

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S ADDRESS to the participants in the Global Forum on Environment and Development for Survival

Esteemed Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Comrades,

The five days which you have spent here, in Moscow, in an atmosphere of intensive creative communication, your meaningful discussions and the documents adopted by you give grounds to say that an important step in moulding mankind's ecological self-consciousness has been made.

The threat of a military thermonuclear catastrophe was recognised earlier. Scientists also made an irreplaceable contribution to this. International forces at all levels – political, diplomatic and public – have already been mobilised to stave off this threat. We are witnessing the first results. But a second threat, the assessment of which until recently was clearly inadequate to its gravity, – the threat to life on Earth as a result of damage to the environment – has emerged.

The great minds of the past foresaw the consequences of the thoughtless “conquering” of nature by man. They warned that humankind could kill itself by destroying the vegetable and animal kingdoms and poisoning the soil, water and air. At the end of the 20th century, we have a very acute crisis in relations among man, society and nature, Paraphrasing Immanuel Kant, it is safe to say that the ecological imperative has forcefully entered the policy of states and people's everyday life. It is becoming unconditional, and not only because perhaps irreparable damage has been done to nature. The new scientific, technical and technological revolution, all the consequences of which we do not know yet, can make this damage irreversible. As distinct from some absolute pessimists, we are not fatalists. But the hour of decision – the hour of historic choice – has come, and there is no reasonable alternative for man because he is not predisposed to suicide. Humanity is a part of the single and integral biosphere.

We provide ourselves with vital resources due

to the products of the biospheres of the past, and we should not forget that clean water, oxygen in the atmosphere, and soil fertility are a result of the interaction of hundreds of thousands of varieties of plants and species of animals and micro-organisms which make up ecosystems. The stability of ecosystems and, hence, the quality of the environment depend on the preservation and maintenance of biological diversity and equilibrium of the biosphere. Your forum has said in no uncertain terms that something should be substantially changed in the factors for further progress in order to ensure man's initial right – the right to life. We agree with this conclusion.

I must admit that in the Soviet Union we only recently came to understand the vital importance of the ecological problem to a proper extent at the level of policy. The war danger stood in our light. Fewer words are needed here. But the gist of the matter lies not only in this. After the revolution, having started industrialising our country, we were not inclined to “divert our attention” to secondary questions, as it seemed to us at that time, especially to spend our limited funds on this. The size of our country and its riches encouraged this ecological carelessness.

Even when the pollution of the environment in some regions began to acquire a dangerous scale, this was not properly assessed at once. It is our scientists – to their credit – who sounded the ecological alarm, and the public followed them. Having changed the philosophical approaches to the problems of the development of society, perestroika has also altered our views on ecology. A detailed report on the national ecological situation, the first in the history of the Soviet state, has recently been published in our country. An unbiased analysis of our woes and dangers was made in this “green book”. The pollution of the atmosphere in some big cities exceeds the admissible level. The state of the water resources spells grave consequences for the vegetable and animal kingdom. Soils degrade, harm is being done to people's health, and full ability on the future generations is being called in question.

In its resolution “On the Guidelines of the Home and Foreign Policy of the USSR” the first Congress of People's Deputies predetermined a deep revision of our entire development, including our attitude to nature, a line to ecologising our policy. What do we mean by this?

We mean, above all, a radical change of the character of production activity from the standpoint of its ecological consequences. We must take into account the ecological capacity of territories when siting economic complexes. We must compare the possibilities of the ecosystems of regions with the corresponding national economic plans and take this into account in demographic, regional and ethnic policy. Of course, we mean the consistent and strict implementation of nature-protection measures, technology used in industry and agriculture, saving of energy and resources, and introduction of waste-free technologies and production units.

Ecologisation of politics is a new look at the problem of consumption and rationalising it. People's living standards should not be raised by exhausting natural resources. This process

should be accompanied by a restoration of the living conditions of the animal and plant world.

Ecologisation of politics affects the methods of handling many social problems, especially damage to people's health as a result of damage to the environment.

Ecologisation of politics implies all possible support for scientific research and fundamental studies of the biosphere and its ecosystems.

Ecologisation of politics requires acknowledgement of the priority of universal human values and making ecology a part of education and instruction from early age, moulding a new, contemporary attitude to Nature and, at the same time, returning to Man a sense of being a part of Nature. No moral improvement of society is possible without that.

We have already begun a major overhaul of the entire system of Nature conservation in this country. Specific programmes have been adopted or are being drawn up for individual regions and sites. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR has passed a resolution “On Emergency Measures to Improve the Ecological Situation in the Country”. Work is almost completed on the draft of a national long-term programme for environmental protection and rational use of natural resources, which provides for a gradual attainment by the year 2000 (in some cases by 2005) of a standard quality of the environment, preservation of the entire variety of species of biological resources and the working out of scientifically sound standards for the use of natural resources. In other words, we are to exert great effort to harmonise Man's relations with Nature. There is work for everyone here: legislative and executive bodies, science and education, public organisations and movements and individual initiative.

Environmental public movements have become active throughout the country. They have dealt a heavy blow to technocratic ignorance and resistance in this field. True, the “Greens” in this country and abroad often overdo it. Concern for the environment should not endanger the systems of life-support for the population. It is easy to get one or another factory or plant closed, although such closures are necessary sometimes when environmental problems have been ignored for a long time. But in general such an indiscriminate approach to the problem of saving Nature has little effect and can only do a lot of harm to the development of society's productive forces and, consequently, to the possibility of using advanced methods of nature conservation.

What is the best solution here? Ecological security based on unbiased scientific analysis on a national and, in some cases, international basis is the key to the rational location of productive forces and power-engineering and other projects of national importance.

I should make special mention of the growing importance of supervision by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and republican and local governments over the implementation of any programmes influencing the ecological state of society.

There is yet another factor to which I would

IN THIS ISSUE

Eduard Shevardnadze gives interview to Associated Press	p35
Soviet Foreign Minister receives Indian Foreign Secretary	p36
The situation in Transcaucasia	p37
Report on the USSR's socio-economic development published	p38
Naval arms: talks a must	p39
Why did Moscow send troops into Azerbaijan?	p40

like to draw your attention. There are ecosystems on the territory of this country that have not yet been affected by human activity. Therefore, we attach great importance to the creation of preserves and other protected territories. By 2000 their area is to increase approximately three times. These are unique Nature laboratories situated over a vast territory from the Arctic islands to the Caucasus and Central Asia. They may serve as standards of primeval Nature and sites for international ecological co-operation.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ecological situation in different countries is different. Many countries have accumulated valuable experience in nature conservation and we believe that any successful experience deserves general attention and practical use. The ecological crisis we are experiencing today is tragic but convincing proof that the world we all live in is interrelated and interdependent. It appears that all people everywhere realise this now.

This means, however, that we need an appropriate international policy in the field of ecology. Only if we formulate such a policy, shall we be able to avert catastrophe. True, the elaboration of such a policy poses unconventional and difficult problems which sometimes affect the sovereignty of states. yet, it is a solvable problem, but only through co-operative effort and search for a consensus. Many interesting proposals have been put forward at this forum about ways to formulate a global ecological policy. I assure you that we shall study them all. In principle, the Soviet Union is for working out as soon as possible an international programme to save the biosphere and restore its vitality. Here are our main ideas on this score.

First, the Soviet Union fully supports the Nature conservation plans and actions of our global universal organisation, the United Nations and its bodies. We want the UN Conference on the Environment and Development, which is to be held in Brazil in 1992, conducted at summit level. It would be right if that conference discussed the question of drafting an international code of ecological ethics. Binding on all states, it should contain common standards of a civilised attitude to Nature. Such an action would symbolise the willingness of the international community, represented by its top leaders, to arrange life in the 21st Century in accordance with new laws. The 1992 conference could also adopt a global programme of action on environmental protection and rational use of natural resources. Such a programme should embrace the protection of the world climate and the animal and plant life on our planet and preservation of biological diversity, without which it is impossible to preserve the regulating properties of the biosphere and, consequently, life on Earth.

Second, the Soviet Union finds it necessary to develop an international legal mechanism of protecting unique natural zones of global impor-

tance. This primarily refers to the Antarctic. The thick Antarctic ice cap is an invaluable treasury of the Earth's past, of its geological and ecological history. Significantly, the Antarctic has become the world's first nuclear-free zone and the first ever territory fully open for international research programmes. The Soviet Union shares the concern of many scientists and public figures over the exploitation of the Antarctic's natural resources. Our grandchildren will never forgive us if we fail to preserve this phenomenal ecological system. The USSR is ready to join the programme for creating a life-support system for the Antarctic – a nature preserve which belongs to the world and which is our common laboratory.

Now about the problems of the Danube and of the Black and Mediterranean seas. Seventy five per cent of the pollution is brought to the Black Sea by the Danube. Over the past few decades, the upper line of the hydrogen-sulphide layer has risen from the depth of 200 metres to 75 metres. Any day now the polluted waters may get over the Bosphorus threshold and move to the Sea of Marmora and to the Aegean and Mediterranean seas. Meanwhile, the Black Sea agreements have been signed only by Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and the USSR. Can we solve the Black Sea problem by cleaning the Dnieper, the Dniester and the Azov Sea alone, without the Danube, and without the countries all along its banks? Can the problems of protecting the Mediterranean be solved without the Black Sea states, without the USSR? The time has come to think about this problem together.

Then again, do not tropical forests and coral reefs – the ecological heritage of mankind – need our common care and concern? Or what about such unique natural phenomena as Lake Baikal?

Third, the Soviet Union believes that the world is in urgent need of an international mechanism for technological co-operation in nature conservation. Our civilisation is indivisible and demands united efforts in this area as well. We are for developing an international system of exchanging ecologically clean technologies effectively accessible to all nations without any limitations and under the most-favoured-nations regime. Also, we are ready to open our territory for inspection in order to dispel all fears that technologies might not be used according to their purpose.

I therefore agree that there should have been more businessmen at the Moscow meeting. At the next meetings this mistake should not repeat itself. I hope Dr Hammer will help link this meeting up with the next ones. And we wish him long life.

Fourth, the transition to new forms of co-operation worthy of the 21st Century has highlighted the need to create an international mechanism of ecological monitoring and control. Today, ecological confidence building measures could be based on the methods, procedures and instruments similar to those used in arms control, including on-site inspections. We could begin by establishing national preserves.

Fifth, the right to a healthy environment is one of the basic human rights. However, we should also ensure the right of the individual and groups of people to participate in drafting ecological policies. The Soviet Union supports this conclusion of the Sofia ecological conference of the states involved in the European process. What is meant here is the completeness and authenticity of ecological information. We need an order whereby every state would regularly highlight its nature-preservation activity and report about the ecological accidents that have occurred or been prevented.

At the moment the member-states of the European communities are actively debating the organisation and functions of the European Environmental Protection Agency. The Soviet Union supports the idea of setting up such an agency and is ready to join its work from the very beginning. Many ideas deserve attention. Among them is Austria's initiative to set up

international nature-protection units called "UN green helmets". Perhaps it would be useful to institute a kind of international "green cross" that would offer its assistance to the states in ecological trouble. The Soviet idea of setting up a UN centre for urgent ecological aid has the same purpose. The centre's chief mission, as we see it, is to set up international groups of experts to be sent to the sites of ecological disasters. Soon, the UN Secretary General will receive the list of Soviet experts and researchers whom the Soviet Government will be ready to send to such places at its own expense on instructions from the centre.

Sixth, last but not least. The Soviet Union believes that the time has come when the limitation of the military activity is needed not so much for lessening the danger of war as for protecting the environment. The best thing to do here would be to ban all nuclear tests. Before this authoritative international forum I reiterate the Soviet Union's readiness to ban nuclear tests completely, for all times, and at any moment, if the US does the same.

The convention on the prohibition and complete elimination of chemical weapons which, we hope, will be signed soon, arouses the need to ensure an ecologically safe method of accomplishing this task. Here, too, international co-operation would be extremely welcome, for we are going to eliminate tens of thousands of tons of these lethal weapons. Generally speaking, military activity on land, in the air and in the seas and oceans, and even in outer space should be run with due account taken of the ecological consequences. With this end in view we are planning to introduce certain limitations on the flights of military aviation, and on the movement of the land forces and of warships. We are also prepared to sign international agreements on this score.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

Fairly often new terms eventually change their meaning. This is true for the term "ecology", which was born in the 19th Century as a purely scientific notion and which has acquired a truly fatal meaning for us today. The same has happened to the term "biosphere", also the product of the 19th Century. The great Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky filled it with a new content. He created a theory of the biosphere and raised the problem of turning the entire medium mankind lives in into a sphere reigned by reason.

In conclusion, I would like to say the following: the problems you have discussed and the documents you have adopted are a call for the triumph of the trinity of scientific knowledge, human reason and universal moral principles. This task is as magnificent as it is complicated. I wish you and all of us success. □

(Pravda, January 20. In full)

Peoples of the Soviet Union

This book is an illustrated reference publication with charts, tables and diagrams. The numerous facts and figures complete with comment tell the reader about how the Soviet Union, with all its many nationalities, is solving the nationalities question.

The book also provides information on the specific features of the peoples inhabiting the USSR, their culture and customs.

price 75p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN)
3 Rosary Gardens
London SW7 4NW

This is the USSR GIVEN BY NATURE an ecological wall map

price £1.20 from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

The Wonders and Problems of Lake BAIKAL

price 60p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN)
3 Rosary Gardens
London SW7 4NW

Eduard Shevardnadze gives interview to Associated Press

Eduard Shevardnadze, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, gave an interview to the Associated Press news agency in connection with the official visit to Moscow early in February by US Secretary of State James Baker. Here follows the full text of the interview:

ASSOCIATED PRESS: The Bush Administration has been in place for a year now. Its long policy review has been completed, and presidents Bush and Gorbachev have held their first summit meeting. How would you describe the state of US-Soviet relations and the efforts of the superpowers to solve regional conflicts?

SHEVARDNADZE: I believe that in analysing Soviet-US relations we can, on the whole, look with satisfaction back to the past year. And the prospects too seem to be favourable.

It has been possible not only to maintain the positive momentum in the development of relations between our two countries, but also to elevate them to a new dimension. Both sides agree that having renounced the spirit of confrontation and achieved certain mutual understanding we must now move on to mutual action.

This need arises virtually in all spheres of Soviet-US relations, not only in the last instance — in the area of solving regional conflicts that you have mentioned.

We have seen some tangible improvements here, although difficulties persist too.

The success of the past year, to be credited also to Soviet-US contacts, include the settlement in south-west Africa and the achievement of independence by Namibia.

The machinery to promote a Cambodian settlement is shifting into higher gear. It seems we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel there.

We keep constantly in sight the problems of the Middle East. It is important that Israel too should help take advantage of the opportunities that are there.

A political settlement in Afghanistan is literally knocking on the door. Reliance on military force has outlived itself.

The peace process in Central America has travelled a long and difficult path. In this connection the US action against Panama, undertaken at a very crucial period for that region, gives rise to grave concern. We have expressed our attitude toward the use of force, toward contempt for international law. We hope that a sense of realism will prevail in Washington and that respect will be shown for the legitimate interests of Central American states and for their right to a free choice.

It can be seen from this brief 'inventory' that there will be something for us to talk about with Secretary of State James Baker early in February in Moscow. We expect to have productive discussions.

President Bush has said that the United States wants closer co-operation with the Soviet Union, and Secretary Baker has suggested that co-operation might include technical advice in areas such as international monetary affairs. The US Administration is moving toward removal of trade barriers. What forms of co-operation would you say are most needed or would be most effective, and what short-term benefits are expected from improved trade relations?

In the sphere of economic co-operation we think, just like the United States does, both of short-term and long-term mutual benefits. For all the difficulties of economic conditions in our country, the situation is not such that we need 'the last straw'. We have vast reserves. And the

purpose of perestroika is to mobilise those reserves.

At this time perestroika is going through perhaps the most difficult period of transition from one economic management system and political structure to another. It turned out that the most difficult revolution is a peaceful revolution, a change in the minds of people.

We have a perestroika concept. We are continuing our creative search for approaches to implementing some of its individual elements. Despite all the difficulties, we keep moving steadily ahead. And we are convinced of our ultimate success.

One of the elements of the economic programme of perestroika is the integration of our country into the world economy system. Our economic ties with the United States could have no small role here. The strategic goal is truly large-scale, mutually advantageous co-operation and interaction of Soviet and American economies. This would benefit both sides.

Unfortunately, what stands in the way is the remaining discriminatory barriers, whether the absence of the most favoured nation treatment or the outdated COCOM regulations. We hope that the readiness the US Administration declared in Malta to move toward normalisation of trade and economic relations, will be translated into concrete deeds.

The United States and the Soviet Union are pressing for a strategic arms reduction agreement in principle by June and for signing of a start treaty this year. Yet, there has been little if any progress reported on the most difficult longstanding obstacles to agreement. Will the Soviet Union sign and implement a strategic arms reduction treaty that does not limit sea-launched cruise missiles, or restrict the US Strategic Defence Initiative?

One of the most important results at Malta was the political decision of the sides to conclude a start treaty in 1990. Generally speaking, this year can become 'the disarmament year'. It is quite realistic to reach agreements also in areas such as the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe and the elimination of chemical weapons.

Thus, our joint policies have been defined very clearly. It now remains to translate them into negotiating positions.

As to the fundamental issues that you have touched upon, we submitted, in Wyoming, compromise proposals on sea-launched cruise missiles. We are willing to limit them outside the treaty framework on the condition that the relevant provisions will be recorded concurrently with the treaty, will be mandatory and subject to verification.

We are willing to sign and implement a start treaty even without agreement on space, if the sides continue to observe the ABM Treaty as signed in 1972. That was also a major step that we took in Wyoming. It is to be hoped that Secretary Baker will bring to Moscow adequate responses to our initiatives. It is not too long before he comes here.

Does the United States' support for the independence of the Baltic republics contribute to the separatist campaign in Lithuania and elsewhere, and will you seek a change in US policy as part of President Gorbachev's efforts to prevent the breakup of the union?

We know the position of the United States which does not recognise the entry of the Baltic republics into the union. Our assessment of it

must be well known to you, too.

As to the specific aspects of establishing a truly federative structure of our country to supersede the unitarism, that actually existed, and setting up a new mechanism of relationships between the republics and the centre, these problems are addressed in the course of a broad dialogue in our country taking into account the interests of all the ethnic groups.

The secession of some particular republics from the union would produce not only additional military-political and economic stresses for their population, but could also result in a major destabilisation of the existing international structure. It is in no one's interest to see this happen.

The problems of inter-ethnic relations are so delicate and sensitive that one should avoid any outside interference in the process of their development. Otherwise, one can provoke unpredictable repercussions.

I should say that on the whole we see that responsible politicians are aware of this.

Thus, recently, the US Administration has reaffirmed that since the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union the United States recognises the territorial integrity of our country. The principles, recorded in the Helsinki Final Act to which the United States affixed its signature, are also well known.

An article signed 'Z' in the American magazine Daedalus has provoked something of a sensation with its contention that President Gorbachev's attempts at reform are futile and that the West should therefore not try to help them succeed. Perhaps the article is getting particular attention right now due to the climate, with Lithuania trying to break from Moscow, the Caucasus ablaze with ethnic quarrels and the economy unable to provide basic food and consumer goods to people throughout the country. How would you respond to 'Z'?

I know about the article by 'Z' from the newspaper version. It is strange that the bag of old clichés it contains about the demise of socialism is portrayed as something of a sensation. This was written and spoken about many times over the past 70 years. And such forecasts always ended up on the dump of history.

The article's author who seems to be prone to stereotype thinking has completely distorted ideas about the content of our perestroika and about the nature of the on-going processes within Soviet society. It is our impression that the changes occurring in the world are not altogether to his taste and that he does not like the administration's course, which is supported by most Americans, for 'a new closeness' with the Soviet Union.

As to our own difficulties, we know about them and we do not conceal them. But we are confident that these difficulties will be overcome because there is no alternative to perestroika.

There is much work ahead of us and we are prepared to do it. □

(Moscow, January 28)

**Indira
GANDHI**

price 50p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

Soviet Foreign Minister receives Indian Foreign Secretary

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE, member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, received Shailendra Kumar Singh, Foreign Secretary of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, in the Soviet Foreign Ministry on January 27.

The Indian diplomat delivered to the Soviet Minister a personal message addressed to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev from Indian Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh.

Shevardnadze and Singh had a talk during which the Soviet Foreign Minister emphasised the invariability of the Soviet Union's course towards all-round development and strengthening of co-operation with democratic peace-loving India.

The Indian representative said that the Indian Government is guided by a similar approach with regard to the Soviet Union.

During the discussion of international problems, Shevardnadze informed Singh of the course of Soviet-American talks on reducing strategic offensive arms and of work connected with the idea of convening an all-European summit conference before the end of 1990.

The importance of intensifying efforts towards complete cessation of nuclear tests was specially pointed out. The Indian side expressed understanding of and support for the approaches set out.

Singh, for his part, described the political situation in India, giving special attention to the aggravation of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

He pointed to India's concern over Pakistan's policy of supporting the secessionists, its actions to destabilise the situation in the state and Islamabad's official statements which by no means promote the normalisation of relations between the two countries.

It was emphasised that Pakistan's actions completely contradict the spirit and letter of the Simla Agreement under which differences between the sides should be settled by peaceful means.

Singh reaffirmed the determination of the government and people of India to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

The Soviet side stated that it condemns foreign interference in any form in the affairs of India.

Singh displayed interest in the processes taking place in the Soviet Union and in particular in the way the situation is taking shape in view of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In answer to a question to this effect Shevardnadze emphasised that the conflict is of long inter-ethnic character and that ethnic, not religious, world-outlook or other problems underlie the conflict.

Over the past two years the Soviet leadership has been taking most active efforts towards a political resolution of the conflict, restoration of

normal good relations between the peoples of the two republics that have long-standing traditions of friendship.

However, when the situation assumed a dramatic character and when an orgy of killings, rampaging and trampling on the elementary norms of law and legality began, tens of thousands of refugees appeared, and armed clashes on an ethnic basis assumed a wide scope, it was decided to use military force to restore law and order, to ensure the safety of people and to uphold the constitution of the USSR and of these union republics.

"I want to point out once again," Shevardnadze said, "that the introduction of troops was prompted not by some political goals connected with the suppression of dissent, as some circles abroad are trying to present it, but by the sole aim - to end bloodshed and to bring peace and security back to people and to enable the peoples of the two republics to democratically develop and build their future.

"As far as the solution of political problems is concerned, the Soviet leadership - as it has repeatedly stated - is categorically against the use of force. Dialogue is the main instrument in this case."

Matters concerning a settlement of the Afghan and Cambodian situations and the forthcoming Soviet-American meeting in Moscow were also touched upon during the conversation which was held in a warm and friendly atmosphere. □

Soviet Foreign Ministry news briefing

SOVIET Deputy Foreign Minister Ivan Aboimov summoned Poland's charge d'affaires in the Soviet Union Jerzy Smolinski today to make an official statement, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vadim Perflyev told a news briefing on January 29.

The statement expressed a resolute protest against an attack on the Soviet Consulate-General in Krakow and demanded that all necessary measures be taken to ensure the safety of Soviet diplomatic, consular and other missions in Poland.

Perflyev said that First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov made a representation to the head of the Israeli Consular Group in Moscow, Arieh Levin.

Vorontsov focussed on recent statements by a number of Israeli politicians, including the head of government, about the need to keep Arab territories in order to resettle arriving immigrants, including Soviet.

"The Israeli leadership is confirming its an-

nexation of occupied Arab territories and refusing to seek compromise solutions to the Middle East conflict," Perflyev quoted Vorontsov as saying.

Vorontsov expressed concern that "certain Jewish emigrants might fall for propaganda and become a tool in the implementation of unlawful plans condemned by international public."

Perflyev said the US decision to start television broadcasting direct to Cuba in the near future "could not only aggravate Cuban-US relations. It could also have unfavourable consequences for the general situation in the region."

He added that the TV-Marti project "has an illegitimate confrontational character and contradicts the current trends in international politics."

Commenting on an announcement by the Cuban Government about a suspension of its troop withdrawal from Angola, Perflyev said the Cuban side made the decision in response to an attack by Unita rebels on a Cuban unit guarding a civilian facility in the area of the Angolan City of Lobito.

"The Soviet Union resolutely denounces this action by Unita," he said.

"It is inadmissible for irresponsible actions to hamper the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola under an agreed schedule, to put into jeopardy the New York Agreements and to interfere with international efforts for ensuring peace and stability in south west Africa.

Asked whether there was a possibility that US President George Bush will propose removing military bases from Europe, specifically from Greece, the Soviet spokesman said: "Now that the cold war is over, any of its elements, such as US bases located far beyond the United States, should recede into the past." □

Soviet Government extends export/import licensing

THE Soviet Government has extended the range of licensed Soviet exports and imports and amended its March 1989 resolution which specified the licence-issuing procedure.

The Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations has been given the right to issue licences for the export of Tibetan medical products, while the Ministry of Chemical and Oil-Refining Industry has been given the right to issue licences for the export of chemicals.

The import of pedigree cattle - cattle, sheep, goats and pigs - this year will be licensed and carried out with permission of the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations.

The export of yellow and red phosphorus from the Soviet Union will also be licensed. Licences will be issued by the Soviet agrochemical association Agrokhim.

Soviet customs authorities have been instructed to allow these goods across the Soviet border only if the supplier has a licence issued by a corresponding organisation, an official from the Council of Ministers' State Foreign Economic Commission said.

The new rules come into force as of February 1, 1990. □

The Judicial System in the USSR

price 60p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens
London SW7 4NW

USSR Yearbook

price £1.50 from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens
London SW7 4NW

The situation in Transcaucasia

By TASS correspondents from Azerbaijan and Armenia:

THE situation in Azerbaijan and Armenia is being gradually stabilised. Law and order maintenance forces, Interior Ministry troops and Soviet Army units are taking measures to normalise it with the assistance of the public.

Baku. Over the past 24 hours, enterprises with a continuous production cycle and vital facilities operated at full capacity. The underground railway is functioning and public transport services have for the most part resumed working.

The work of the republican television has been restored. Colonel Nikolai Petrusenko, People's Deputy of the USSR, spoke on local radio in a live broadcast, giving answers to people's telephone calls. His dialogue with Baku residents was frank and constructive.

There have been no clashes of an inter-ethnic nature. Voluntary associations of citizens are being set up with active participation of reservists for the maintenance of order.

A destabilising influence is being exerted by militant groups that continue to spread false rumours and are trying to undermine the prestige of local government bodies. Leaflets calling for civil disobedience are being distributed.

About 10,000 leaflets of a provocative nature were confiscated at the Shmidt plant that served as one of the militants' 'headquarters'.

The population welcomed the massive supply of fuel delivered to Baku filling stations by troops to ensure the operation of the ambulance service, motor transport, food-industry and trade enterprises. Troops are restoring the republican communications structure.

Lenkoran. The activities of Party and local government bodies have been restored. It is calm in the city. Enterprises, organisations and institutions are functioning. Party activists and residents of the city had a meeting with commanders and political officers of the border detachment in the city.

They jointly worked out specific measures to stabilise the situation. Militants who tried to interfere with the process were driven out of the premises by city residents themselves.

Hanlar. As a result of active explanatory work among the population, militants from the 'defence committee' began to surrender their arms on January 26 and 27.

An armoured personnel carrier, an infantry combat vehicle, 12 hail control guns, 97 sub-machine guns, 4 carbines and 47 small-bore rifles were handed in.

The search for and surrender of arms are being continued in other areas of the republic as well. No measures in prosecution are applied to people who voluntarily hand in arms.

Nakhichevan. The situation in the autonomous republic is stabilising, a spokesman at the Party Regional Committee told an Azerinform correspondent.

All industrial and building enterprises and organisations are operating and transport is functioning normally. The publication of the regional newspaper was resumed after a weeklong interval.

During the investigation of the activities of the extremist wing of the Azerbaijan Popular Front, State Security Committee personnel detained Allakhverdiyev and Asadov, leaders of the 'popular front' board of Ilyichovsky district, who had weapons with them, and Ismailov, one of the leaders of the 'popular front' group in Baku who was carrying a forged passport and identity card. An investigation is under way.

At the same time the situation in the Nakhichevan autonomous republic still remains complex.

Gandzha. The voluntary handing in of arms continues. Life is returning to normal. For the second day running no rallies have been held. Food industry enterprises, transport and everyday service establishments are functioning. Foodstuffs are being supplied to the shops. Suburban electric trains has resumed normal service, and city newspapers are being published.

But many enterprises are still not operating. Construction sites are at a standstill owing to an acute shortage of stone, cement and other building materials. The damage section of the Ahsu-Gandzha water supply line has not been restored.

Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region. Motor traffic has resumed. In Stepanakert, representatives of the republican organising committee for the normalisation of the situation in the region met the military command. Matters connected with the prevention of inter-ethnic conflicts were discussed.

Strong points of militants with large stocks of food were uncovered in Kirkijan settlement. A home-made artillery gun, hunting guns, more than 500 cartridges, six kilograms of canister and blank weapons were confiscated.

Mingéchaur. Enterprises, with continuous production cycle, health care facilities, schools kindergartens, a bakery plant, food shops, markets and transport are operating. The local population, including detachments of workers' militia, actively participate in the maintenance of order in the city.

Neftechala. All enterprises, organisations and institutions are functioning normally. The situation is fully under control. A 'headquarters' of the militants was routed in the area on the night of January 27 to 28. More than 200 units of firearms were confiscated.

Hachmas. On January 27 Azerbaijan Popular Front militants forced their way into the city mosque and demanded money. Threatening to blow the mosque up, they stole 27,700 roubles donated by the population.

Sheki. A bread making plant, health care institutions, part of trade, public catering, and communications facilities are functioning. However, Azerbaijan's major silk industry complex – the Lenin Silk production Amalgamation – and a number of other industrial plants, construction projects and transport are at a standstill.

In Armenia, a hail control gun, 200 shells for it, a submachine gun, eight pistols, a Nagant revolver and four rifles have been handed in over the past 24 hours.

The formation of groups of militants is going on in various parts of the republic, and thefts of weapons continue. There have been attempts to manufacture home-made bullet-proof vests, small arms and optical sights.

There is mounting concern in the republic in connection with the availability of a large amount of stolen weapons that wind up in the hands of criminal elements.

The leaders of informal organisations should realise that the measure of their responsibility to their own people for the crisis in the region will grow still further if they continue to hinder the voluntary handing in of stolen or seized weapons.

Reports from the Soviet-Iranian border more and more often mention the reassessment of the state of affairs in the region by the population. Farmers, workers, veterans, directors of farms and industrial plants request the command and political bodies of border troops to help them and defend them from militants.

In Jalilabad district of Azerbaijan, 'popular front' functionaries systematically extort money from the population. This is giving rise to indi-

gnation. In a number of villages the residents set up voluntary teams to protect themselves from criminal encroachments.

Over the past 24 hours, 80 people found illegally crossing the border have been detained. About 22 million Iranian rials, tens of wrist watches, and Soviet money were confiscated from two smugglers. □

(Moscow, January 28)

Azerbaijani Party Central Committee elects new chief

THE Central committee of the Azerbaijani Communist party held a plenary meeting in Baku on January 24 to discuss the socio-political situation in the republic and organisational issues, Radio Baku announced on January 25.

Members of the Central Committee Bureau gave detailed reports to the plenum's participants about their meeting with the country's top leadership, the radio said. Eighteen people took part in the discussion.

The plenum relieved Adul-Rakhman Vezirov of the duties of the First Secretary of the Party Central Committee for serious mistakes that led to the crisis.

Two people were nominated for the top Party post: Ayaz Mutalibov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the republic, and Gasan Gasanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijani Communist Party.

Mutalibov was elected the new Party chief by secret ballot. Eighty-two people voted for his candidature, and 31 against.

A mechanical engineer by profession, Mutalibov worked as a foreman at the Baku household electronics plant. He eventually became its manager and then worked in Party and local government bodies.

During the past six years, before being appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the republic, Mutalibov headed Azerbaijan's State Planning Committee.

The plenum was attended and addressed by Yevgeni Primakaov, alternate member of the Politburo of the CPSU and Andrei Girenko, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

The question of Vezirov's Party membership had not been discussed at the Plenum. □

DOCUMENTS of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the WARSAW TREATY Member States

Bucharest
July 7-8 1989

Price 30p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

Report on the USSR's socio-economic development published

GROWTH rates for the production of consumer goods outpaced the increase in the means of production in the USSR in 1989, Goskomstat, the Soviet State Committee for Statistics, reported on January 28.

It summed up the results of the country's socio-economic development in 1989. The committee's report says that 1989 has witnessed the implementation of measures to restructure the economy, effect its social re-orientation and improve the country's financial status. Arms production conversion has been started. Investments in the social sphere made a priority. Measures to raise people's welfare, planned for 1989, have been carried out.

Gross national product increased 3 per cent in 1989 (excluding the effect of the actual price change), national income – 2.4 per cent, and labour productivity – 2.3 per cent.

However, the economic situation in the country remains complex. Tension on consumer markets rose. The dynamism of economic development declined. Many important targets of the country's socio-economic development plan for 1989 were not met.

The actual rise in prices for consumer goods and paid services amounted to 2 per cent as against 1988. Considering the increase in unsatisfied demand, inflation in the consumer sector reached 7.5 per cent.

Industrial output increased 1.7 per cent in 1989. The insignificant production growth rates are attributed largely to the industry's unsatisfactory performance in the second half of the year.

Association of peasant husbandries set up in USSR

USSR-Britain joint production of robots

THE Sumy machine-building plant in the Ukraine has launched serial production of robotised technological complexes in co-operation with the British manufacturing firm the General Electric Company

The Sumy machine-builders now manufacture metallic mechanical parts for the installations, while the British partners instal the electronics in them. Each complex incorporates up to 30 robots, designed to handle 999 programmes.

"We are interested in such co-operation," noted Alexander Shulyak, chief designer of the project. "We've visited our British colleagues and studied their methods of work. We have already received orders for sophisticated robots from several automobile and shipbuilding plants. We have also orders from abroad."

Contacts between Ukrainian enterprises and British firms are developing steadily. Production co-operation is on the rise. New joint ventures are being launched. The Soviet-British enterprise Diamed, for instance, which recently opened in Makeyevka (Donbass), has undertaken to build and equip a medical diagnostical centre capable of dealing with 500 patients daily. □

(TASS, January 26)

Labour discipline slackened in all branches of the national economy, the report says. Last year witnessed increased absence from work, idle time and personnel turnover. Over seven million man-days were lost in the past year due to strikes. Direct output losses (unfulfilled work) amounted to 0.8 billion roubles.

Nineteen-Eighty-Nine saw the construction of 2.2 million apartments with an aggregate area 128.1 Million square metres. The plan for commissioning housing in the country as a whole was underfulfilled for the first time during the current five-year period. Building workers constructed 4.3 million square metres less of housing in 1989 as against 1988.

The output of grain, potatoes and sunflowers rose in 1989 and a rich sugar-beet harvest was taken in. At the same time, the country grew less vegetables, grapes and cotton than in 1988. Fifty-nine million tonnes of grain were added to state resources, or 27.3 million tonnes less than was called for by the state-placed order.

The number of union and republican ministries and agencies declined by 25 per cent as a result of streamlining the organisational structures of management. The number of all management staff dropped by 254,000 people as against the third quarter of 1988, or 14 per cent.

Foreign trade turnover rose 4.7 per cent in 1989. The country's exports amounted to 68.2 billion roubles, which is 1.1 billion roubles or 1.7 per cent up on 1988. The country imported 70.2 billion roubles worth of commodities, which is 7.9 per cent up on 1988.

Goskomstat reported that 1,274 joint enterprises were registered in the USSR. They involve firms and organisations from 60 countries.

The population of the USSR had reached 288.8 million by the beginning of 1990. □

THE activists, who set up peasant husbandries or farm production co-operatives, have inaugurated the Association of Peasant Husbandries and Co-operatives of Russia. Its constituent congress ended in Moscow on January 24.

The association is headed by Alexei Yemelyanov, Vice-Chairman of the Agrarian Problems and Food Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet and Academician of the USSR Academy of Agricultural Sciences. He is a zealous advocate of new forms of economic management.

The main goal of the new public organisation is to render economic, social and legal assistance to Soviet farmers and co-operatives in promoting efficient production methods, reviving the peasant way of life and labour. The association has the right to effect export and import transactions and propose legislative initiatives. The constituent congress expressed its attitude to the published draft principles of the federal and republican law on land. They demanded that "workers of collective and state farms not be denied the land they cultivate."

Yemelyanov said that the free association of farmers had the purpose of helping "self-management organisations to gradually gain ground and oust the administrative-command system, imposed from above, that is still in force." The association, he believes, "can create a managerial mechanism meeting not only the principles of socialism, but the essence of normal society."

(continued on next page)

Azerbaijan and Armenia – performance within Soviet economy

THERE are largely common reasons for the irregularity in the supply of soap and powdered detergents to the Soviet retail trade network, which forced the country to increase by 10-fold the import of detergents in 1989, and this year's sudden scarcity of cigarettes. One of them is the ongoing ethnic conflict in Transcaucasia reports TASS correspondent Andrei Orlov on January 29.

Given the established methods of production in the USSR coupled with a very high level of co-operative links in the country's economy, frequent stoppages in the production of chemicals in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait or cigarette paper in Yerevan, Armenia, painfully affect consumers throughout the country and are a heavy burden on the consumer market weak as it is. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, now subsiding, now bursting into a bloody flame, as has happened this January, has a specific economic dimension.

According to the figures issued by the USSR State Committee for Statistics, the national income of the two republics, with a combined population of slightly more than 10 million, stood at 16.8 billion roubles in 1989, or 2.6 per cent of the all-union production. They contribute over a quarter of their output to the all-union fund.

For instance, Azerbaijan supplies 37 per cent of its production of oil and gas, 65 per cent of its chemicals, and 40 per cent of food products to other parts of the country.

As for Armenia, before the devastating earthquake of 1988, it exported 65 per cent of its light industry output, 59 per cent of its production of chemicals, and virtually all trucks, motor-tyres, farm machinery, electronics, instruments and many other goods produced in the republic. A plant in Spitak, which was destroyed by the earthquake, used to turn out a quarter of all lifts produced in the country.

The two republics also heavily depend on other areas of the country. Azerbaijan depends entirely on imports for its requirements in timber, paper, cardboard, motor-tyres and soda ash. Union supplies of ferrous metals (51 per cent of the republic's consumption), chemical industry products (46 per cent), and light industry output (39 per cent) are crucial to Azerbaijan. Almost half of the meat sold in the state sector and 79 per cent of milk products are imported to the republic.

Armenia, in turn, completely depends on imported fuel. It imports 93 per cent of ferrous metals, 56 per cent of chemicals and light industry goods, and 32 per cent of machines and equipment. The republic also takes delivery of large quantities of milk, meat, sugar, butter, and fish.

Lastly, both Armenia and Azerbaijan need to import all their requirements of photo cameras, vacuum cleaners, radio sets and other consumer durables.

Azerbaijan accounts for just 0.8 per cent of Soviet exports, and Armenia 0.1 per cent.

Azerbaijan exports two per cent of its industrial output and Armenia 0.7 per cent. □

Muslims
in
the
USSR

at 40p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

Naval arms: talks a must

Admiral Nikolai Amelko, Candidate of Military Science (naval) gave the following interview to Major-General Yuri Lebedev, Novosti political writer and expert on military issues:

LEBEDEV: The defensive military doctrine precludes the offensive component. Is the rule applicable to naval arms?

AMELKO: The majority of modern combat vessels are universal, i.e. they can be used for both for offence and defence. But there are purely offensive vessels, too. Strike aircraft-carriers are one such type, for they are designed to deliver bomb and missile strikes, including the use of nuclear weapons, against land targets – cities and industrial and military installations. Each USN (US Navy) aircraft-carrier has up to a hundred aircraft on board, including 40 nuclear-capable aircraft. Their range of operation is some 2,000 kilometres. The rest – fighters, radar patrol aircraft, submarine hunters, target finders and flying tankers – give support to the hostilities and defend the aircraft-carrier. Thus, aircraft are the main weapon of aircraft-carriers, a feature of its design.

Surface and submarine vessels with long-range sea-based cruise missiles (range 600km plus) are other types of offensive weapons. Their arms are their main characteristic. The USN Tomahawk sea-to-land cruise missile has a range of 3,000km in the nuclear-tipped variant, and 1,300km in the conventional variant.

Another two types are SLBM-armed submarines and landing-craft capable of carrying and landing marine landing parties on unprepared shores.

The Soviet press has first reported and later denied the construction of aircraft-carriers in the Soviet Union. Your comment?

The Soviet Union is building heavy cruisers cap-

able of carrying aircraft, not aircraft-carriers. We have four of them and a fifth is still under construction. The four vessels – the *Kiev* to the *Tbilisi* – are of the same type, the only difference being their displacements and the number of aircraft on board. Each new one has more aircraft than its predecessor. But they are cruisers by right. They are equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles and heavy guns, a characteristic of cruisers. At the same time, they have a small number of aircraft – planes and helicopters – on board, but they are not capable of delivering strikes against shore targets.

They were first designed in the early 1970s, when the arms race was at its height. Admiral Gorshkov, who has contributed a lot to the construction of the modern Soviet Navy, suggested we build aircraft-carriers. But the Soviet defence industry was not able to build them, so we were forced to build something bigger than a cruiser and smaller than an aircraft-carrier, although many naval experts said it was a mistake.

The air-capable cruisers were assigned the following tasks: to find and destroy enemy submarines, help naval operations, fight enemy surface ships, and provide anti-aircraft defence for naval groups in distant areas. There are some questions, though, that defy logical answers.

Thus, what are the naval groups to be protected in 'distant areas'? In the light of the Soviet Union's geographic situation and the US military bases along its perimeter, one can hardly expect the cruisers to reach these 'distant areas'. Even if they do, they will have to engage exclusively in self-defence, which is hardly promising of success.

The cost of the heavy cruiser has not been

publicised yet, but judging by all it is billions of roubles. Perhaps the price is too high?

What are the prime measures to lower naval confrontation?

The USSR has repeatedly called for talks. One can hardly question the destabilising character of the navies and the extent of threat emanating from them. The navies of the major powers make up a third of the potential of the armed forces. Everyday naval activities, especially outside territorial waters, cause the legitimate concern of all states, especially in the event the other side concentrates naval forces comparable with wartime forces.

Another rationale is the need to balance out European forces, especially in the event that other weapons levels are lowered following Vienna accords.

It seems too early to launch an effort to prune the navies. But the current situation can be tolerated no more. There must be a staged effort to ameliorate the situation, in the Pacific also. One way to do it is to heed Gorbachev's initiatives for the reduction of naval activities, proposed in Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk.

It is high time all naval powers acceded to the accords on the prevention of incidents at sea and in the air space above, like the USSR-US accords. It is expedient to agree on a minimal distance the more dangerous naval groups can approach the shores of other states – carriers of nuclear weapons and long-range cruise missiles, and large groups of combat and landing vessels.

Following these steps, one could proceed to actually lower the confrontation at sea and reduce the navies. □

Will the Warsaw Treaty Organisation be restructured?

By Vladimir Katin, Novosti political analyst

I THINK that perestroika, which has embraced all Warsaw Treaty countries, will affect their military alliance, too. How will it change? The military-political bloc will most likely become a politico-military, and later a purely political alliance. The winds of change have already initiated dialogue on European issues between the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and NATO.

The coming restructuring of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation should be complemented by corresponding NATO actions. This is not only wishful thinking. The aim of the Vienna talks on conventional weapons is to proceed from reducing armaments and restructuring armed forces

(continued from previous page)

Yemelyanov realises that it is very difficult to foster a real farmer, aware that he is master of his land, because the administrative system has stripped him of this feeling. "This is why our task is to create a favourable and sound climate for people who are eager to run their farms independently. I believe the peasant and co-operative sector will grow steadily. The number of people in it will increase as we overcome the administrative system and create conditions for the development of peasant and co-operative husbandries." □

and military structures to eliminating military confrontation in Europe.

The Warsaw Treaty countries clearly advocate the disbanding of the two blocs. But the preservation of NATO will keep alive the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, which guarantees the security of its seven members and is a factor for stability and peace in Europe. Proof of this is the 35-year-long history of the organisation.

Despite changes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation is not in crisis or on the verge of dissolution. The latest meeting of the Defence Ministers' Committee of the organisation, held in Budapest six weeks ago, reaffirmed this.

However, this does not mean that the Warsaw Treaty members are unanimous on all issues, but difference of opinion is a natural thing.

What changes can one expect in the Warsaw Treaty Organisation?

Political observers in Moscow, diplomats and military experts think that the organisation members will become equal partners respecting the diversity of social structures of each other. Unanimity on the key issues does not preclude differences, and even controversies, on individual issues.

I think that the past few years, and especially months, have shown to East Europeans that the Old Soviet policy with regard to its allies has been buried. This will greatly facilitate the improvement of relations within the alliance.

It is believed in this country that the reforms of the organisation can include the creation of a standing political headquarters to draft political

decisions for problems and to tackle issues of inter-alliance dialogue.

The efficiency of the Political Consultative Committee, headed by the supreme party leaders, is being questioned. Under the current structure of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, many problems are settled, or rather were settled, not at state level, but at the highest party level, by the Political Consultative Committee. This cannot go on in the current quickly changing conditions. Hence, we need a new body, probably called other than the headquarters.

In a word, the coming restructuring of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation will be another proof of the peaceful disposition of its members. □

PERESTROIKA as seen by an ECONOMIST

By Ruslan Hasbulatov

at 30p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN9),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

Why did Moscow send troops into Azerbaijan?

By Eduard Ryabtsev, *Novosti* news analyst

FOLLOWERS of Islam in some countries denounced the Soviet leadership for using force in Azerbaijan, they said that Moscow was using "double standards": on the one hand it conducted talks with Baltic republics concerning their independence, and, on the other "dealt summarily with Azerbaijani Muslims with force of arms.

Can such pronouncements be regarded as true?

Oddly enough, those who are criticising the Soviet leadership these days forget to mention that the main reason for the dispatch of troops to Azerbaijan was the rapid deterioration of the ethnic conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians. The situation was so unruly that it jeopardised the lives of thousands of innocent people. In my view, no government with a sense of responsibility could remain indifferent in such a situation or fail to take resolute steps to avoid further bloodshed. By the way, blood flowed in Baku only because the extremists met troops with submachine gun fire, evidently the prospect of normalisation did not suit them: it would prevent them from continuing the rampage, including outright pogroms, with impunity.

Some people in the USSR also criticise the Soviet leadership for being too late in ending troops into Azerbaijan and thus failing to prevent the situation from deteriorating. However, they forget that the Soviet Government and the Supreme Soviet, the national legislature, repeatedly appealed to the conflicting sides and took many specific steps to resolve the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region.

One gets the impression that some persons in the leadership of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan are after certain aims which could not be

further from those of perestroika. They have not condemned the large-scale pogroms and killings of dozens of Armenians in Baku. On the contrary, seeing all that violence and lawlessness, they started kindling nationalistic sentiments, disobeyed the legitimate authorities and assembled groups of street fighters, who in their turn, began to seize firearms and attack the military.

Such actions could not but cause the utmost concern of the Soviet leadership. If the process of perestroika opens broad opportunities for affirming the principle of freedom of conscience for all religions, why are some followers of Islam in Azerbaijan resorting to force of arms and destroying border fortifications? An indulgent attitude to actions of that kind, no matter where they are taking place, would mean giving the green light to such behaviour in many regions of the world, because people belonging to different tribes, nationalities and religions live together almost everywhere. In essence, this is one of the potential reasons of numerous regional conflicts.

But maybe the Azerbaijanis – all of them – no longer want to remain within the USSR? If the overwhelming majority of the population of that republic wants to secede from the Soviet Union, why are popular front leaders staging unlawful actions with bands of fighting-men instead of giving peaceful expression to that desire? This is why when Moscow is being accused of "double-standards" towards Azerbaijani Muslims someone is deliberately distorting the reasons which necessitated the decision to send troops into Azerbaijan and introduce a state of Emergency there.

Some people can object: the popular front is backed by hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis. But who are these people? These are mainly refugees from Armenia who are homeless and jobless now, who are indignant at the sluggishness of the local authorities in tackling their social problems. Local extremists are trying to

exploit precisely these feelings for their own ends.

Perestroika is not doing anything to prevent Islam from flourishing in Muslim regions of the USSR. It is obvious that in Azerbaijan it is being hampered by extremism and political ambitions of certain members of the popular front as well as corrupt persons manipulating the nationalist feelings of the people.

Of course, the Muslim public abroad is free to voice its concern about the events in Azerbaijan. However, if it supports perestroika, it can do a great deal to cool off some of the hotheads in the leadership of the Popular Front of Azerbaijan. In doing so, it can not only promote an early establishment of peace in that republic and the normalisation of life there, but also the flourishing of Islam in Azerbaijan and the development of broad contacts between Soviet Muslims and their co-religionists in other countries. □

Soviet-Japanese venture

A Soviet-Japanese joint venture is being established in the field of machine tool making for the first time since the process of creating ventures with foreign firms began in the Soviet Union.

The venture is being instituted by the production amalgamation Stankoservice, the Moscow Technical Service Centre and the all-union association Stankoimport on the Soviet side and the firms Fanuc and Mitsui Bussan on the Japanese side.

Thereby Fanuc, the world's major producer of numerical-programme-control and robotic devices and Soviet machine-tool making organisations are joining hands, spokesmen at the USSR Ministry of the Machine Tool and Instrument Making Industry, told TASS on January 26.

The partners intend to carry out the technical servicing of machine tools, train operators to handle them and to set up the production and sale in the Soviet Union of various products made from plastics. These include disposable syringes, instrument panels for motor vehicles, and consumer goods.

A Soviet-Swedish joint venture involving the Litstankoproekt organisation (USSR) and the Swedish firm Galvour has begun to design and make purifying equipment.

The establishment of new joint ventures with Italian and West German partners is in prospect. Negotiations to this effect are being held. □

Arab diplomats received at Soviet Foreign Ministry

YULI VORONTSOV, First Deputy Foreign Minister, on January 29 met the heads of diplomatic missions of Arab states and a representative of the Arab League in Moscow to brief them on the Soviet Union's attitude to the statements by a number of Israeli politicians concerning the immigrants including immigrants from the Soviet Union.

It was noted that these actions by the Israeli Government is a serious blow to the peace process in the Middle East. They undermine the process of settlement and pose a threat to the

security of all nations in the region, including Israel itself.

At the same time explanations were given about the uniform rules for all Soviet citizens' exit and entry, laid down in Soviet legislation on the basis of respective provisions in international legal documents on human rights, of which the Soviet Union is a co-signatory.

The representatives of Arab states and the Arab League expressed understanding of the Soviet Union's stance with regard to the plans of the Israeli leadership.

They stressed their countries serious concern over the inevitable negative consequences the implementation of these plans would incur. The importance was stressed of maintaining contacts with all interested countries, including with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, in order to coordinate efforts aimed at preventing the worsening of the situation and at achieving just peace in the Middle East.

Yuli Vorontsov also explained to the Arab diplomats the situation in Transcaucasia and cited examples to expose the slanderous and provocative nature of Western allegations of the unrest and briefed the diplomats on the measures that are being taken to expedite the normalisation of the situation. □

This is the USSR INVITATION TO A JOURNEY

a new wall-poster from the USSR

obtainable at £1.20 from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.

THE ANTI-MAN

by Ernst Henri
a portrait of Hitler

at 60p from:
Soviet Booklets (SN),
3 Rosary Gardens,
London SW7 4NW.