

Eduard Shevardnadze talks to *Izvestia* on forthcoming summit meeting

IN AN interview with the newspaper *Izvestia*, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze praised the results of the talks with US Secretary of State in Washington. The interview is published in the April 9 issue.

It would be premature to speak about specific changes, tantamount to a breakthrough, which emerged at the disarmament talks, Shevardnadze said. But they are surfacing.

If an agreement on a 50 per cent reduction in strategic offensive weapons is initialled at the talks, this will be the main breakthrough in this important area.

Prospects have also emerged to accelerate drafting a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

"The sides are working on a dozen draft agreements concerning Soviet-American relations which, to my mind, we shall manage to complete by the summit," Shevardnadze said.

The two sides have never achieved such results, in any case in the past decades of bilateral relations. "I mean, for instance, an agreement on trade."

The sides will possibly complete work on agreements on investments, cultural centres, peaceful co-operation in space and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The minister expressed concern that no

understanding was reached in Washington on air- and sea-based missiles which are two important elements of an agreement on strategic offensive weapons.

The Americans painfully respond to Soviet proposals on inspections on warships and submarines, considering them inadmissible.

On the other hand, the USSR believes that the two sides have come to such a stage in disarmament when the question of trust comes to the fore. Principles of confidence are unthinkable without a system of mutual monitoring.

If both sides do not exert all efforts, there is an apprehension that they will not have time to prepare for the summit. However, this does not put into doubt the summit itself, stressed Shevardnadze.

It will take place. However, it is desirable and even necessary that its results should be specific, impressive and important.

Dealing with prospects for Soviet-American relations, the minister noted that there is not complete confidence for the time being that they will not be subject to serious fluctuations.

Mindful of this, the Soviet side attaches special importance to stepping up bilateral relations, including contacts between people, he said.

"I mean the expansion of student exchange, establishment of a joint Soviet-American university and other similar ideas," the minister stressed.

The summit crucial to super-power relations Gorbachev says

LIFE has shown that Soviet-American summits are a very important element of international politics, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev said in an interview with *Pravda* in the run up to his visit to the United States on May 30-June 3.

The text of the interview was circulated in Moscow on April 7.

Summits help clarify the two states' positions and interests, Gorbachev said. The sides seek ways to combine their interests with the interests of other countries and the world community in the context of their views to the world and problems facing it, he said.

"We have a good understanding with President George Bush. I count on a comprehensive and free talk, and on the expansion of trust in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States," he said.

"The President and I will sum up the results of work done after Malta and reach certain agreements, first of all in arms control and disarmament. This is what the summit's success will primarily depend on."

Gorbachev said developments in Europe will be high up on the summit's agenda.

Europe is witnessing the most significant changes since the end of the Second World War, and the United States and the Soviet Union are active and influential participants in the European process, Gorbachev said.

Their responsibility is to ensure that these changes, the German reunification in the first place, proceed constructively, harmlessly and in the interest of all of Europe and the world, he said.

"This is a very responsible moment, and the American President and I have much to think over together," Gorbachev said.

The summit offers a good chance to discuss what both sides can do to bridge the gap between words and deeds, in economic relations in the first place, Gorbachev commented, saying that so far there has been little progress in this sphere. □

They pointed to the necessity of parliamentarians' joint actions to safeguard peace, security and stability on Earth, including in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sharma approved of Lukyanov's proposal to think over the meeting of parliamentarians of Asian and Pacific states and supported the idea of extending positive changes in international relations from Europe to Asia.

Lukyanov invited Sharma to visit the Soviet Union at any time convenient to him. Sharma accepted the invitation with gratitude.

In the evening, Sharma gave a dinner in honour of the Soviet guests. Exchanging friendly toasts, Lukyanov and the Indian Vice President confirmed the two countries' desire to promote their friendship and co-operation.

The dinner was attended by members of the Indian Government and leaders of political parties, represented in the Indian Parliament. □

Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR visit to India

ANATOLI LUKYANOV, Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, on April 5 met Shankar Dayal Sharma, the Indian Vice President. The meeting was held in a warm atmosphere typical of Soviet-Indian relations. Anatoli Lukyanov is on an official visit to India.

They stressed the necessity to safeguard and promote friendship and versatile co-operation between the two countries in the interest of their peoples and universal peace.

Speaking about the sources of Indian-Soviet friendship, Sharma pointed out that its foundations were laid before the Great October Social-

ist Revolution, during India's fight for national liberation.

India appreciates Soviet assistance in laying the foundations for its national industry, Sharma said. Our co-operation expands and this is promoted by regular exchanges of visits by the two countries' leaders.

It is very important that these relations are not restricted to governmental level. Indian and Soviet peoples' friendship is an important factor which guarantees international peace and security, the Indian Vice President stressed.

Sharma called the 1986 Soviet-Indian Declaration on the principles for nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world an important landmark in international policy. The document sets the aims for all humanity and it is very important to reach them for its development, Sharma said.

Speaking about perestroika in the Soviet Union, Lukyanov characterised it as a revolution in all spheres of life – political, economic, legal and cultural. "We want to use the experience of all democracies, including Indian," Lukyanov said.

Lukyanov and Sharma favoured the promotion of contacts between the two countries' parliaments and their active participation in resolving specific tasks of co-operation between India and the Soviet Union.

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Soviet statement on Central American summit

The following statement by a Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman was released in Moscow on April 6:

THE Soviet Union received with satisfaction the announcement of the successful conclusion of a regular meeting in Nicaragua of the presidents of five Central American states, which adopted a number of important resolutions to intensify efforts to normalise the situation in the region.

We fully share the positive assessment contained in the final document of the results of the recent general elections in Nicaragua and of the role played by the country's present President Daniel Ortega in strengthening the process of democratisation.

At the same time we view with understanding the concern expressed by participants in the meeting over the lack of progress in the solution of the Contras issue and express support for the demand to demobilise and disarm groups of the Nicaraguan armed opposition before April 25.

We also view as absolutely fair the appeal formulated by the Central American leaders calling on the US Administration to support the demobilisation of the Nicaraguan rebels and

transfer the funds earmarked for the opposition to the international commission for support and control so as to make possible the use of these funds to finance measures to facilitate the return of the rebels to peaceful life. This approach is all the more justified taking into account the fact that the emergence of armed opposition groups and their hostile activities against the legitimate Nicaraguan Government over the past almost ten years became possible thanks, above all, to the unstinted aid and comprehensive support from Washington throughout this period.

Of great importance is the agreement reached at the meeting to work out a schedule of talks on security, verification, arms control and reduction in the countries of the region. We welcome this initiative and reiterate our readiness to help with the preparations on this score.

On the whole it can be noted that another substantial step has been taken towards the resumption and expansion of mutually beneficial co-operation in various fields, the deepening of integration processes and the ever broader involvement of Central American states in the life of the world community.

Soviet Parliament discusses youth policy bill

A JOINT session of both houses of the USSR Supreme Soviet discussed and approved at the first reading on April 9 the bill on the principles of a national youth policy, drafted by the Central Committee of the Komsomol (Young Communist League). It envisages a system of legal and social guarantees to young people and also the establishment of a special department responsible for youth affairs.

Submitting the bill, Komsomol First Secretary Viktor Mironenko said it was the first step to setting up a system of social legislation in the USSR. "This system," he said, "must include a package of legal acts, regulating the exercise of civil rights by sections of the population requiring additional state guarantees."

Taking part in the deliberations, Alexander Mokanu of Moldavia expressed the hope that the bill would provide the basis for a single national youth policy that was often discussed but never implemented. "Because of this," Mokanu believes, "we now have to cope with numerous youth problems."

Many speakers said the law was particularly necessary now that the country is about to go over to a planned market economy, when young people may prove to be among the most affected sections of the population.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Youth Affairs Valeri Tsubukh stressed that young people needed guarantees at all stages of transition to a planned market economy. The state must give them support as to one of the least protected social groups.

Tsubukh believes that a department for youth affairs would also meet this purpose. "The Komsomol," he said, "formerly used to serve as a sort of 'youth ministry', but in conditions of a multi-party system the Komsomol will no longer

be able to discharge this function, and a definite vacuum will appear."

Though the bill came under heavy criticism, the Supreme Soviet voted to approve it at the first reading and relegated the document to corresponding parliamentary committees and commissions for further elaboration. □

Gorbachev issues decree on aid to Chernobyl children

IN response to calls from mothers whose children live in areas contaminated during the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, President Mikhail Gorbachev has ordered local authorities to provide these children with proper medical treatment and leisure facilities of the summer.

The President asked the Soviet Trade Union Council to ensure that children from contaminated areas in Byelorussia, the Ukraine, and Russia's Bryansk region get the necessary treatment and spent their summer vacations in medical centres and rest homes across the country.

Gorbachev told central ministries and agencies and republican governments to allocate places in their sanatoriums, rest homes, pensions and summer camps to children from contaminated areas before May 1, 1990.

He ordered the Soviet Council of Ministers to turn over the Ai-Danil Health Centre for government officials to the children.

The facility should be turned over to the Soviet Health Ministry before May 1, he said.

He put Deputy Health Minister Igor Denisov in charge of the conversion, asking him to see to it that the children get proper medical treatment at the health centre. □

Leonid Abalkin urges bolder moves to carry out reform

BALANCING between the remnants of the old administrative system and new forms of economic life cannot continue any longer. Resolute measures are needed to speed up economic reform, Leonid Abalkin, Soviet Deputy Prime Minister told a news conference in Moscow on April 9.

Leonid Abalkin said the government will soon present the Presidential Council and the Supreme Soviet with a package of legislative acts aimed at speeding up the transition to a regulated market-based economy.

The economic problems that have emerged in the past few months, he continued, "forced us to tighten the schedule of transition to the market system that was endorsed four months ago by the Second Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR." The new programme is aimed at speeding up the introduction of market-based relations, with proper guarantees for the rights of those sections of the population with fixed incomes.

The government's programme, which primarily aims at the earliest attainment of a balanced consumer market, envisages gradually decontrolling prices, allowing manufacturers to dispose of their products freely, releasing the State Bank from state control. It also provides for creating joint-stock societies and stock exchanges, the partial sale or transfer of small and medium-size plants into private hands, flexible taxation and the struggle against monopolism in the economy.

Asked what was necessary to flesh out the programme, Abalkin said "in the first place the government should be independent and free from step-by-step, day-by-day coordination with legislators."

Soviet spokesman on Gorbachev's visit to the US

THE setting of the date for Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to the United States from May 30 to June 3 this year has captured headlines throughout the world, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Yuri Gremitskikh told a briefing in Moscow on April 6.

The spokesman agreed with the opinion of many Western commentators who note that this accord and the announcement of the visit before the Soviet Foreign Minister's talks in Washington are completed "are an illustration of a serious and profound approach by the sides to the development of bilateral relations and to the discussion of topical world issues." □

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Alexander Yakovlev's meeting with Lithuanian Deputies

ALEXANDER YAKOVLEV, member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, has described as a "conversation" his recent meeting with a group of Deputies of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet. Responding to the TASS question whether the meeting meant a turn towards a dialogue, he said that "in political practices it is a common occurrence that each one interprets this or that conversation in the way advantageous to him."

He pointed out that "the meeting was held at the urgent request of the Lithuanian Deputies who stressed the 'unofficial' character of the meeting and said that they were not authorised by anybody and were acting as private individuals." Yakovlev described the conversation as being "frank from both sides."

"The representatives of the Lithuanian public were told that a constructive and responsible approach was clearly expressed in the resolution of the Congress of People's Deputies and the addresses of President Gorbachev to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet and the Lithuanian people," Yakovlev pointed out.

"The USSR Supreme Soviet has adopted the law on the procedure of settling problems connected with the secession of a union republic from the USSR, which is envisaged by the Soviet

Constitution. Issues dealing with the union treaty are being discussed and other measures are being taken to establish the independence of the republics in the economic and political spheres. In these conditions any attempt to accelerate the developments can be understood only as the unwillingness to hold consultations and a dialogue. Subjectively, no matter how these developments can be interpreted, but the impression is that objectively this stepping up of actions is aimed at hampering the normal constitutional process whose results would meet the interests of all republics and of the Lithuanian people.

"The Lithuanian Deputies were told that a normal dialogue on all issues of mutual interest is possible on the basis of the situation that existed before March 10. It was stressed that the actions in the first several days after March 10 were actually directed against perestroika, including perestroika in Lithuania, against this historic turn, which is taking place in the country in general.

"It was pointed out during the conversation that various statements and actions directed against the Soviet Army on Lithuanian territory are immoral, to say the least, because they are directed against people fulfilling their professional duty and resolving problems dealing with the country's defences.

"Concluding the conversation, the Lithuanian Deputies again stressed its 'private character' and expressed the intention to consider once again measures to be taken to overcome the existing situation," Yakovlev said. □

Supreme Soviet passes bill on economic relations

BOTH chambers of the Soviet Parliament – the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities – in separate meetings on April 4 approved the second reading of a bill on the fundamentals of economic relations between the union and constituent and autonomous republics.

A resolution passed at the time says that the law will come into effect on January 1, 1991, and that all resolutions and instructions of the government that contradict it will become null and void.

The law considerably expands the authority of constituent and autonomous republics in the fields of finance, taxation, investment policy and uses of nature.

The republics will have right to independently carry out foreign economic activities and planning, set a budget and even suspend decisions by federal bodies if republican rights are violated.

The range of the union's competence continues to include the establishment of single legislative foundations of the economic activity and the federal market, the organisation of the country's taxation system, the implementation of a common price-formation policy, the organisation of the financial-credit system and single monetary circulation, the management of

single transport and energy systems, and some other functions.

After the bill's discussion in the first reading, when many deputies called for guarantees of independence for enterprises, the bill was considerably amended. Now it proclaims that economic relations between enterprises and republican and local management bodies should be built on a contract basis.

The law also contains guarantees against anti-market measures. It says that federal and autonomous republics have no right to introduce limitations on the import and export of goods and financial resources and to introduce transit payments without the consent of other republics. □

Presidential Councils examines situation in Lithuania

THE Presidential Council chaired by President Mikhail Gorbachev held a meeting on April 9. It examined the situation in Lithuania and around the republic.

It was noted that the reply by the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet was not constructive and did not open an avenue towards settling problems. In fact, it leads matters into a dead end.

The present Lithuanian leadership is blocking any exit from the crisis with its anti-constitutional actions and the escalation of illegal measures. It is aggravating the situation in the republic, for which it bears full responsibility.

Guided by the mandate of the Third Congress of People's Deputies, members of the Presidential Council concluded that additional economic, political and other measures should be taken to protect the USSR Constitution and the interests of citizens living in the republic and the Soviet Union as a whole. □

Soviet committee chairman on transition to market economy

THE introduction of a market economy in the Soviet Union will probably occur much sooner than expected. The work on a programme to switch the economy to market-orientated relations is now in progress in both the parliament and the government, Valentine Vologzhin, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Economic Reform Matters, said on April 6.

The programme is expected to become the subject of consideration at a session of the Presidential Council in the coming days. A transition to market relations, originally planned by the government programme for 1993-1995 should be carried out in 1990-1991, he said.

Vologzhin spoke in favour of ensuring that a legislative basis of a new model of the economy be laid this year. Then 1991 will become the first year of entering into a market system, he added.

Vologzhin regards a reform of the price formation system to be most difficult point in the transition programme. He believes that a market system in the Soviet Union should mean free prices of a large part of the means of production and consumer goods.

He emphasised the need to ensure the protection of groups of the population with fixed incomes. Otherwise, he maintains, "the situation in the country may become ungovernable."

The committee chairman also called for renouncing a tough directive planning and for the freedom for producers – irrespective of the form of ownership – to sell their products on both domestic and foreign markets. He believes that a stage-by-stage devaluation of the rouble with respect to other currencies will also be needed.

Vologzhin admits that a turn of such magnitude cannot be utterly painless. But without it, there is no hope of bringing the living standards in the Soviet Union up to those of the developed countries. All attempts to postpone the decisive step "make the reforms more difficult," he believes. □

Law passed on local self-government

THE USSR Supreme Soviet promulgated, at a joint session of its two chambers on April 9, the law on general principles of local self-government and local economic management in the Soviet Union.

The law grants local authorities broad powers to decide questions relating to social and economic development and environmental protection.

The law lays down new principles for forming the power structure – only those functions that cannot be performed at lower levels shall be delegated to superior bodies. In this way, superior councils of people's deputies will be changed from ruling bodies into coordinators of the activity of lower councils.

Local councils of people's deputies will independently work out, approve and implement budget decisions for respective territories. The basis of local budgets will be formed by a new territorial tax and the previously enforced individual income tax, payment for land and natural resources, a local tax and a tax on profits of enterprises, which formerly was fully used to form the national or republican budgets.

The law will come into force as soon as it is published, except for provisions relating to local budgets, which will be enforced on January 1, 1991, and some other provisions that will be enacted on July 1, 1990.

As the federal law deals only with general principles of self-government, republics will have to promulgate more detailed regulatory enactments, taking into account local specifics. □

Soviet Trade Unions

by Jack Phillips

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Afghan settlement: realism needed

In an interview, given to the Novosti Press Agency, Nikolai Kozyrev, Ambassador-at-Large of the USSR Foreign Ministry, had the following to say:

TWO years ago, on April 14, 1988, the agreements on Afghanistan were concluded in Geneva. They gave an impetus to a political settlement of the Afghanistan situation, both its international and internal aspects.

In full accordance with the Geneva Accords, the USSR has withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan. This has radically changed the situation in that country. The obligations of the parties to the agreements and of the guarantor-states remain their great importance. Though these obligations have not been fulfilled in full due to the continuing outside interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, it is obvious that without the Geneva accords it would have been impossible to advance in the Afghan settlement.

The bloodshed in Afghanistan continues. Unfortunately, there is no agreed-upon mechanism for resolving the Afghan problem. There are, however, a number of positive moments that we should not underestimate. As for the Afghan settlement, the Soviet Union is maintaining permanent contacts with the UN and with the USA, the second guarantor-state of the Geneva accords. Meetings between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and US Secretary of State James Baker play a major role in the search for peaceful ways of settlement. Soviet and American experts on Afghanistan hold regular consultations. The last consultations have revealed a positive tendency of going over from outlining the positions of the sides to seriously discussing such mechanisms of settle-

ment as would help bring the Afghan problem out of the blind alley.

The latest consultations in Helsinki were conducted in this vein. Both the Soviet and American sides pointed out that the Afghan issue should be solved through political means. This calls for an inter-Afghan dialogue and an interim period during which power would be handed by the Kabul regime to the interim government. However, the Americans do not leave room in this government either for President Najibullah or his closest associates. The mujahedin, too, refuse to conduct a dialogue with them. This dialogue, the Americans say, will be conducted between the opposition, on the one hand, and representatives of Kabul and other cities - certain good Moslems', on the other. To my mind, the formula is inconceivable. It does not take into consideration the present-day Afghan realities, first of all the fact that after the withdrawal of Soviet troops the Najibullah government has proved its viability, both militarily and politically. This fact can in no way be ignored.

The essence of the Soviet position is that a comprehensive Afghan settlement should take into account the interests of the conflicting sides. Without this, it is impossible to put an end to the war in Afghanistan. We stand for reasonable compromises. The transitional period is important, however, it is not this period, but the elections prepared during it that will decide the destiny of Afghanistan. The Afghan Government shares this position. The elections must be universal and direct under strict international control. Those who win them would be

represented in the future bodies of state authority in Afghanistan. President Najibullah stated he would abide by whatever results.

We think this approach is honest and just, and we said this in Helsinki. It does not encroach upon the interests of either of the conflicting sides. We stand for *status quo* in Afghanistan in the transitional period: not to change the state structure there, to leave intact the armed forces both of the government and the mujahedin, and to allow them to remain in the territories they control now. The Kabul government and the opposition should jointly prepare elections under the supervision of the UN. These elections would be a legitimate culmination of the Afghan settlement. Such is our position we have outlined at the consultations in Helsinki. The US side stated the Soviet position would be thoroughly examined with the aim of finding points of contact and moving ahead. We also wish this.

The Soviet side is actively discussing the Afghan settlement with Pakistan and Iran. Efforts in this direction will be continued. The leaders of these countries show interest in consultations on the Afghan issue. But I would like to emphasise that the Afghans themselves, their political will and aspiration to restore peace in the country must play the main role in settling the problem. The Soviet Union believes that in order to stop the bloodshed in Afghanistan it is necessary to use more extensively the positive international experience in solving regional conflicts. I have in mind the events in Nicaragua and Namibia, for instance. In both cases, disputable questions were solved peacefully, through elections under the control of the United Nations. □

Time to discuss tactical nuclear weapons

By Gen. Yuri Lebedev, Novosti military writer

THE Soviet Union and the USA are in the process of destroying their medium- and shorter-range missiles under the INF Treaty. Sixteen states are in Vienna discussing the reduction of conventional arms in Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, trying to bring down military confrontation and stabilise the situation in the region.

But Europe still has land-, air- and sea-based tactical nuclear weapons, with a range of up to 500km. There are thousands of these offensive weapons which can initiate a deadly armed conflict. Even a layman can see that stability will not be attained as long as there are nuclear weapons in Europe.

The destabilising effect of tactical nuclear weapons is growing immeasurably with the reduction of other classes of weapons. This calls for discussing them, and the sooner the better,

because military plans and research sometimes proceed quicker than negotiations.

Guided by security considerations, the Soviet Union unilaterally pulled out 500 tactical nuclear weapons from allied territories in Europe in 1989. It is prepared to move further if tactical nuclear weapons are discussed. The Soviet Union is not modernising its tactical missiles or replacing them with more sophisticated weapons.

The Brussels session of the NATO Council recognised the possibility of talks on tactical nuclear missiles in Europe. But this selected approach will not settle the problem because it would create certain advantages for NATO, which has superiority in air-based nuclear weapons. Besides, the NATO Council's condition for beginning the talks on the realisation of the agreement on conventional reductions.

This is alarming, for we are losing time and undermining major values. Procrastination in this issue will lead to attempts to make up for the eliminated medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe. Proof of this is NATO plans for the modernisation of Europe-based tactical weapons.

Why is NATO doing this? Is it reasonable to plan the deployment of the US Lance-2 (range 450km) missiles in Europe now that major changes are going on in East European countries and the Soviet Union has destroyed its Lance-class missiles, the SS-23, under the INF Treaty?

We have favourable conditions for moving towards the third zero, which is the elimination

of all tactical nuclear weapons.

Of course, it is difficult to stop believing in 'nuclear deterrence', including at the tactical level. This belief is still alive in the minds of NATO leaders, which is creating a problem. But this problem can be settled at talks on tactical nuclear weapons that would lead to their gradual reduction.

A mandate for such talks could be produced at consultations between Warsaw Treaty and NATO experts to facilitate mutual reductions of tactical weapons, even if partially, in the near future. In this situation neither side would harm its positions: the Soviet Union would remain loyal to its non-nuclear ideas, while the West would retain its concept of 'minimal deterrence'. □

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External business: mirroring the home economic scene

By Ivan Ivanov, D.Sc. (Economics), Deputy Chairman, Foreign Economic Commission, USSR Council of Ministers

THE USSR's external economic performance in 1989 confirmed that new positive trends coexist with old problems.

Following a recent fall, foreign trade continued to stabilise. It grew by 141,000 million roubles, or 6.6 per cent on 1988. This growth was both in terms of value and physical terms.

On the export side, machinery grew and fuel and power products fell from 42.1 per cent to 39.9 per cent of overall value. Deliveries of factory plant, road-building machinery, electrical engineering goods, chemical plant and mining machinery went up as did chemicals, including farm chemicals, timber and forestry products, steel, and paint and dyes. In other words, this indicates that Soviet exports are beginning to assume an industrialised character. Because of domestic shortages, we reduced the export of refrigerators, building materials, furs, meat products, and household goods, including film and photo cameras and accessories.

As for imports, machinery purchases favoured the consumer goods industries and metal-working at the expense of sectors inefficient as far as foreign made plant is concerned. The import of refrigerating, newsprint and chemical plant increased as did purchases of consumer durables. This shows that external business is helping resolve urgent domestic issues.

However, there is also a negative spin-off. First, foreign trade grew largely through imports (11 per cent), while exports increased very little (2.4 per cent). This created difficulties for current payments and increased the Soviet foreign debt.

All this is because of the continued emphasis on imports, with external business erroneously seen as a cure for domestic mismanagement. Imports, or imports plus reconverted defence plants, cannot be instrumental in supplying us with foodstuffs and consumer durables. It is the domestic consumer goods industry and agriculture that should play the main role in combating consumer shortages.

The call that we should not export what is needed at home can result in our losing external markets and exports stifled by licensing, which is unfortunately taking place. Exports take a small fraction of our domestic stocks. A rouble's worth of exports bring us 5-6 roubles' worth of consumer imports, in domestic prices. To beef up our consumer market, we should intensify exports, not to discourage them.

Second, thousands of operators now may transact external business without government intermediaries. However, along with positive results, this practice has revealed producers' irresponsibility. All ministries failed to meet the 1989 targets for major exports, including oil and machinery. This undercut our expected revenues by about 3,000 million roubles. A particularly big loss was the failure to honour the export of crudes and refinery products, although their prices were much more favourable in 1989 than earlier.

Third, producers still feel ill at ease in the field of external business. Their free-market performance is impeded by the domestic economic reform being too slow. For instance, delays with a pricing reform do not allow us to give the rouble a new rate of exchange and make a step

towards its convertibility. Producers may not export products classed as government contract items. Marketing and pricing information is lacking and we are short of trained personnel for these services. External business regulations are often deliberately violated and some producers practise unfair competition at the expense of other Soviet operators. Some ministries, including the one in charge of light industry, have failed to repay currency loans on time. Reckless projects emerge, such as Association 21st Century, promoted by incompetent people with the help of the mass media and even some MPs.

Soviet external performance is adversely affected by changes in other CMEA countries. The bureaucratic regulators of commodity flows are ceasing to work and our partners often do not supply us with goods as fixed in agreements. In 1989, our CMEA partners failed to meet delivery targets for consumer durables and foodstuffs, especially fruit and berries. Such practices should be discouraged since CMEA countries accounts for over 60 per cent of Soviet foreign trade.

So far we have failed to ensure the return of our loans to developing countries. Unless our loans are repaid with commodities, we shall sell these countries' debt obligations for cash at discount.

Among the top priorities is fitting external business in with the model of a planned market economy which is being developed by the Soviet Union. External business is to encourage commerce, market operations, and competition.

The results of 1989 should be considered in handling these major issues. □

(Novosti)

Soviet land: reform's new stage

By Alexander Voznesensky

Background

THE Decree on Land, which was adopted the day after the triumph of the October 1917 Revolution, seemed to have settled the issue once and for all: the private ownership of land was abolished to be replaced by the "Property of all People" and be tilled by all working people living on it. But in 1928, following the national socialisation drive, the land was made state property.

To quote Academician Vladimir Tikhonov, the idea, whether sound or not, has thrown agriculture into a permanent state of crisis. The farmer lost the land to become a hired hand, who cares not a bit for the result of his efforts. As a result, newspapers are asking silly questions like "who'll feed the nation?"

The master-less land started to deteriorate: over the past quarter-century, the nation has lost 22 million hectares of arable land, having ceded 12 million hectares to industrial construction and 6 million hectares to scrub. Seventy per cent of the remaining land is erosion-prone, which costs 11-13 billion roubles a year.

The new law

The main thing the new Law on Land, introduced in February 1990, does is to abolish the state monopoly. The land was proclaimed

the property of the nation, and the right to manage it was turned over to local soviets, or governments. The law says each Soviet citizen has the right to own a plot of land for life, bequeath and inherit it, as well as own the fruits of his labour. The public ownership of land will coexist with what is in effect private property.

The new feature is payment (article 12) in the form of the land tax or rent. The amount to be paid depends on the quality and location. Nationwide, the tax will come into effect on January 1, 1991, following the compilation of an accurate land register.

Region-wise, the terms will differ. In Estonia, farmers were allotted plots of land in early 1989 and are paying tax - 40 roubles per hectare on average. In Latvia, the land is so far being allotted free of charge as is specified in a law the republic adopted a year ago. But as farmers grow richer, they will be paying for the land they are using under the traditional farmstead scheme, or they can buy it out from the state.

Doubts

The union and autonomous republics will reorganise land relations without reference to the federal authorities, which is good of course, for they know better. But what if the Baltic republics introduce, as they did, private property of land? One should have no fear, I think. First, those who buy land thereby willingly dedicate their lives and the lives of their children to tilling that land, and the whole of society will only benefit. Second, it is still a far cry from the free sale of land. Baltic economists have pointed out

that the step may complicate a lot of things. Without free sale of land, private property will be just another term.

There are more doubts. Under the law, plots of land may be allotted to both private citizens and all willing state, co-operative and public concerns. It would have been alright were it not for the collective farms.

While the law was still being debated, many agrarian deputies wanted private citizens, rather than collective farms, to be masters of the land. If their proposal had been adopted, the collective farms, theoretical owners of land, would have become effective owners. Any farmer could quit membership and set up on his own. Some of collective farms would go up in smoke, especially those who are used to living at the expense of the state. But the efficient farms would survive, and the farmers would be their backbone. Regrettably, the proposal was voted down. True, one article says that a farmer gets a plot of land if he quits the farm and pays the local average price for the land. As it is, the collective farms are still the masters, and farm managers are the benefactors, and for this reason many of them will do everything to prevent the allocation of plots.

Are Soviet citizens ready to live and work on the land? The national public opinion polling institute has calculated that only 40 per cent say they are, while the more accurate figure is 10-14 per cent. Law or not, many of them feel unprotected, while others are unable to purchase farming implements. Twenty to 25 per

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THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

The Lithuanian problem from the viewpoint of international law

L. Kapelyushny, *Izvestia* special correspondent

HAVING noted the questions and arguments I heard at rallies in Lithuania and during the parliamentary debates on Lithuania's independence, I contacted Dr. Yuri Reshetov, head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Department on International Humanitarian Co-operation and Human Rights, and asked him to grant me this interview.

KAPELYUSHNY: Two weeks have passed since the Lithuanian parliament declared the republic an independent state and the Lithuanian authorities emphasise this in every public statement. However, the governments of other countries are in no hurry to recognise independent Lithuania.

RESHETON: I think they don't recognise it because Lithuania should first secede from the USSR.

The Chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, Vytautas Landbergis, repeatedly said that "Lithuania need not secede from the USSR for the simple reason that it never joined it." As the advocates of Lithuania's independence say, there will be no divorce because there was no marriage.

There was a marriage. And the expensive "wedding presents", including territorial ones, bear this out. So any expert in international law can easily prove that such allegations are groundless. He would prove this guided by the spirit and the letter of law rather than emotions. Even if a marriage (I using the family law terminology) was not properly registered, the years of living together make the partition of common property inevitable. Such is the law. And it does not matter whether Mendelssohn's March was played or not when the conjugal union was formalised. The whole world knows that Lithuania's becoming part of the USSR was legally formalised.

Let's assume it was. But then Lithuania decided that it no longer wanted to be one of the family. It decided to be on its own and exercise its constitutional right to self-determination. What is to be done? Is the Lithuanian situation unique? Are there any precedents?

It is not unique, but there are few precedents. Divorces between states are extremely rare. Moreover, an absolute majority of the most democratic countries have no constitutional provision for this. There can be no divorce Italian style. The secessionist activities in Spain are the prerogative of criminal rather than family law. Article 2 of the French Constitution proclaims indivisibility of the French Republic. It should be noted that the European Convention of Human Rights in 1951 included a new clause restricting the activities of organisations to ensure inviolability of territorial integrity of states. So, a European-style divorce is also very unlikely.

But popular desire is above law. Suppose the residents of Russian America, that is Alaska, recall that 100 years ago they were part of Russia, that they were sold without their consent and declare that they want to return. This is their right.

I think no one in the United States would take this problem seriously the way no one there considers the problem of self-determination for the American Indians, although the latter would not mind regaining full control over their historical territories. I think the only country where the problem of self-determination can be raised legally is the Soviet Union.

However, if you get the right to self-determination, you must also give the right to self-determination. In a multi-ethnic state this must be a legal and moral obligation. That is why I was disappointed when I learned that one of the first statements of the Lithuanian government was that Lithuania was indivisible.

Consequently, Lithuania had the right to demand secession from the USSR and used this right.

A procedure for the further development of the process of self-determination should be established. The most important thing is to determine whether the decision to secede from the USSR is legitimate. It is one thing to raise this question and it is quite another thing to pass a decision, formalise it and make it legitimate on the basis of the exercise of free will by the majority of the population. Here we shall have to begin from afar . . .

International law has the institution of succession. These are rules regulating the transfer of rights and duties from one state to another. The sphere of action of this principle of international law is very broad. It regulates the rights and duties from one state to another. The sphere of action of this principle of international law is very broad. It regulates the rights and duties of states, arising from the treaties they signed earlier, all economic and financial matters, the questions of ownership, especially state property, state debts and the right of succession with regard to the state archives.

Do you mean to say that the Lithuanian archives with their documents of a fifty-year history of the people, including some rather dramatic pages, do not belong to Lithuania? I simply must clarify this point because it is of great importance for the republic now. There has been a round-the-clock picket near the KGB building over the past few months because of the suspicion that the KGB archives might be taken out of the republic. The question has been discussed in the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR which has passed a special law on this score . . . Are there international conventions on this and all the other issues you have mentioned?

In 1978, the Vienna Convention on the succession of states with respect to international treaties was drafted and adopted. It reads that any treaty which is in effect at the moment of the succession of states with respect to the entire territory of the preceding state shall remain in force as regards the inheritor states and the successor states. This means that in the eventuality of the secession of any federal entity from the USSR it shall bear the commitments undertaken by the Soviet Union. As for the problem for the transition to economic, financial and property rights as well as many others, all these rules operate in international law as ordinary laws. This does not make them any less binding than the ones stipulated in the international convention. I am afraid that the text is overloaded with legal terminology, but this is where style is sacrificed for the sake of greater accuracy. To use common language, the legislative acts and rules existing in the country for the moment of self-determination of a particular republic, even if it does not like them, are binding for everyone. And since you have specifically asked about the archives, I may tell you that the archives are common property because they contain not only Lithuanian but also Soviet history.

Does this mean that until all the questions of succession between states are settled, Lithuania will remain independent only nominally? Then

what is to be done with the proclaimed act on the independence of Lithuania?

In my opinion, the Lithuanian Parliament has demonstrated undue haste with the declaration of this act. It should have crowned the difficult work on self-determination instead of preceding it. To bake bread, one must first plow the land, sow the seeds, grow the harvest, reap it and only then start the celebrations . . . The concept which is represented by one of the founders of international law, the British scholar Lauterpacht, is based on the fact that the recognition of a new state is impossible at all before all the questions of succession have been resolved. I would not say that it is a universal theory, but it is shared by many scholars, so it cannot be simply ignored. But the primary condition of self-determination and for the secession of a republic from the USSR must be the expression of the will of a majority of the population. As far as I know, there has been no referendum or plebiscite in Lithuania, whereas parliament, even a democratically elected one, has no right to decide this question.

Let me clarify this point, please: it has been said that since the parliamentary candidates from Sajudis and the candidates from other parties supported by this movement did not make it a secret that they were upholding the idea of independence and secession from the USSR, by voting for them the people thus voted for self-determination. Is there any sense then in wasting time and resources on a referendum when its results are clear in advance?

You have asked me how these questions are tackled in the civilized world, so now I'm answering your question. The expression of the will of the people for the purpose of deciding the future of a territory is done by international law through a plebiscite. Juridically, the procedure for holding plebiscites and referenda is very similar. The notion of referendum, however, is broader, and it is used for settling other questions, too. As for the problems of legal possession of territories, they are traditionally resolved by plebiscite.

Given that the USSR is a multinational state and that many territories are historical homelands of several (and even many) nations, it would be democratic and fair to raise the question that in the eventuality of the secession from the USSR of Lithuania or any other Union republic, the plebiscite (or referendum) should be held by territories, regions and even districts. The purpose of this is to get a fuller opinion of the people living on the territory of these administrative units.

There should be no limitations on the participation in the plebiscite. All citizens should have equal rights. Nationality, residential qualifications, command of the language and so on play no role under the international law. The introduction of the residential qualification in the Baltic republics is a brazen violation of human rights and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. I am a member of the relevant international committee and I know that only a few of the world's states have retained the residential qualification. This group has now been joined by Lithuania and Estonia.

What are these states?

One is the Kingdom of Tonga. But the residential qualification there is six months. It is always a poor sight when proponents of demo-

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Legitimising overflights by spy-planes?

IN February 23 member-countries of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and NATO held the first round of the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa.

This is an interview given to a correspondent of the newspaper Trud by Maj-Gen Vladimir Kuklev, first deputy head of a General Staff department and leader of the Soviet experts' delegation at the meeting.

KUKLEV: Is it true that the idea of Open Skies was first suggested by US President Dwight Eisenhower in 1955?

TRUD: Yes. But the cold war was at its height and the idea could not be implemented. It was rejected by the Soviet side out of hand.

But over the years our attitudes to many problems, including security and secrecy, changed. So, last May when President Bush proposed discussing this problem again, we accepted his proposal.

But a conference is not the same as negotiations. The sides merely outlined their positions on the problem. Did they coincide on major issues?

The conference showed that all its participants realised the importance of establishing an Open Skies regime and wished to achieve an agreement on this issue. As for the specific aspects of this problem, substantial differences arose.

First, there were differences about the types of aircraft that would operate in Open Skies. NATO insists that every country or group of countries should use its own aircraft to overfly the territory of other countries. We suggested that the side under observation should choose itself what kind of aircraft should overfly its territory – its own, those of the observing side or those of a third country.

We were guided mainly by economic considerations. I shall explain. Early in January this year a Canadian Air Force plane made an experimental flight. It took off from the Lahr airbase in West Germany and with the consent of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian authorities crossed Czechoslovakia and overflew Hungary. The flight cost 82,100 Canadian dollars for Can-

ada and 5,000 US dollars for Hungary. It should be noted that the aircraft had no sensor instruments on board and flew a very short distance.

Taking into consideration that the United States has its bases round the USSR, while we have no bases near the United States, if we accept the NATO proposal, we shall put ourselves at a disadvantage from the economic point of view. Another difficult problem from the economic and other points of view is technical maintenance of "foreign" planes.

Second, we want the aircraft to carry on board apparatus of agreed types and characteristics. Only in this case it will be possible to compare the information obtained.

As far as I know, no country has objected to the proposal that aircraft carry only permitted apparatus aboard. Moreover, Western representatives propose that arriving aircraft should be inspected for this purpose.

Let me begin with the last argument. Experts say that 20 hours (the NATO proposal sets this time limit) are not enough to make sure there is no unauthorised instruments aboard a plane. Besides, such an inspection is not harmless from the point of view of the safety of the flight.

As for the apparatus, the NATO countries use the term "prohibited apparatus" and make a list of such apparatus. All the other instruments, including those that may be developed in the future, are not covered by this list. We also have differences about specific types of apparatus.

We believe that visual instruments – optical and optical-electronic – are quite sufficient for observation of military activities, whereas NATO proposes also using infrared apparatus, synthetic aperture radars (the so-called side-looking radars), multi-spectral apparatus, instruments for taking air samples, magnetometers, gravimeters and laser detectors.

What are all these instruments needed for? Is it for strengthening trust? I don't think so. Are they needed for intelligence purposes? Then it is a different matter.

The same questions come to mind when one analyses the NATO proposals on the use of the information obtained. The Americans want every country to gather information itself, with the use of its own aircraft and only for itself, without reporting the results even to the inspected side.

We believe that a single data storage bank should be created. Far from all the 23 participating countries can afford frequent inspection flights. It may be more convenient sometimes to buy the information one needs. So, a data storage bank is a fair and money-saving proposal.

Speaking about the correlation between confidence-building measures and intelligence I don't want to sound too suspicious. Moreover, we consistently advocate a lowering of the level of secrecy. However, the United States insists that there should be no "closed" areas on Soviet territory and, at the same time, does not want to allow the Soviet side to inspect its bases near the USSR.

Are there many 'closed-off' zones in the USSR? Nearly all countries have such zones. In our country, neither military nor civilian aircraft overfly, without dire need, large cities, chemical and other ecologically-sensitive enterprises, nuclear power stations, and large hydros. Why should we make exceptions for foreigners and endanger the lives of Soviet citizens? Also, we have zones which are sealed off for reasons of state security. But, firstly, they are few, and, secondly, we recognise the Western countries may have them too. Everything should be fair and square.

Why did the Soviet delegation to the conference insist on a longer term of notice for overflights, in effect by doubling the NATO proposal?

We did propose a 48-hour advance note. But not because we want to hide something – the route is announced by general agreement upon the arrival of a group of observers – but to tackle some technical issues. Thus, some states would want the time to hire a plane in case the overflight is done by a third country's aircraft. Also, it takes some time to brief the crew before the flight, check the instruments, and so on.

Will there be any limitation on the number of Open Skies overflights?

There certainly will. We have not agreed on the figure yet, but all 23 states agree a limitation is necessary. We proceed from the viewpoint of material expenses.

Economic motives seem to be prominent in your reasoning. There was a time when the military counted no money. From the economic point of view, is the Open Skies necessary at all? After all, we do have satellites, don't we?

The country is short of money. There are stiff limitations on defence expenditures. You can't get more money even if you want to spend it to build up confidence. So the military have to take account of every rouble.

On satellites, I have two comments: firstly, aerial observations are still cheaper than satellites, and, secondly, the satellites' alleged omnipotence is a myth. I don't want to go into detail, but aircraft are more effective in this case. So there is every reason to work for the Open Skies.

It's always either the 'Soviet side' or the 'American side'. Was it a dialogue of the two sides only?

Of course it wasn't. Before going to Ottawa, Warsaw Treaty countries got together to discuss the key matters. NATO countries did the same. There was no full unanimity on either side though. Thus, Czechoslovakia proposed a compromise option to base monitor aircraft in third countries' airfields, while France actively supported our proposal to keep the data gathering within the format of confidence-building measures.

It seems that contradictions between the delegations were many. The question is: Is an agreement possible at all?

I think it is. We all agree that we need to implement the concept. There is no evading contradictions. But they should not be feared. I believe there will be less disagreement at the next stage of the conference. This is what we are working on.

(Trud, March 27. In full.)

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cent of those polled are sure that the collective farms will hamper private ownership of land.

It is not expected that the number of Soviet farmers, 10,000 in all, will grow significantly in the near future. The only hope is that the law will be modified as time goes on. Farmers' social activity is growing all the time; farmers' unions have been established in the Baltic republics, Byelorussia and the Russian Federation. The prevalent idea is the establishment of an agrarian union to be open for all those who work on the land, whatever the mode of ownership. □

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Germany between East and West

Y. Bovkun, *Izvestia correspondent*

ALTHOUGH East and West Germanies have not yet united, Europe is busy shaping its attitude to the emergence of a new state entity right in its centre.

What is a united Germany going to be like, many Europeans ask? The quality of relations between the two German states is changing quickly that estimates, in the East and in the West, are lagging behind events. The results of the recent elections to the GDR's Volkskammer (People's Chamber) dispelled the illusions of those who believed that the socialist ideology would discourage East Germans from resolute rapprochement with the FRG. People want prosperity and democracy to the full extent and right now. But whether or not their hopes will be justified is yet another question.

Nevertheless, as the rate of social and economic rapprochement is growing, consultations on the future Germany's political status have slowed down.

Under what conditions could the four victorious members of the anti-Hitler coalition abdicate the collective responsibility for the whole of Germany? I don't think the next meeting of the six states ("four plus two"), to be held at the end of April, will clarify the situation.

As to the negotiating parties' positions on the frontiers, which is vital for maintaining stability in Europe, they have been defined more or less clearly. "Germany within the 1990 borders", they believe, is a formula which suits both East and West, including the two German states.

Not long ago, a well-known conservative politician spoke in front of a still more conservative audience. In the interests of unity and unification with the GDR, he said, the former Germany territories in the East must be given up. But then, do borders matter now that the reform in

the East has made them penetrable? Europe is advancing towards integration. Also, we had to take into account our allies' insistent recommendations, the speaker said.

That meeting took place shortly after the Federal Chancellor, at last, unambiguously formulated the Federal government's position concerning the post-war border along the Oder and Neisse, taking into account Poland's demand for guarantees of the inviolability of this frontier. Obviously, that step was not easy for him to make: for the CDU/CSU it would most probably mean the loss of two or three hundred thousand votes of the "exiled" – at least those of them who hoped to see Germany within the 1937 borders.

The two German states' armed forces and their affiliation to military alliances constitute a far more difficult issue. The long-term goal does not arouse objections whether in the East or in the West: Germany must become part of the future European system of collective security. As to the transitional period, there are lots of variants. Which one to choose?

Neutrality? A few years ago West Germany's parliamentary opposition discussed it as a possible prerequisite for the unification of Germany. Now, with the exception of the radical-minded left-wing intelligentsia, no one seriously debates this issue.

Moreover, to make Germany neutral, the armed forces of the US and of the USSR, whose presence has a double legal basis, would have to be withdrawn. Meanwhile this presence derives from the right of the winners and from the membership of the opposing military alliances.

The allies have not yet come to terms as to the form of their presence in a united Germany. New relations between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation have not taken shape either. So, pending the formation of a system of collective European security, Germany should remain within a military alliance. Which one?

Most of the Bonn politicians believe that Ger-

many's membership of NATO will guarantee double security to Europe: its military potential, integrated into a common system, would be under permanent and reliable control and, concurrently, defend the interests of the other members of the community.

The North Atlantic alliance was invented to keep the Americans inside and the Russians outside, and neutralise the European's fear of Germany, well-known German historian Michael Stuermer told me. He also said that Eastern Europe should be interested in Germany's remaining under NATO's control.

May be. However, this does not solve the problem of the Soviet troops' presence in its territory. Now what kind of relations will the armed forces of the FRG and the GDR maintain? In which army will the young men of a united Germany serve?

The security structures during the transitional period are rather vague. West German Foreign Minister Genscher's well-known proposal boils down to the non-extension of NATO's control over the GDR. The federal government thinks in about the same way. West Berlin's social-democratic Burgomaster Momper believes that the territory of the GDR should be under international control, based on a quadripartite agreement, similar to that on West Berlin.

Neither of the plans, however, remove the contradictions of the dual interim status of the uniting Germany. This problem will remain unsolved if the confrontational mentality is not renounced.

For instance, why should the Bundeswehr fight against the National People's Army of the GDR? Do the NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation headquarters have to invent new defence concepts, if East and West are opting for comprehensive co-operation? As former commander-in-chief of NATO's joint armed forces in Europe, West German General Gerd Schmueckle joked, an advertisement "Enemy image missing. Looking for new one" should be placed in newspapers. Well-known disarmament expert, Social Democrat Egon Bahr is convinced that even the Common Market in its current shape represents a suitable model of security, to say nothing of possibilities of broadening it. Why should a state attack its neighbour if its capital is invested in it?

A waning confrontation is an objective fact. What remains to be done is to step over subjective stereotypes: we should not suspect all Germans of revanchism and neither should they think that perestroika will slow down and reverse its course. Only then shall we come to terms.

The consultations between the West German leaders and their allies, and Kohl's and Genscher's recent speeches in the European capitals give an idea of which path towards European security the Federal government has chosen. There are plans to solve at least four tasks: to accomplish the economic integration of the European community; to pass from the political co-operation between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation to co-operative security structures, wherein the two alliances could dissolve; to complete the first phase of the Vienna talks by signing two agreements – on cutting down conventional armaments and on military trust-building measures; and to broaden consultations within the European Conference on Security and lend them a new quality.

Thinking back, the levers of the German policies have never been in the hands of Germans alone. Now as before, the future of a united Germany is closely linked with the destinies of the whole of Europe. May be, in the central part of our continent, on the former confrontation line between the two systems, a new form of inter-state and human relations, based on trust and mutual respect, is emerging. □

(*Izvestia*, April 1. In full.)

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cracy pick the worst examples to emulate. Why do not they learn from Sweden, where even foreigners are eligible for participation in local elections?

So they have staged a plebiscite. The majority of the people stand for self-determination. They are considering the issue of succession. Yet even in this case, like in family law, the judge should ask the plaintiff and respondent: Have you considered it well enough? Is not a compromise better than the divorce? The separatist sentiments that have swept the country are a cause of concern and bitter feelings of all sensible people in this country and a reason for bewilderment throughout the world. The trend of integration and unity is the sign of the day all over the globe, especially in Western Europe.

Your reasoning will hardly be accepted by Lithuanian politicians. I see their stubborn refusal to stage a referendum (we have no law on plebiscite) as a sign of being afraid that the people would not support the idea of seceding from the USSR. It is clear that not all the people would support it. The idea of polling the popular opinion region-wise would be rejected out of hand. The areas of Vilnius and Klaipeda may vote against secession from the Union. The Polish population of the Vilno region have for over a year been rolling the idea of autonomy in their mouth. What does the international law say? And what is to be done about those Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians who do not want to live abroad?

I think that in demanding freedom for itself Lithuania should provide the same right to national minorities in its territory and respect their opinion. Without this, democracy is impossible. In any case, we have lived side by side for centu-

ries, we will have to live side by side, and we should help each other as good neighbours do. Our common history makes our relations a special affair.

What do you mean, a special affair?

Even if we divorce, there will be non-Lithuanians in Lithuania who would have the feeling of belonging to their ancestral land. Under international law, the ancestral country has the right to get to know the fates of compatriots abroad and help them preserve their national culture. Following World War I, some European countries were divided. There came the treaties on the rights of minorities, verified by special control agencies. Even today, we see some countries closely following the life of patriots abroad. Hungary cares for Hungarians in Romania and the USSR, Poland for Poles in the USSR, and so on.

I do not see Russia caring much for compatriots both in and outside the country. Of all non-Lithuanians, the Russians worry most. How will their civil and property rights be defended if they want to leave?

Many people change their country of residence. As a rule, they are compensated for the property they leave behind, and are reimbursed for the damage done by their forced departure, while the issues of housing, employment and so on are settled by bilateral agreements. In supporting Lithuania's striving for self-determination, the leading politicians of the world appeal to both sides to settle the controversy at the negotiating table. Their words are addressed both to the USSR Government and Lithuanian politicians, who prefer ultimatums. In addressing the world public opinion, the Lithuanian side must honour the norms of international law.

(*Izvestia*, March 28. In full.)