it is taking place close to the Soviet Union's borders.

"The only conclusion comes from historic responsibility, a common sense and humaneness – to put to use all the levers of a political settlement on the basis of the Security Council resolutions.

"At this critical moment I appeal publicly to the Iraqi president, urging him to analyse again what is at stake for his country, to display realism which would make it possible to take the path of a reliable and just peaceful settlement. I shall immediately send my personal representative to Baghdad to meet President Hussein.

"By taking these steps, we want, acting jointly with Arab and other Moslem countries, with European and Asian countries, with the United States in the first place, and with all the permanent members of the Security Council, not only to help overcome the state of war as soon as possible, but also to begin preparing a solid and equitable security system in that region, which is so important for the whole world.

"This security system should include, of course, the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem. The countries of the region should play a decisive role in this process. Iraq should hold a worthy place in the post-war settlement. Its people cannot bear responsibility for the past developments, they deserve sympathy, compassion and support.

"I repeat that in order to make a breakthrough to peace in the Near and Middle East, it is necessary to put out the flame of war in the Gulf as soon as possible. This is the most important thing now." □

Primakov arrives in Baghdad

Academician Yevgeny Primakov, personal envoy of the Soviet president, arrived in Iraq on February 11. On his way to Baghdad he made a brief stopover in Tehran.

At Tehran airport Primakov was met by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Maleki. They exchanged views on the current development of the situation in the Gulf.

The Iran news agency's report on the meeting points out that Primakov welcomed the Iranian president's peace initiative and emphasised the need to make diplomatic efforts to end the war and prevent further manpower and material losses.

"We want our diplomatic efforts to be in conformity with and in coordination with Iranian efforts," Iran quotes Primakov as saying.

Primakov said that "Soviet foreign policy principles repudiate the partitioning of Iraq, which was proposed by some parties", Iran points out. □

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It only takes one link within this integral system to break down, a few enterprises to cease work, and in the wake of this tens and hundreds of others also stop and then the entire country comes to a standstill.

The Soviet Union possesses a vast scientific and cultural potential. This spiritual achievement is also the result of joint creativity. Those who decide to renounce this cultural powerhouse, clearly, stand to lose a great deal.

One of the advantages of a large federal state is the ability to ensure full and reliable security for one's country. And in any case, who is going to divide up the nuclear-missile, strategic potential of the Soviet Armed Forces?

By virtue of its political weight and prestige, the Soviet Union is now a powerful player on the international stage, justifiably called a superpower. Its policies influence all the processes taking place in the world. Enormous effort was needed to acquire such influence and this can be so quickly squandered, thrown to the winds. Let me add that, with the exception of unreconstructed reactionaries and militarists, nobody in the world wants to weaken the role of the Soviet Union in international affairs.

These conclusions, dear comrades, form the basis of my firm conviction that our Union must be retained and profoundly reinvigorated.

A renewed federal state, a federation of sovereign republics, means guaranteed security, a vast market, powerful science and culture.

The Soviet Union is a world power, playing one of the key roles in the establishment of a new international order that is being built upon justice and solidarity.

The Soviet Union represents a reliable future for all our peoples, for me and you, for our children and grandchildren.

Pravda, February 7. In full.

Presidential spokesman on Primakov-Hussein meeting

It is planned that there will be a meeting between the Soviet president's representative Yevgeni Primakov and Saddam Hussein on February 12, the Soviet president's spokesman Vitali Ignatenko told a briefing at the Soviet Foreign Ministry Press Centre in Moscow.

The spokesman said that "nobody can now suppose how the meeting will proceed, but its concept was set out in Mikhail Gorbachev's statement".

"We may say for sure that Academician Primakov has not brought any proposal which would run counter to the UN Security Council's resolutions," Ignatenko stressed.

He also said that they key aim of the Baghdad visit by the presidential representative is to try to convince Iraq of the need to fulfil the UN Security Council resolutions.

Moscow supports "any initiative, which will make Saddam submit to the Security Council resolutions," the spokesman continued. "We are sure that we are understood correctly."

Ignatenko said that the main Soviet position on the Gulf conflict, "which lies in the firm support for the UN resolutions, remains unchanged".

Replying to reporters, Ignatenko stressed that "Primakov's task, based on Gorbachev's statement (on February 8), has no mysteries. We have not brought to Baghdad any secret protocols or secret agreements. Everything will be

done openly".

He added that on Gorbachev's instructions "Primakov was instructed to ask the Iraqi from the American CBS TV company, who were lost in the area of combat operations.

"Primakov was instructed to ask the Iraqi leaders about their fate and, if possible, to help them," Ignatenko said. □

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Valentin Pavlov's interview with *Trud*

The exchange of 50- and 100-rouble banknotes carried out in the Soviet Union was "of protective, not confiscatory character," Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov told the newspaper *Trud* on February 12.

He said that a large-scale injection of banknotes was being prepared in the Soviet Union. With this end in view, Soviet banknotes of large denomination were bought up on a mass scale, with operations involving banking associations in the Soviet Union and a number of private banks from Austria, Switzerland and Canada.

"I shall not name the banks, although I know specific addresses," Pavlov emphasised. He believes that "the purpose of the operation to inject a huge amount of money was to bring about an artificial hyperinflation. Such actions have been carried out in many regions of the world when the aim was "to change a political system or overthrow unwelcome political leaders."

Describing the financial and economic situation in which the Soviet Union would have

found itself had such action succeeded. Pavlov said that the country would have been threatened with the loss of economic independence and with "a kind of annexation, a quiet and bloodless one".

"The Soviet government has a clear-cut strategy. We want to effect a large-scale economic reform if we are not prevented from doing this by a political frenzy that is threatening to develop into internecine strife," Pavlov said.

The prime minister believes that if political confrontation were "muffled", if only for a period of several months, the ensurance of civil peace and accord in the country would have enabled people to obtain a rouble on which "it would be possible both to buy goods and to travel abroad".

In the opinion of the head of the Soviet government, a renewed union should be preserved as an independent sovereign state. A slackening of statehood in the Soviet Union or loss of independence would signify a predatory exploitation of raw material, manpower and ecological resources. With all the respect for

Western civilisation, there should be no illusions on that score, he said.

Pavlov emphasised that the government is not abandoning the policy of privatisation. "But there should be no question about selling the means of production and fixed assets, created by the work of generations, to money-bags or shadow business dealers. The working man must be the subject of privatisation. This should be effected through people's shares on the basis of a single state property, part of which will be turned into collective property".

Pavlov spoke against the concept of privatising land through buying and selling, and said that a land reform should be carried out only on the basis of individual shares.

Touching upon the problem of international cooperation, Pavlov said "we are open to reputable partners who have serious goals".

The composition of the cabinet ministers is now being finalised, according to Pavlov. A proposal has been made to set up an economic reform council, to be headed by the Prime Minister, in place of the State Commission for Economic Reform, he said. □

Warsaw Treaty to be dismantled — Ignatenko

The Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) member-states have decided that the time has come to dismantle the WTO's military structures. April 1 is expected to be chosen as a target date at a meeting later this month, Soviet presidential spokesman Vitaly Ignatenko told a briefing in Moscow on February 12.

"We believe that such a decision will help attenuate military opposition in Europe and switch from bloc to non-bloc security structures," Ignatenko said. He noted that all this is "prompted by the spirit of the Paris summit and the climate forming in Europe over the past few years".

Ignatenko said the Soviet Union expected "some reaction from the NATO countries".

Speaking about the development of relations between the WTO member-countries, Ignatenko noted that the Soviet Union favoured "actively switching these relations to a bilateral basis". He said "certain coordinating mechanisms will remain, including at the top level".

Ignatenko said he expected that the foreign and defence ministers will sign an agreement in Budapest, leading to the dismantling of the WTO's military structures by April 1. □

TASS COMMENT

The outlook for Eastern European cooperation

By Tass international news analyst Albert Balebanov:

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) is now in the final stages of dissolution. Although a decision to this effect was already taken at the January meeting of the CMEA executive, formally the final say will rest with a CMEA session at the level of the heads of government of the member-states, to be held in Budapest at the end of February.

However, the point now is perhaps not so much to dissolve the CMEA, as to create a fundamentally new organisation, the tentative name of which is the Organisation for International Economic Cooperation (OIEC).

The intention of the forthcoming event is to create such cooperation structures, which would rely on up-to-date norms of international economic cooperation to take the place of the CMEA, which has exhausted its economic possibilities.

Shortly after the new governments took office in the East European countries, some of them began to call for a reorientation of their foreign economic relations towards Western neighbours and for revising the earlier concluded agreements and commitments within the CMEA's framework.

Later on, euphoric statements on that score subsided and then disappeared altogether. This is far from being fortuitous — it was prompted by serious economic calculations.

Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest, and Sofia came to view what had been achieved due to the CMEA in a more sober light and with due respect.

As a result, the talk about eliminating the CMEA was followed by calls to radically reform it and put the pattern of cooperation onto market principles.

Now that the days are numbered before an official decision to dissolve the CMEA, it has become known that the East European member-states of the CMEA have reaffirmed their

interest in going ahead with implementing the overwhelming majority — more than 80 per cent — of the already existing agreements, and in keeping intact more than 20 existing multilateral economic organisations.

It seems that the future OIEC will become not simply a successor to the CMEA, but will also inherit many positive aspects from it, specifically those from the viewpoint of the continuation of flexible cooperation.

It is no secret that this cooperation has been a major feature of the CMEA's activities over four and a half decades. And it has proved impossible to throw this aside by means of one political decision.

This cooperation enabled the CMEA member-states to pool their efforts and to concentrate material and financial resources on the solution of many key national economic problems.

The international division of labour that has historically taken shape within the CMEA framework made all the partners closely interconnected and interdependent. To break this interdependence would in effect put those national economies on the verge of disaster. □

(February 12, Tass)

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THE UNION TREATY REFERENDUM

The view from the republics

THE Soviet republics continue debates about the decision to hold a nationwide referendum on the future of the Union on March 17.

The fourth Congress of Soviet People's Deputies decided that Soviet people would be asked to reply if they considered it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which human rights and freedoms will be guaranteed to each citizen irrespective of nationality.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, in his televised address on February 6, called for active participation in the referendum, stressing that the supreme bodies of state authority in some republics have already decided on preparations for the referendum.

Today, the parliament of the Russian Federation, the largest Soviet republic, decided by a majority to include the question about private land ownership in the poll.

Also today, representatives of political parties and public movements in the parliament of the Ukraine, the second largest Soviet republic, were sharply critical of the formulation of the question in the forthcoming referendum. They wondered if a single "yes" or "no" was enough to express one's attitude to the problem of

federation, sovereignty and human rights.

Most speakers, mainly communists, favoured the preservation of the Union. But they said it must be based on new principles as a union of sovereign states, fully-fledged members of the world and European communities.

The opposition insisted on holding a separate referendum on the fate of the Ukraine as an independent state, to be followed by a referendum on the Union.

Lithuania and Estonia are clearly against the referendum. Their parliaments decided to hold polls on the restoration of their republics' state independence instead.

According to the Estonian parliament, the poll will be recognised as valid if a majority of voters take part. One half of the votes plus one will be enough to make the decision. In other words, the decision will be proclaimed legitimate if a total of 25 per cent plus one of the registered voters cast their ballots in favour.

President Mikhail Gorbachev said in his televised address to the nation that a poll of this kind cannot be recognised as legally sound.

The Latvian parliament has not yet decided on its own poll, although the parliamentary majority, representing the Popular Front, is urging such a poll. Popular Front members are against Latvia's participation in the nationwide referendum. The opposition, holding one-third

of the mandates, supports President Gorbachev's stand and insist on equal access to media outlets for a free presentation of views and positions.

Azerbaijan, which on Wednesday deleted the words "Soviet" and "socialist" from the republic's official name, nevertheless, favours the preservation of the Union as a voluntary and equitable community of sovereign republics, Azerbaijan parliament chairwoman Elmira Kafarova told Tass.

She said that the republic will join the renewed federation on one condition - if the centre pledges to ensure the republic's territorial integrity. □

Results of the poll in Lithuania

THE results of the February 9 poll in Lithuania were formally announced at the session of the republic's parliament in Vilnius on February 11.

Juozas Bulavs, chairman of the republican Election Commission, told the parliament that 84.7 per cent of the voting population had turned up for the polls and 90.47 per cent of these said "yes" in reply to the question: "are you in favour of the Lithuanian state being an independent democratic republic?" A negative answer was given by 6.56 per cent of those polled.

On the basis of these results, the parliament adopted a constitutional law "on the Lithuanian state" proclaiming Lithuania "an independent democratic republic".

The Lithuanian parliament also adopted a declaration "on the equitable participation of the Lithuanian republic in the community of world states." The declaration calls on "all states, their parliaments and governments to take into account the results of the poll which took place on February 9, 1991 and render assistance to Lithuania".

The Socialist Movement for Perestroika in Lithuania, mainly comprising non-Lithuanians, said "the results of the voting in the poll on Lithuanian territory were not consistent with the facts."

The movement said in a statement released on February 11 that its observers had registered "cases of voting irregularities" and that "members of district polling commissions engaged in agitation when issuing polling papers, issuing several ballots to one person and allowed ballots to be cast on behalf of other people."

The statement recalls that the poll in Lithuania was radically at odds with the decision of the fourth Congress of Soviet People's Deputies and the resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet "on the nationwide referendum on the future of the Union."

Earlier, a decree issued by the Soviet President proclaimed the poll in Lithuania "legally invalid."

CPSU politburo on referendum preparations

THE work of Party organisations to prepare and hold a referendum in the USSR on preserving the Soviet Union was discussed on February 6 by the Soviet Communist Party Politburo.

The resolution adopted by the meeting says that the referendum, to be held on March 17, 1991 will undoubtedly be an important political event in the country's history.

The resolution says that the referendum is being prepared at a time when crisis processes have aggravated in the country's economy, in the social and political spheres and inter-ethnic relations. Taking advantage of the situation, various separatist, nationalist and anti-socialist forces exerted themselves in order to impose on people ideas which mean the USSR's disintegration.

People are being urged to stay away from the referendum. Criticism and slander of the Soviet state and the Soviet Communist Party are becoming more acute.

The Politburo holds that such actions should be repulsed by Party organisations and communists.

Party organisations should find methods and ways of effective work on the basis of the Constitution and laws of the USSR to organise and hold a countrywide referendum.

It is necessary to indicate that it is only within a renewed Union that sovereignty of republics and peoples can intensify and assume real content, while the unity of the federal state is a guarantee of all-round development and consolidation of the country's international prestige.

The Politburo urged communists and citizens of the USSR, political parties, movements and public organisations favouring perestroika to show high responsibility at this time of trials for the country, and to pool their efforts to preserve the Soviet Union as a renewed federation of sovereign republics enjoying equal rights. □

Bessmertnykh meets Syrian Foreign Minister

SOVIET Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh and Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass have confirmed at a meeting in Moscow on February 5 their countries' resolute condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Vitali Churkin, Foreign Ministry spokesman told a briefing in Moscow on February 6. Tlass was on a visit to the Soviet Union at the invitation of the USSR Defence Ministry.

At the meeting, the two men pointed out that Iraq's stubborn reluctance to heed the will of the world community, refusal to pull out of Kuwait, and the Iraqi leadership's tough position which does not take account of reality were the prime cause of tragic events in the region, Vitali Churkin continued.

Both sides are deeply concerned by the possible escalation of military actions in the Gulf zone. The Soviet Union and Syria come out in favour of preventing an escalation of the war, fresh casualties and destruction. It is especially important to prevent the current clashes from being transformed into a regional conflict.

The two ministers stressed the need for the earliest political settlement of the Gulf crisis, preceded by Iraq's unequivocal commitment to pull out of Kuwait and fulfil UN Security Council resolutions.

Speaking about the post-crisis prospects, Bessmertnykh and Tlass agreed that, following settlement of the current crisis, urgent measures should be taken to settle other acute problems in the Middle East, primarily the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet Union and Syria were unanimous that "an international conference with the participation of all interested sides, convened under the aegis of the United Nations, is the most reliable way to attain a lasting peace and stability in the region."

The ministers noted with satisfaction the steady development of Soviet-Syrian co-operation, its positive impact on the situation in the Middle East. □

PAGES OF HISTORY

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Questions engendered by the war in the Gulf

By Vadim Zagladin, presidential aide.

Despite the continuation of active hostilities in the Gulf, people are increasingly asking questions more suited to peace time. For example, should the borders of regional countries be changed as a result of war?

I would say that actions taken by decision of the UN Security Council are designed not to change but to restore borders, that is, to liberate Kuwait. On a larger scale, I think that such questions, both in the Middle East and the world over should be settled on the basis of the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

There are a number of acute problems in the Middle East, apart from that of Kuwait. They must be eventually settled, though far from all of them are connected with the war in the Gulf. One such problem concerns the Palestinian state. Another concerns the normalisation of relations between the Arab states and Israel, the settlement of which should take into account the

Work on draft Union Treaty continues

Plenipotentiary representatives of the USSR republics met for their first meeting in the Kremlin on February 8 to continue jointly with the working group, representing the President and the USSR Supreme Soviet, work on the draft union treaty. Representatives of ten republics attended the meeting. Delegates from Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Moldavia were absent.

Opening the meeting, Rafik Nishanov, chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Soviet parliament, stressed that the prerequisites for the transition from the conceptual to a more substantive level of work on the draft had been created.

Speakers at the meeting noted that substantial intellectual studies of various aspects of the draft treaty have appeared over the time that has passed since the draft of a new union treaty was published. The co-ordination of unresolved issues can be continued relying on these studies.

Nishanov emphasised that the latest session of the Federation Council showed greater mutual understanding and the general conviction that the treaty process needs to be accelerated.

It was decided to concentrate efforts on the draft's second section, dealing with the structure of the union, to reach accord here and thus open opportunities for the drastic restructuring of the system of relations between union republics.

This task should be accomplished above all by the plenipotentiary representatives of the republics and the working group representing the country's President and the USSR Supreme Soviet.

The participants co-ordinated further work on the draft, which was expected to continue for the next week. Representatives of the republics and experts will begin the clause-by-clause discussion of issues pertaining to the delineation of competence between the union and subjects of the federation.

After additional study, the draft union treaty will be discussed at a regular meeting of the Federation Council. □

security interests of all the countries and peoples concerned.

As for the problem of the Kurds, Kendal Nezan, director of the Paris-based Institut Kurde, has told me that it concerns above all the guarantee of all human rights for Kurds. He said that 85 per cent of Kurdish territory in Iraq has been turned into scorched land. This is inadmissible.

The international community is discussing security structures for the Middle East that will preclude the appearance of regimes which, like Hussein's regime, would strive to expand by means of violence.

In general, the peoples themselves should choose their regimes. But it is clear that the Soviet Union favours democratic and peace-loving regimes.

At the same time, the world community can do much to preclude expansionism, in particular violent expansionism, without interfering in the internal affairs of nations in the region.

I think that the establishment of a safe peace in the Middle East (apart from the acute problems which we discussed above) calls, first, for all regional countries to pledge not to use weapons of mass destruction. Second, to agree on the realisation of the principle of defence sufficiency based on purely defensive armed

Mikhail Gorbachev meets Roland Dumas

PRESIDENT Mikhail Gorbachev met with French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas on February 12. Their conversation was marked by mutual understanding characteristic of people who have done much to improve Soviet-French relations and are confident that these relations are of major importance for the two countries, Europe and world politics.

The conversation continued the exchange of views which began in recent letters exchanged by Gorbachev and French President Francois Mitterrand.

Gorbachev devoted most of the time to a detailed analysis of the essence and extreme complexity of the transition processes in the Soviet Union, the nature and purpose of measures taken by the Soviet government and the president to preserve, strengthen and develop perestroika, above all in the economic sphere and in reforming the union on democratic principles.

The president focused on recent suspicions and inventions alleging that the Soviet leadership was going back on its reforms and returning to totalitarianism. Specific cases were cited, which revealed the actual scale of the crisis, the superficial and biased interpretation of which in the west is detrimental to the new international relations, especially in Europe, which gave rise to so many hopes.

Gorbachev and Dumas favoured full-scale implementation of the ideas and principles of the new European Charter. This has acquired special significance in connection with the war in the Gulf, the consequences of which call for the highest sense of responsibility of all parties for a fair settlement in the Middle and Near East, a region of major importance for the world.

An agreement was reached to maintain permanent contacts between the two countries at the presidential and ministerial levels. □

forces, which is being applied in Europe. And third, to change the structure of arms exports to the region (or better still, to any region of the world) and to reduce them in accordance with the principle of defence sufficiency.

In short, the task is to create a regional security system for the Middle East. Can such a structure be created without the participation of one or several major powers? Should it be a purely Arab system?

To begin with, though the region is populated mostly by Arab nations, it also has non-Arab states, in particular Israel, which have an equal right to participate in the creation of a security system. This is natural, because a security system cannot be created without their participation.

I think that the major powers, above all the UN security council members, and probably some other, in particular European, countries should take part in the creation of such a system. It will probably need UN guarantees. In general, the role of the UN, including its role in the solution of the problems of the Middle East, should grow.

And lastly, I believe that the war in the Gulf and its consequences will affect not only the Middle East. It will change the world, and it will become our common task to draw lessons from the current tragedy and to find the courage to proceed together towards a reliable, guaranteed system of global security, a new peaceful world order. □

Novosti, 11 January

Presidential spokesman on Baker's remarks

Soviet foreign ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin expressed bewilderment at the statement by US Secretary of State James Baker on the situation in the Soviet Union.

Asked by a Tass correspondent on February 8 to comment on Baker's statement made at the US Congress, Churkin said the following:

"We calmly read the statement by the Secretary of State. But we were bewildered by his remarks on the situation in the Soviet Union. What would the United States say if Soviet officials begin to make comments on the political significance of changes in the US administration, or give recommendations to the US President on tax policy?"

"What may be acceptable for journalists and political scientists is not always proper for statesmen. We base our relations with the administration of the United States, as well as with other countries, on tactfulness. We hope to pursue this dialogue in the future as well, including with the US administration, with President Bush and Secretary of State Baker." Churkin said. □

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Boris Yeltsin speaks to Baltic Fleet officers

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has rejected charges levied against him that Russia wants to break up the army or cajole it to its side to aggravate the political situation in the country. Yeltsin, who was paying a working visit to the Kaliningrad region, spoke to officers of the Kaliningrad garrison and the Baltic Fleet on February 9.

"Under the sovereignty declaration of the Russian Federation, the republic delegates the responsibility for defence to the Union. However, ceding these functions to the Union does not mean that the republic completely withdraws from handling the tasks of defence," Yeltsin stressed.

"We are not indifferent to the problems of the armed forces, the core of which is made up of Russians. Like the other republics, we are vitally interested in firm guarantees for our security, in permanently maintaining the high degree of our country's defence capability. Therefore, Russia contributes its full share to the military budget and no one can reproach it that it economises on the army," Yeltsin said.

"Russia should know what military policy is being pursued, what military reforms are being prepared, how its sovereign rights are being ensured, whether the security of the entire Union is effective enough, because Russia does

not see itself outside the Union, and is working together with the other republics on a Union treaty," Yeltsin stressed.

Speaking about the possibility of forming republican armed units, Yeltsin said that "this possibility was mentioned in the most general and preliminary form only once."

"It was purported at that time that there could possibly be a double subordination of the army deployed on Russian territory."

Yeltsin categorically denied speculation that the possibility of forming its own army was discussed in the Russian parliament.

"Any structural changes are possible, just as it is possible to set up volunteer corps as a preliminary form of training and then to switch to professional foundations in the army. A national guard of double subordination, and the strategic armed forces and fleet of the subordinate directly to the USSR Defence Ministry are also possible. All these are only variants that can be discussed, rejected or accepted," Yeltsin said.

"But I protest against making generalisations from one phrase, because I did not and do not state that Russia will set up its own army," Yeltsin said.

"Republican armed units are not just a phantom today. They are becoming a reality in several republics. Tough sanctions and bans can only speed up and distort this process, as well as impart socially dangerous forms to it.

"Most importantly, this process should be kept under the most rigorous control of both republics and the Union as a whole. Then, it will be possible to find mutually acceptable forms of interaction between national units and the Union armed forces, and possibly to stem this tendency altogether, which would be the best solution," Yeltsin stressed.

He noted that if the issue of forming a Russian army came up in future, it would be solved "only through parliamentary means, on a sound legal basis and jointly with the USSR Defence Ministry and the people.

"When social tension is high, the army's participation is solving internal political issues is fraught with serious negative consequences," Yeltsin said.

"Its use in conflicts should be an exception rather than a rule. It is especially inadmissible to use it at the request of some anonymous National Salvation Committees."

Explaining the need to conclude political and economic agreements between Russian and other republics, Yeltsin said that "they ensure the legal basis for defending the fights of the Russian-speaking population, including servicemen."

In conclusion, Yeltsin called for imposing a moratorium on the confrontation between the centre and republics and for going ahead with sweeping socio-economic reforms. □

Reshuffle in KGB leadership

VICTOR Gruskhov, who has led the Soviet counter-intelligence service for a year, has been appointed First Deputy KGB Chairman, the KGB (State Security Committee) chief Vladimir Kryuchkov told *Izvestia* on February 8.

Lieutenant General Gennady Titov, a career intelligence officer in charge of the former German Democratic Republic, was given Gruskhov's job, Kryuchkov said.

Army general Filipp Bobkov, 66, until recently First Deputy KGB chief, is on vacation and intends to work as a defence ministry consultant, Kryuchkov told the newspaper.

Bobkov was among the most influential "pillars" of the KGB and at times was its actual head, *Izvestia* said.

Under the late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Bobkov led the KGB's fifth - ideological - directorate, it said.

Deputy KGB Chairman Vladimir Pirozhkov, 66, also resigned and will lead the veterans' movement in the KGB.

Bobkov and Pirozhkov offered their resignations last year, Kryuchkov said.

But the reshuffle took place only this year and "certain questions were decided at the level of the president", he said. □

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South Ossetia - Russia offers mediation

THE conflict in Southern Ossetia can be settled soon, chairman of the Sub-commission of Ethnic Relations of the Russian parliament Gennady Sorokin said upon his return to Moscow from a visit to the region on February 11, where he and a group of other Russian parliamentarians had been on a fact-finding mission.

Sorokin told Tass that talks are needed to settle the conflict in Southern Ossetia, and stressed that neither the Georgian nor the Ossetian leadership has anything against beginning such talks.

A third party is needed, Sorokin stressed, adding that Russia or any other republic could mediate in such talks. The Russian parliamentarian said that the disarmament of armed groups on both sides, and the participation of the Soviet leadership, including the President, are necessary conditions for the talks.

Sorokin also told Tass that the situation is extremely hard in the city of Tskhinvali. The administrative centre of Southern Ossetia is on the verge of famine, and the remaining food stocks will only suffice for a day or two, Sorokin said. Electricity and water supplies are cut off.

Last week, the Russian parliament instructed its presidium to begin immediate talks with the Georgian leadership to urge a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Sorokin said Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia told the Russian parliamentarians he was ready and willing to cooperate and negotiate. □

Distribution of humanitarian aid in the USSR

ABOUT 60,000 tonnes of food and 1,200 tonnes of medicines and medical equipment have already come in from 41 countries within the framework of humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union, Igor Prostyakov, Deputy Chairman of the Central Commission to Organise the Utilisation of Foreign Humanitarian Aid, told the commission's meeting in the Kremlin on February 11.

Aid parcels are sent to those Soviet people who need them most of all - children and socially vulnerable sections of the population - and to areas hit by ecological disasters.

An effective organisational structure capable of ensuring the delivery of food and medicines to the intended destinations has been set up.

At today's meeting, the commission discussed matters aimed at streamlining the work connected with this charitable actions, and considered additional measures to organise the distribution of aid donations arriving from abroad.

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Preparing for the new Soviet law on entry and exit

Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Chaplin interviewed by Izvestia correspondent S Moushkaterov

Perhaps, most problems will be linked to the level and nature of emigration flows?

It is far too difficult to accurately access the number of emigres. Various sources cite figures from one or two to dozens of millions. First and foremost, they refer to those Soviets who will go abroad for a relatively long term to work there.

In fact, there are different attitudes to an expected outflow of workforce from the USSR, which is called "temporary migration". On the one hand, it is a negative phenomenon brought to life by political and economic predicaments in the USSR. On the other hand, to work abroad is a usual business with many. Moreover, the USSR Supreme Soviet laid a legal groundwork for professional activities of Soviet nationals abroad in the recently adopted federal and republican Fundamentals of Legislation of Employment.

Anyway, when the law is adopted, the outflow of manpower will become a reality, which should make us look for positive elements in it today, and make them useful for the state and the nation. Stemming from foreign experience, these positive elements include ample opportunities to upgrade the skills of Soviet specialists who will learn new technologies and acquire business skills and approaches. Finally, these elements include the increase of hard-currency flow into the USSR in the form of banking transfers and possible investments from Soviet nationals working abroad.

To this end, it is essential to set up a federal body that would help to employ Soviet people abroad and try to make the chaotic migration more organised.

I guess the state should do more ...

Of course. There are two sets of issues to be tackled. First, we should establish an effective administrative and inquiries structure to help Soviet nationals use their right to go abroad. Second, we should make sure that social and legal rights of Soviet nationals in a foreign country be equal to those enjoyed by its nationals or other migrants. Primarily, I refer to the right to receive legal, medical and social assistance.

Do you have any detailed plans?

The government is currently considering all practical issues related to this law. At a later stage, it will give concrete instructions to individual ministries and state committees. However, the foreign ministry has already taken several steps in this direction with other state structures. A new law has been prepared to regulate the procedure for taking out, sending or obtaining documents from the USSR on demand. This law envisages obtaining a special permission for every instance of taking out a document. The limitations include work records, military service cards, ID cards and personal documents which are of considerable artistic, historical, scientific or other value and registered at the USSR Archives. If required, special certificates may be issued instead.

Essential documents have been drafted as a preparatory work for the USSR's joining the Hague Convention, which annuls all requirements to legalise official documents. Today, a person has to apply to three or four instances in order to certify Soviet documents. After the USSR has joined the Hague Convention, this procedure will be greatly simplified. It will no longer be necessary to legalise Soviet documents in foreign diplomatic missions or consulates. The ministries of justice and the interior of the union republics, the USSR Procurator's Office and the Chief Administration of Archives at the USSR Council of Ministers will be authorised to

certify those documents themselves.

It is also necessary to decide on the participation of the USSR in the International Organisation for Migration, which now has the membership of 35 countries. Its aim is to organise international migration flows on a planned basis, exchange experience and information on related issues. This organisation has branches in member-states, language courses for would-be migrants and a recruitment bureau for employment abroad.

We should significantly expand Soviet participation in other major international conventions and agreements on migration, civil procedure and criminal law, on social and pension security, medical services and insurance. However, this will mean assuming certain obligations with respect to immigrants to the USSR.

Finally, we should cardinaly overhaul the operations of the Office for Visas and Registration, which now issues international passports for Soviet nationals. I believe that this office could also provide consultations and give full and unbiased information to potential emigres about living conditions in the country of their destination and obtain foreign entry visas for them. Since the amount of its work will grow manifold, it would be expedient to make it an independent emigration agency, rather than leaving it subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior.

Since the number of foreign trips will enormously increase, Soviet consulates will experience many strains too. Logically so, as Soviets facing various problems will apply to consulates first.

The basic function of the consular service is to protect the interests of Soviet citizens abroad. Obviously, it is preparing for greater amount of work. Something has already been done, though. Thus many obsolete administrative ordinances have been repealed on its initiative. Procedures for getting permission to leave abroad on a business, tourist or personal trips have been simplified.

Consular operations with respect to Soviet nationals residing abroad improved. Last year, we rescinded the rule of stamping the expiry date in the passports of Soviet emigrants who maintained Soviet citizenship on their trips to the USSR. The matter is, that before a Soviet passport did not mean an automatic permission to come to the USSR whenever its bearer wanted. Today, Soviet consulates are equipped with computer facilities, and new Soviet passports and visas which can be processed by computers are in the pipeline.

However, we have our problems too. The Soviet consular service annual brings 12 billion roubles worth of foreign currency to the federal budget, but only a fraction of this sum goes to developing the consular service itself. We have to change this situation.

There is also another problem of rendering material assistance to Soviet nationals in emergency abroad. But Soviet diplomatic legations have no funds allocated for these purposes. Since many more people are expected to be going abroad, the situation will be getting more acute. This means that we shall have to set up special funds to this end.

Many foreign states are apprehensive about this law. Today, there are voices that "a new Berlin wall" may be erected by the West for economic reasons ...

We realise that the labour market in Western Europe is satiated, and, practically, those countries do not need immigrants. It is true that a queer situation is now taking shape: for many

years, the West condemned the USSR for restricting emigration rights, but claims today that it cannot accommodate Soviet immigrants. Currently, western countries are erecting barriers to check the flow of Soviet immigrants.

Apparently, Western harsh anti-immigration policies are not confined to the USSR only. Thus the United States sets annual quotas for resident permits.

However, there is a growing understanding of the fact that restriction will not solve the problems of migration. A recent favourable example is a conference on migration held in Vienna in late January 1991 and attended by representatives from 32 European nations, including the USSR, and also the United States, Australia and Canada. The conference discussed issues related to the current state and the prospects for migration flows from Central and Eastern Europe. Though the conference appealed for further dialogue, many contributors announced limited possibilities of the West to accommodate labour migrants from Eastern Europe and the USSR.

In a nutshell, to make the Soviet law on exit and entry a tangible instrument of safeguarding the right of Soviet nationals to go abroad, it is crucial to do a thorough preparatory work in this country and coordinate the efforts of the international community. □

(Izvestia, February 8. Abridged.)

Soviet and French foreign ministers meet

SOVIET Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov today met visiting French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas on February 12.

In a friendly atmosphere, they discussed Soviet-French relations. They noted that the Soviet Union and France have accumulated valuable experience of co-operation and interaction. Due to their adherence to new political thinking, they are playing an important positive role in the current world and the construction of a new Europe.

The Soviet Prime Minister focused on problems of radical economic restructuring in the Soviet Union and the transition to market relations. He noted that the Soviet Union praised its business partners in France and other countries.

Pavlov said the Soviet Union aimed to raise the efficiency of its foreign economic ties and created favourable conditions inside the country for developing business co-operation with trade, industrial and financial circles abroad.

They agreed that the two countries were interested in overcoming difficulties in the developing of bilateral trade and economic relations. They noted that this would help strengthen new relations of co-operation and solidarity in Europe. □

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Treaty on strategic offensive arms near completion

On February 6 Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh sent Aleksei Obukhov, his deputy for relations with the US and Canada, to Geneva as head of the delegation of the USSR Defence Ministry and other experts on strategic offensive arms reductions. A *Pravda* correspondent interviewed Obukhov before he left Moscow.

Why is this new effort within the framework of the Soviet-US talks necessary?

Soviet-American talks on radical strategic offensive arms reductions, which started in the current format in 1985, have long entered the final stage. All the most complicated fundamental problems have been settled. This is clear.

Political agreements – I mean those reached at summits and meetings of our foreign ministers – were vital for settling the key aspects of the future treaty, such as the aggregate reduction ceilings, the composition of reducible forces, and verification of compliance with the treaty. Actually, these agreements are the moving force of the negotiations process. Suffice it to remember Reykjavik, Washington 1987 and Washington 1990 summits, where the sides coordinated the outlines of future agreements on nuclear and space weapons and on strengthening the

strategic stability.

But the final stage of the talks proved to be quite difficult. By late 1988 the delegations had coordinated the joint drafts of the treaty and some adjoining documents. However, it took a series of intensive meetings between foreign ministers to work out the details of the limitation of long-range sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, and some other major problems. Our delegations in Geneva worked on the basis of the above mentioned agreements, settling in passing a great deal of technical problems.

By the end of 1990 we saw that we needed the participation of deputy foreign ministers and experts in order to give another boost to the talks.

The deputy foreign ministers met in Washington and Houston in December last year and in Washington in January 1991. What did these meetings achieve?

They were held as part of preparations for talks between ministers. I would not like to assess my own actions, yet I have to state that the painstaking discussions of many complicated technical problems, attended by experts, have helped us to come to an agreement on issues which until recently hindered the signing of the treaty.

I mean the reduction of the throw weight of ballistic missiles, control over the armaments of heavy bombers, permanent control over facili-

ties that produce mobile ICBMs, and some other issues. They were included in the Houston package. I think that its realisation (there are few uncoordinated issues in this package) would be a major breakthrough at the final stage of the talks.

What about the deadline of the talks?

In late January Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh and the American leadership agreed to finish the text of the treaty in February. I shall follow this decision in my work.

What can you tell about the negotiating positions?

Our dialogue with Reginald Bartholomew, under secretary of state, is very constructive, despite some differences in opinion. The aim of the talks is to find a compromise that would be acceptable to both sides – I repeat, both sides. Like before, we are relying on positions which are elaborated by corresponding departments in Moscow, including the Defence Ministry.

It is an honour for me to take part in the final stage of drafting the SOF treaty, which will become a major landmark on the way towards practical disarmament. I hope to be able to use the experience of the INF agreement, which I helped to draft, as well as of my previous involvement in the talks on the reduction of strategic offensive armaments. □

(*Pravda*, February 7. In full.)

New broadcasting corporation established

A STATE TV and radio broadcasting corporation is being created in the Soviet Union. It will replace the USSR State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, which had the status of a ministry. A decree on changes in the TV and radio broadcasting system was signed by President Gorbachev on February 8.

The same decree appointed Leonid Kravchenko, who headed the state committee until today, to the post of chairman of the new TV and radio broadcasting corporation.

The presidential decree gives the new corporation easy terms of taxation in foreign economic activities.

The president also ordered the creation of the All-Union Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting, which will co-ordinate scientific, technological and programme policy in this sphere, as well as in increase in the contribution of the republics to the development of international ties in television and radio broadcasting. The heads of the republic TV and radio institutions will become members of the council on a voluntary basis.

Journalists were looking forward to the decree, regarding it as an important step to the decentralisation of the TV and radio broadcasting system in the country. □

Soviet-French commission resumes in Paris

THE second session of the Soviet-French inter-governmental commission for economic, industrial, scientific and technological cooperation opened on February 11 in Paris.

The Soviet delegation is headed by Soviet First Deputy Prime Minister Lev Voronin, and the French side is headed by Minister of State and Minister for the Economy, Finance and Budget Pierre Berégovoy.

French newspapers write that the commission will focus on long-term scientific and technological cooperation, including the areas of power engineering, civil uses for nuclear energy and space exploration, as well as on the training of Soviet specialists in France, and French exports to the USSR.

The French newspaper *Tribune de l'Expansion* says that French exports to the Soviet Union fell to eight billion Francs in 1990 as compared to ten billion Francs in 1989, while the trade deficit grew to ten billion Francs, which is 4.3 billion Francs more than in 1989.

The commission is expected to discuss the activities of Soviet-French joint ventures. Out of 70 joint ventures only two or three are operating at full capacity.

The France Presse news agency notes that many Soviet-French contracts have yet to begin being implemented. □

Soviet-American symposium on Eastern Europe

"Eastern Europe the future Europe" is the topic of the Soviet-American symposium, which opened in Moscow on February 11 under the aegis of the Social Sciences Institute under the Soviet Communist Party Central committee and the US International Practical Policy Institute (IPPI).

The seminar was attended by Soviet scientists from the Europe Institute and the Institute of the United States and Canada under the USSR Academy of Sciences, the Institute of the International Workers' Movement and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, as well as their colleagues from the IPPI, the Social Studies Council, the Brown University Foreign Policy Centre, and several former US Congressmen.

The three-day symposium discussed the situation in Eastern Europe and the economic, social and national processes now under way there, the contradictory tendencies in that part of the continent. The agenda also includes the role of the United States and the USSR in the CSCE process and East European development, as well as Germany's importance in East-West relations in the 1990's.

A roundtable discussion of political campaigns and referendums was also held during the symposium. □

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