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GORBACHEV**

**Perestroika  
Is the Concern  
of All Soviet  
Peoples**

Speech at a meeting with working  
people in Kiev

February 23, 1989



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**Михаил Сергеевич Горбачев**

**ПЕРЕСТРОЙКА — ДЕЛО ВСЕХ НАРОДОВ СТРАНЫ**

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Dear Comrades,

I extend warm greetings to you, representatives of the working class, the farmers, the intelligentsia, Party and government workers, and economic executives, and, through you, to all the people of the Soviet Ukraine.

My stay here is drawing to a close, and I am very pleased with the many meetings and conversations I have had here in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, and in the Donetsk, Lvov, and Kiev regions.

What is, perhaps, most important is that during my stay in the Ukraine I have felt that people are genuinely concerned and have a vested interest in seeing to it that perestroika is gaining momentum and that all those on whom it depends act with determination, so that everyone should feel the results of the current reforms and changes.

At a meeting with miners in Donetsk, one worker said: "We've talked enough; now it's time we put those words into action." A forthright and clear-cut statement. And I say in response to that: "More practical deeds is the slogan of the day." For what is needed most of all for perestroika's success is a greater emphasis on practical work.

Here in the Ukraine, we get the strong feeling that the

working class, all people are for perestroika. There is no going back, but there is a need for specific results—such is the opinion of the people of the Ukraine. This is major support, and the Central Committee highly values it.

These past few days, I've also heard criticism levelled at both the central and republican bodies. I was likewise impressed by the amount of self-criticism I've heard. Of course, we have long had the tradition of criticising authorities, but here I've got the feeling that many are dissatisfied with what they are themselves doing. A. Y. Kolesnikov emphasised this point in his speech at a meeting with miners. I have a great deal of confidence in him as a good worker who matches his words with actions and as one with high moral standards. He made specific proposals about improving performance, accomplishing economic, social and ideological tasks, and developing and deepening the processes of democratisation.

I was quite frankly gratified to hear all that. Indeed, only concerted efforts can open up broad vistas for the country's advancement and renew our society. At this point, however, far from everyone is really and truly involved in the processes of perestroika, while some people are simply hoping—though in vain—that perestroika will peter out and we'll be back to what we started from. We have to take such attitudes into account in our work.

Comrades, our meeting is taking place at the height of the election campaign, in the course of which the Soviet people will decide who will be handling all the major issues of domestic and foreign policy in the next five years. Naturally, at a time like this, everybody in one way or another turns his thoughts to the destiny of the country, its past and future, and, of course, its current problems.

Soon it will be four years since the Party called upon the people for the country's revolutionary renewal. This



period has been marked by social and political activities of unprecedented intensity. Soviet society as it is and as it sees itself today is very different from what it was in early 1985. Moral stagnation has given way to openness, lively debates, and the determination to make a full and uncompromising analysis so that we can understand what brought us to the verge of crisis, and so that we can release the tremendous energy inherent in our people.

We are now going through what is perhaps one of the most important stages of perestroika, when plans and programmes are being materialised and having a bearing on current social processes, bringing about new forms of social, economic and political organisation. Perestroika is penetrating all areas of life and is having an increasingly greater effect on the interests of different social groups and, indeed, every family and every person. Today, perestroika is being put to the most serious test yet—the test of life.

At turning points like this, it is particularly important that actions should be well thought out and coordinated. At a time when society is being galvanised and passions are running high, we must not lose our bearings. It is essential to take purposeful and consistent action and to ensure that chance occurrences do not lead us astray and that, frightened by new and out-of-the-ordinary developments, we do not put the brakes on the reform process. With these warnings in mind, we must be as careful, efficient and responsible as we can be, and, at the same time, act with the kind of determination that the policy of perestroika requires.

History does not forgive those who lose the initiative and allow opportunity to slip by. That's what is at issue today. We cannot afford to miss the chance offered by perestroika; we must lead our country to new avenues of economic, social and political progress.

We have a sufficiently clear plan of action. It includes a radical economic reform, the revival of the power of the Soviets, perestroika in the Party, so as to enable it to

achieve its potential as the political vanguard of society, and the formation of a law-governed state. In more general terms, the point at issue is the renewal of our socialist society through all-round democratisation and a radical turn to the people.

I think you understand that having a programme is not enough. We need tremendous social energy capable of overcoming the inertia and resistance of the past, eliminating the braking mechanisms and putting society on the track of dynamic development. Such energy is being generated by perestroika itself, by the large-scale and profound changes it is introducing. These revolutionary changes have helped people to stand tall and set all social forces in motion.

We see how the activity of the working class is growing and that workers are showing an understanding of the tasks on our agenda. Although a changeover to new forms of economic activity is taking place with some apprehension and pain, and is not producing immediate tangible results, workers see ahead and connect the country's future and their own with perestroika. This was once again convincingly demonstrated during the recent meeting with workers at the CPSU Central Committee and during the conversations held here, in your republic, over the past few days.

We are restoring respect for farmers as a full-fledged class of our society. Farmers feel this, and they are standing taller. The Soviet village is on the threshold of profound changes.

In this transition period in the life of this country, the best forces of our intelligentsia are devoting their knowledge and talent to the people and to the ideals and cause of perestroika.

It goes without saying that the current processes in public consciousness, in the minds of the people should not be simplified. We are dealing with radically changing a mode of life, habits and ideas that developed over many decades. Such changes, Comrades—and we know



this from our own experience—are very hard to make. Sometimes they are accompanied by painful developments. All this is only natural given the historic transformation we are carrying out. It is not a matter of dramatising the situation: we have started a very complex, large-scale and truly revolutionary undertaking.

I cannot help mentioning the tremendous responsibility we have to shoulder at the current stage of perestroika. We must be extremely perceptive and self-critical in evaluating the results achieved. It is very important that there should be neither euphoria nor panic.

Of course, we would very much like perestroika to change everything as soon as possible, so that we could say that we have overcome the elements of stagnation. But this will take a long time. The truth is that the turn is just beginning and the necessary political and economic conditions for taking the country to the road of healthy development are only being created. The very mechanism that can ensure the success of perestroika is not yet working in full gear. I'm talking about democracy, self-government and the active involvement of each and every citizen in the processes of perestroika.

A lot of hard work lies ahead and I am sure we will cope with the job. The most important thing for us is to decisively proceed with the radical economic and political reform and cultural and moral restructuring. We must not allow any obstacles to stop us. We should attentively and critically examine our experience, draw proper conclusions, make the necessary adjustments and steadily further perestroika. Like any revolution, as has been shown to us time and again, perestroika is not meant for the weak and uncommitted.

Now, Comrades, let me move on to the questions that are uppermost in the minds of Soviet people and are the focus of pre-election discussions.

The ultimate aim of every aspect of perestroika is to reveal the humaneness of socialism and promote social

well-being. The individual, his problems, general state and everyday life should be the main concern of society.

Allow me to repeat that the individual is both the object and subject of perestroika, of our revolutionary transformations. That was why it was vital, through the use of democratisation and openness in public life, to create a new social atmosphere allowing every Soviet citizen to reveal his best features and abilities and to be actively involved in all the endeavours of society and the state.

We had to start with this because perestroika would have been inconceivable without a new social atmosphere. We have done much here. We are sure that greater democracy in the economic field and the recreation of the Soviets as the instrument of genuine democracy and people's self-government will make it possible to reveal the tremendous potential of socialism as a truly popular system, with the power and the country's future in the hands of the working people.

From the very first steps of perestroika, we realise that its advancement will be measured not by high-flown words or abstract criteria, but by such all-important gauges as the quantity and quality of housing, foodstuffs, consumer goods and services, and by a concerted effort to satisfy the people's diversified material and spiritual requirements.

At the start of perestroika, a vigorous social policy was found to be an absolute necessity. We mean this. We have begun making the economy more people-oriented, reallocating resources in favour of the social sphere.

Following many years of stagnation, housing construction has started to grow. Large additional investments have been made in such vital sectors as health care and education.

Major funds have been allocated for building roads, especially in the non-black-soil zone of the Russian Federation.

We are taking measures to change our structural

policy to increase the production of consumer goods. For the first time in many years the manufacture of consumer goods has outpaced general industrial growth.

Another revolutionary measure is using defence branches to retool the consumer goods and food processing industries. Hundreds of defence plants are currently working for this purpose. More and more of them are beginning to make consumer goods.

Consumer services in the last few years have grown by more than 10 per cent thanks, in part, to the growing cooperative and self-employed sectors.

And, what is most important, the conditions are being created in the course of the radical economic reform for improving the entire economy and raising its efficiency. Major programmes are being implemented. I would like to single out among them the programme for modernising our country's engineering industry.

Why am I telling you about this? Because it is of decisive importance in determining what our economy will be like tomorrow and how it will be working for the benefit of man. And today we are already beginning to feel some results: for the first time ever industrial production is growing because of higher labour productivity, and sometimes even in conditions when there has been a decrease in the number of workers.

That these changes are occurring can be seen, among other things, from the results of the Ukraine's economic development. National income, industrial production, the output of many types of products are growing in physical terms at a higher rate here than that envisaged by the current five-year plan. We owe the entire increment to higher labour productivity. More schools, hospitals and outpatient clinics than planned went into service. 200,000 apartments over and above the plan have been built in this republic.

Since 1986, as compared with the previous five years, the average yearly output of farm products has grown as follows: cereals, 7.5 million tons (19 per cent); meat,

slaughter weight, 539,000 tons (15 per cent); milk, nearly 2 million tons (9 per cent); and eggs, 1,400 million (9 per cent).

In a word, there are signs of a change in the economy; we managed to halt many negative tendencies and that enabled us to effect a series of important measures in the social sphere. For the time being, however, the situation remains difficult. And what gives rise to special concern is that in many cases people have not felt any changes for the better in their living conditions. We have to tackle many problems, both the ones inherited from the past and the ones that are emerging in the current process of transition from one system of economic management to another.

Comrades, the most acute issue today is, without a doubt, the problem of the supply of goods to the population, the normalisation of the consumer market. It is paradoxical that, on the one hand, the output of both foodstuffs and other goods has really grown over the past three years. Last year there was a record-high increase in retail trade turnover and in the amount of paid services. But, on the other hand, an acute shortage of many goods continues to make itself felt.

We in the Central Committee, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the USSR Council of Ministers receive letters showing that the working people regard consumer shortages, chronic queues and profiteering on goods in short supply as sabotage of perestroika. They demand radical measures to remedy the situation in the near future.

Here is one such letter. It is from Comrade Dmitriyev of the city of Kakhovka. "Dear Mikhail Sergeevich, it seems to me that what I'm seeing in the Ukraine now is sabotage. Pasta products and confectioneries, sweets, biscuits, safety matches, detergents and soap have vanished from shelves. The bread that is being produced is of inferior quality. And all these shortcomings are blamed



on perestroika." It is sad to read such letters, and they are not only coming from the Ukraine.

So what's going on? We're producing more and more and yet the quality of life is not improving, maybe it's even declining. This is an extremely serious question, it is a political question and it should be studied.

The root cause of the current difficulties is the disbalance of the market, which, in turn, is linked with the neglected financial situation in the country and, to a no lesser degree, with the insufficient development of the output of goods. Financial difficulties did not just appear today. They were inherited from the time when the emphasis was placed on gross output, on "oil money" and on compensating the budget deficit through the sales of ever increasing amounts of alcohol rather than on economic efficiency, quality and final results.

We are now changing our economic approaches, but the accumulated problems from the past continue to put pressure on it. We have so far failed to check the inflationary processes or to reduce the amount of money that is not backed with commodities. Moreover, even as new methods of economic management are being introduced, many manage to preserve conduits for getting incomes that are not linked with the actual results of the output of high-quality goods and services. Last year, too, wages were growing faster than labour productivity. This means that in many cases we continue paying unearned money.

But, of course, it is not enough merely to state that these negative phenomena exist. We must take decisive measures to do away with them. This was the subject of special analysis by the Central Committee and the government. The task of increasing the output of goods and expanding the trade network is coming to the fore here. This year the volume of retail trade turnover is to be increased by almost 30 billion roubles, 30 per cent up from the previous year. It is planned to increase sub-

stantially the provision of services to the population. Much depends here on the centre and on the republics and especially on the practical efforts made at the local level. Much can be done for these purposes through the use of the possibilities of the cooperative movement and the activity of the self-employed.

During my meetings in the past few days, I tried to learn how these problems are being tackled in the Ukraine. I think that today everybody understands how important they are. But I have heard quite a few complaints on this score in Kiev, Lvov and Donetsk. It has to be admitted that only 35-40 per cent of the population's reasonable level of requirements for paid services are being met. In the past three years, the production of consumer goods per one rouble of wages went down in Kiev and Kiev Region, and increased by a mere 3-4 per cent in Donetsk and Lvov regions.

The emission of money, which amounted to several billion roubles in the current five-year period, proves that the situation concerning services and an increase in the production of consumer goods is unfavourable. Comrades, we must draw serious conclusions from this fact.

The normalisation of the market and money circulation is connected with the stabilisation of finances. Our country must gear spending to possibilities as soon as possible. We will solve financial problems, but not through uncompensated price increases or at the expense of workers' savings, but by using the vast reserves of the national economy. It is a complicated task but there are ways to fulfil it.

Most of all, I mean a radical change in capital construction. It would seem that everybody should understand the absurdity of the situation when we are building more and more without caring about actually putting these facilities to use. And what is the result? In 1988, the amount of uncompleted construction projects went up by 30 billion roubles compared to 1985, surpas-



sing the norm by several billion roubles. This money was buried in foundation pits and foundations, in uncompleted plants. About one-fifth of this sum was paid out to people in the form of wages, which increased purchasing demand.

Here are the figures for the Ukraine. The inability to put many facilities into operation has increased the share of uncompleted projects, which amounts to nearly 18 billion roubles, or 87 per cent of the annual volume of state capital investment.

Given this situation, the Soviet government decided to reduce the share of capital construction by several billion roubles. In the near future we shall switch over to a new form of planning and financing in capital construction, with the end result being the main index.

Another realistic reserve is to be found by lessening the burden of defence spending, though, of course, without detriment to national security. In addition, we must postpone the fulfilment of some economic programmes which can wait, so to speak.

We must also solve the acute problem of subsidies to unprofitable enterprises. We are spending billions of roubles on them!

But the main thing, Comrades, is that we must regulate the economic mechanism in such a way as to guarantee that labour productivity grows faster than wages. We are completing the elaboration of a series of measures to improve the financial situation in the country.

Our task is to re-orientate the work of hundreds upon hundreds of enterprises, to change the essence of the work of millions of employees, and to subjugate it to the current needs of society, of the people.

The food problem is the most acute of all the supply issues. I am sure that many of you in this hall are thinking that the talk about the revival of the countryside has been going on not for years but for decades.

We have several times raised the purchasing prices of agricultural produce, increased capital investment and reformed the system of management. But we have not managed to make any fundamental change. Why? I am sure that we have not yet reached the roots of the negative phenomena which must be reversed. I mean production relations.

Old methods have been compromised in agriculture more than anywhere else. We must really open the doors to everything that can radically change the situation. We must return the farmers to the land, to the means of production. We must make them the true masters.

No stereotypes or dogmas must be permitted to stand in the way of resolving the food problem. All effective methods must be given the full right to exist.

Administrative barriers in this sphere and attempts to camouflage lack of economic enterprise with references to socialist principles are inadmissible. Should we present those chronically unprofitable enterprises, where parasitism is rampant and where wages have no connection with labour contribution, as the top form of socialist organisation? It is impossible and inexpedient to continue granting subsidies and allocations from the budget to keep them afloat.

Of course, this issue must be tackled simultaneously with the solution of other problems, including the social development of the countryside, the strengthening of the material and technical basis of agriculture, the broad use of intensive technologies, and the creation of a modern infrastructure. We shall carry out drastic measures in order to radically improve food supplies. The March Plenary Meeting of the Party Central Committee, on which we are pinning great hopes, will discuss specific ways of changing our policy in farming and the goals we should be aiming for.

In general, Comrades, I must say that the radical economic reform has spread to all sections of the national economy. In realising it we are approaching the

key problems: I mean the restructuring of socialist property relations. Experience has shown that without this, new economic methods and the achievements of technological progress are rejected as alien elements.

Not long ago, questions of property were regarded as something distant which was of no practical significance. They were discussed mostly by scholars—political economists and lawyers. Now we can see that these are the most vital, topical problems. Self-management, the rights of work collectives, cooperatives, lease contracts, family and other teams, and shares are all property relations, and we decided to radically improve them. We must consistently democratise property and gear it to the interests of people and work collectives. It must not only belong to the people but be managed by them. This is the essence of perestroika in socialist property relations, and the process has already started—“from below”, incidentally.

Let's take the developments in lease arrangements. We already know the effect of leases on agriculture. They are also very fruitful in industry, construction and trade. The preparatory work will soon be over for a Lease Act, which will open the way to lease relations.

And now, a few words about the cooperative system. It shows how vast our national potential is. We can increase labour efficiency two- or three-fold, and drastically cut our managerial staff. We simply can't afford to pass up this chance to raise commodity production and improve services.

We hear justified complaints about exorbitant prices, grabbing and downright profiteering by some cooperative managers. True, there are negative factors in the movement. Sometimes, cooperatives are used for unbridled personal gain and exacerbate commodity shortages. We can't tolerate such things, and we shall combat them. We must find optimum criteria to evaluate cooperative work and, on that basis, establish firm rules to encourage the development of cooperatives and

reduce abuses to a minimum or rule them out altogether. One such rule is the recent decision to pass cooperative taxation to republican competence.

To restructure socialist property relations means to put an end to egalitarian trends and the sponging attitudes, deeply rooted in our society. We must protect all conscientious working people—shopfloor workers, engineers, scholars, cooperative members, or leasers. Efficiency, competence and industry require our protection. Those who don't want easy money but want to work for their living and to provide for their children must gain the upper hand, and we ought to guarantee it. Only highly proficient, enterprising people can pull our economy out of the depths of stagnation.

I would like to dwell on the correct concept of social justice in this connection. Many issues are muddled, and there are many shallow speculations here. This has given rise to widespread ideas that justice amounts to crude egalitarianism. That's all wrong.

To combat egalitarianism doesn't mean to give up the policy of social justice and social guarantees, which is our major achievement. On the contrary, it is the national wealth, which has increased thanks to the strictly observed principle of remuneration according to work done and to the encouragement of higher labour productivity, that will allow us to allocate increasingly more to the social sphere. First and foremost, we must make use of the higher efficiency of labour and social production to improve the situation of low-income families, children and pensioners without delay. This was stated in most specific terms in the Address of the Central Committee to the Party and the People.

Our nation is developing an ecologically-orientated mentality. This, Comrades, is one of the results of the current democratic changes in society, and the mighty lever of perestroika. It's vital indeed to protect the environment. Lately, we have allocated billions of rou-



bles for it. But to tell the truth, we have a long way to go before achieving the desired change.

Every year, several dozen million tons of pollutants are released into the air. Every year, our arable land shrinks by several tens of thousands of hectares. Our flora and fauna are dwindling, and water resources are getting scarcer. As the environment is destroyed, human health suffers and man's links with Nature are severed. These developments are having dire moral and social consequences. We have to open our eyes to the true significance of ecological issues.

I have to mention here that the environment protection drive has become large-scale. We welcome this. But the main thing is to work out a clear programme of practical action.

We need a well-balanced ecological policy. Work is under way on an all-round environmental programme. It will be open for national debate. But the programme alone is not enough. We shall be successful only when everyone joins in with the environmental effort: the central bodies, the state and local management bodies, and the public at large. All projects will be subject to expert assessment in case they have a detrimental effect on the environment. The debatable cases will go for referendums. We can't afford to go to extremes in such matters. They demand the utmost realism and responsibility.

We can't solve our national problems at one fell swoop, and we know it full well. To launch our social progress onto a new level, to dramatically improve people's living conditions, we need a consistent policy, orientated towards the future. We have such a policy, and the concept of economic and social progress for the period ending in the year 2005 will develop on its basis. The central bodies, all republics and scholars are actively working on that concept.

Dear Comrades,

In our multinational country, the state of relations

between the ethnic groups making up the family of Soviet peoples has always been of primary importance. The drive for perestroika, more democracy and glasnost compels us to review the state of these relations and to tackle the problems accumulated in this sphere. We must admit that we have underestimated the acute character of some of them. Last year we saw flares of ethnic antagonism which we still feel to this day. Yet, the experience gained is a valuable asset.

The Party's fundamental approach to these issues is spelled out in the relevant resolution of the 19th Party Conference and the platform of the CPSU Central Committee for the coming elections. It has already formed the basis for launching efforts to consider a broad range of economic and political issues, and to find optimal solutions which will correspond to the interests and aspirations of all ethnic groups and the Soviet nation as a whole.

At this summer's plenary meeting of the Central Committee we will discuss inter-ethnic relations. And, of course, they will be in the focus of attention of the newly elected bodies of authority, primarily the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

What would I like to say about this now? The experience we have accumulated and the analysis we have made tell us that national and inter-ethnic problems can be resolved only along the lines of perestroika, since they are an organic part of this revolutionary process. Any attempt to attain the goal outside or, moreover, despite perestroika is doomed to failure.

Of course, the relations between the centre and the republics will not become harmonious automatically, of their own accord, within the drive for perestroika. The economic reform and the reform of the political system assume specific features when we deal with nationalities issues. In this respect, perestroika is a continuation of the Leninist nationalities policy under today's conditions.



I would like to dwell on this idea with regard to the basic issues we are facing in the nationalities policy sphere. For we are already setting out to resolve the tasks of the political reform's second stage, aimed at harmonising inter-ethnic relations in the country.

Take the topical issue of relations between the federal centre and the Union republics. The reform of the political system will guarantee increasingly tangible and realistic popular power locally, and a decisive role for the working people of all national and ethnic groups in running the state. The potential for the elected bodies in the republics to tackle the basic issues of state and social life is substantially growing, provided the republics meet their constitutional obligations to the Union.

The radical economic reform, in its turn, opens the way for restructuring the machinery of running the economic and social spheres in Union republics on the basis of self-management and self-financing. The main condition here is the switchover of all enterprises and amalgamations, no matter what their departmental subordination, to full self-financing and cost-accounting, and the establishment of economically-based relations between them and the republican and local budgets. The republican budgets must have their own sources of revenue based on long-term programmes.

This approach is logical if the republics are to have more rights and greater responsibility for better meeting the material and cultural needs of the population by way of higher labour efficiency, comprehensive economic development, and rational exploitation of natural resources. It is clear that such restructuring should not result in autarchy and self-subsistence economy, for the harm done to society would exceed the benefits. It is equally clear that these issues should be resolved comprehensively and fairly, so that no one's interests are trampled.

We were dealing with these issues on the eve of the latest session of the Supreme Soviet. The task is to find

the optimal balance between the rights of the federation and the republics along the lines of the general principle: a strong centre and strong republics.

We have now made a big step in this direction. We have involved Party and state officials, scholars and experts from all the republics in elaborating the concept of the basic principles for the republics' self-management and self-financing. As you know, this concept was discussed in the CPSU Central Committee the other day and will soon be published for broad consideration and will later be debated by the newly elected supreme bodies of authority.

Of late we have witnessed the problems of relations between the republics and nations. This issue is highly delicate and prone to dramatic developments. We have to view our past and present from the point of view of what unites our nations, what engenders trust and respect, rather than alienation. Anyone taking a different path, is taking on a heavy responsibility particularly before his own people, for his way leads to a dead-end.

We are right in saying that under today's conditions all conflicts and debates between states can only be resolved by political means. This is fully applicable to inter-ethnic collisions within one socialist federation. All calls for the satisfaction of this or that national demand by force and outside the law are tantamount to instigations. I have already spoken about this. Yet, I deem it my duty to repeat it in no uncertain terms.

We have every possibility of resolving any problem quietly and in all fairness. With the emergence of the new structure of federal and republican authority this possibility will further considerably increase.

Speaking about inter-ethnic relations in our country, I want to emphasise another of their important specific features: they permeate the whole social structure, from the Union as a whole down to every region and work collective. In fact, people of different nationalities live

and work side by side all around our country, in all the republics, cities, regions and districts. This is the result of historic development. It is a reality on which very much depends, and it would be wrong to ignore it. It must be taken into consideration in the work of our Party and state bodies and public organisations.

As well as broadening the rights of the Union republics, the harmonisation of inter-ethnic relations includes enhancing the status of all kinds of autonomy and ensuring the national minorities' rights in many ways, including the establishment of new national districts and national Soviets in areas densely populated by people of a particular nationality. Questions arise relating to the life of the people of one nationality or another who have no autonomy and who either live compactly, or are scattered across various republics and areas of our country. It is clear that they have specific ethnic requirements—to study and use their native tongue, to preserve the values of their native culture, etc. Much is now being done to meet these requirements.

Questions relating to the situation of individuals or groups of citizens living among people of a different nationality can be successfully resolved only through perestroika and the democratisation of our society's life. The population is multi-ethnic almost everywhere in our country, with rare exceptions.

Balance of interests, mutual respect, common work to attain common aims, and a mutually-enriching, full-blooded spiritual life—such are the conditions for well-being and stability in any multi-ethnic region, in any city or village, at work, in an educational collective or military unit. It is precisely in such grass-roots cells and the family that the foundation of mutual understanding among people of different nationalities, the foundation of people's communal life is laid.

Over the last few days I have visited the Lvov Region. The 50th anniversary of the reunification of the Ukrainian lands within the integral Soviet state will be

marked this year. During our meetings the working people of this fine land, with its own unique character, told me how people lived in the past and how they live now, and what high level of social and economic development they have reached. But there are many problems today, and these were also discussed. Furthermore, there has been a true flourishing of national culture in the years since the reunification of the Ukrainian lands. It is also good that much is being done in the Ukraine to satisfy the requirements of the people of other nationalities who live here. Faculties for studying the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Modern Greek, Crimean Tatar and Gagauz languages have been opened at secondary schools and higher educational establishments. Crimean Tatar-Russian, Bulgarian-Ukrainian and Czech-Ukrainian dictionaries have been published. Radio broadcasting in the Bulgarian language has been started in some districts of the Odessa Region, in Modern Greek—in the Donetsk Region, and in the Moldavian language in some districts of the Chernovtsy and Transcarpathian regions. Preparations are under way for issuing a newspaper in the Crimean Tatar language. This is how problems of inter-ethnic relations should be resolved.

In short, Comrades, ethnic revival is an integral part of perestroika. The new social conditions, which are becoming firmly established in our country now, enable every people to materialise its potential on the unique scale which geography and history have given us.

The peoples will never agree with those who view separation and self-isolation as a way of achieving ethnic revival. Such calls, dictated by political ambitions, careerism or even simply open hostility to socialism, are false, dangerous and harmful. We must warn those who disseminate such ideas that they are playing with fire.

We should build happiness and prosperity through joint efforts. Our perestroika accords with the heartfelt



hopes of all Soviet peoples and is aimed not at separating them but at rallying them even more closely together on the common socialist basis.

Comrades, perestroika has reaffirmed the ideological and political leadership of the Party. Having set forth a programme of social transformation at the 27th Party Congress and the 19th Party Conference, we have set ourselves the task of radically restructuring the work of the Party itself as a top priority.

Having renounced the administrative, managerial and other functions which are not intrinsic to it, the CPSU has adopted a policy of assuring the full power of the Soviets and a political partnership with public organisations. Under the Party's leadership, the democratisation processes have gained momentum, the command-administrative system is being intensively broken, and a law-governed socialist state is taking shape.

In April 1985 we swore loyalty to democracy and we intend to pursue this course unswervingly. In so doing, we see both the huge potential of the political activeness which has accumulated in society and the considerable obstacles which still lie ahead on the way to the continued development of the democratic process.

The CPSU with its membership of 20 million is now a vanguard social force that is capable of ensuring the transition to a renewed, democratic model of socialism free of dangerous cataclysms and with a minimal cost for society. Being by nature a party of the working class and expressing, as the ruling party, the common interests of the entire nation, it fulfils the function of the unification and integration of all political forces, which is always vital, especially during such revolutionary periods of development.

In our view, the Party's role as the political vanguard of society lies precisely in coordinating the complex task of accommodating various interests, in defining, together with other mass organisations, the priorities for

satisfaction of various social needs on the basis of their significance for society as a whole and in accordance with the principles of social justice. In this regard the perceptions of the party as the political vanguard are being drastically transformed. It remains in power, but renounces diktat and high-handed practices and sees its role, first and foremost, in the political leadership of society.

Democratisation and glasnost have begun to enter our Party, arranging many things in it in accordance with their own laws, shattering the former conservative pattern of inner-Party practices. Party committees and Party personnel are learning to work in a new way, drawing on the opinion and experience of the masses.

At the same time, however, it must be admitted that the restructuring of thinking still goes slowly in the Party ranks. Anyway it does not go the way we would like it to, and, further, not the way demanded by life itself. In some Party organisations undisguised attempts are made to slow the transition to the new methods of work. A number of officials in both high and low positions of leadership have not yet become aware of the scale of the changes, and continue to nurture the illusion that the reforms will sooner or later run into some obstacles and things will return to the high-handed practices they hold so dear.

It is necessary to openly declare that all of this does exist in real life. We must, therefore, solve the outstanding personnel problems as required by the situation and on the basis of the requirements of perestroika and popular interests. Now as never before, we need good capable people, both in the central bodies and on the local level. Every good worker who devotes his energy and knowledge to perestroika has a right to expect respect for his hard work and the support of society. Perestroika is producing and will continue to produce an increasing number of innovative, talented and bold people capable of assuming responsibility for the future of the revolutionary cause we have embraced.



Now that a new political system is being shaped, that democratisation and glasnost allow the free discussion of the country's future, the Communists' active participation in these processes is particularly important. Every Party member has the obligation to defend socialist values, to support the vital interests of the working class and the working masses, and to make the effort to strengthen the Soviet federation on the basis of Leninist internationalist principles. It is more than an expectation, it is a demand placed on the Party by the tens of millions of workers, peasants and members of the intelligentsia who are irrevocably committed to socialism.

The pluralism of opinion and the freedom of discussion presuppose the opportunity to express a wide variety of views and opinions. And this is exactly the reason the Party must actively participate in the nationwide discussion, proving the wisdom of its course of perestroika and socialism's renewal.

In short, the CPSU is now in the process of profound change. It already compares favourably with what it was like in recent past. Let us make joint efforts to develop it on the basis of democratic principles and to help it recover its Leninist aspect in all areas: in its ideology, organisation and methods of operation. Nothing short of such a party can finalise the cause of perestroika.

Reporting to the people during the election campaign, we have a right to point to major positive changes in foreign policies: the threat of war is diminished, the security of the USSR has been strengthened, and the prestige of our policy among the international community and the public has grown perceptibly. This is the main result of the international activities of our Party and the Soviet government on behalf of the interests of the people and every Soviet citizen.

When we were only approaching perestroika, the Party leadership was concerned, above all, by the state

of affairs in our country. When we launched perestroika, we quickly realised the further need to reassess the world situation, our position in the world, relations with both socialist countries and with states having the other social system, world contacts and problems in their entirety. This led us to the new political thinking, to abandon the outmoded ideas and patterns, the habit of viewing the world in black and white. We have, at least, realised two crucial things.

First, it is impossible to ensure the security of one's own country without accounting for the security interests of others. In the nuclear age, reliable security cannot be ensured by military means, however technically perfect. This made us revise the very notion of security and develop a completely new concept of comprehensive security, involving all aspects of relations between peoples and states, including their human dimension.

Secondly, in the present interdependent and increasingly more integral world, progress is impossible in a society which is separated by impenetrable frontiers and ideological fences from the world process. This applies to any society, including a socialist one.

True socialism, where the system serves man and not vice versa, can fully develop only by interacting with the entire world, only by increasing, on a par with other nations, its contribution to the development of world civilisation and receiving from this development all that does not contradict its inherent values.

Remaining what we are, we must engage in the political, economic and spiritual life of the world. Only in this manner can our country get a second wind in the end of the 20th century and prove both to itself and to others the effectiveness, democratism and humanism of the socialist system.

These conclusions, which constitute the foundation of the new thinking, brought us to institute a resolute renovation of our foreign policy. We have followed the

course of the maximal utilisation of political opportunities to remove international tension, achieve understanding with the West and to untangle the most intricate knots of international contradictions through dialogue, negotiations and the quest for reasonable compromise.

This course, linked to the deep reform in our country, has moved such a cliff overhanging the world as Soviet-American confrontation. The improvement of relations between the USSR and the USA is a turning point in the entire world process.

Another dangerous impediment has been cleared from the road to peace and progress—the alienation, which at times expressed itself as enmity, between the two great socialist powers—the USSR and China.

Our relations with many developing countries, above all our friendship with India, are assuming a dynamic character.

The results of our new course in Europe could have hardly been expected within such a short time, considering the after-effects of the Cold War, which are especially tenacious here. Meetings with the leaders of most of the European states and other contacts and negotiations have revealed tremendous opportunities for releasing European politics from militarism and ideological enmity, for the rebirth of Europe's role as an integral factor of positive change in the world. The Vienna meeting elevates the European process to a level where the first contours of a "European home" become discernible.

Comparing the present circumstances with those of a few years ago, we can see how far the situation has advanced. Dialogue has become the order of the day. Negotiations, even if mired in difficulties, have for the first time produced major results, initiating actual arms reductions, regional conflict settlements and steady improvements in the international situation.

Our troops have returned home from Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union will stick firmly by the road of political settlement of the situation in Afghanistan, urging all, most importantly the countries-signatories to the Geneva accords, to act in the same spirit.

It would be no exaggeration to say that one gain of the new political thinking is the fact that the word "confidence", once an abstract category used mostly in propaganda, has become a political term with well-defined content. It has become a gauge for assessing the relations between states belonging to different social systems and blocs.

As often as not, we fail to notice how greatly the atmosphere has changed. Indeed, our relations with the West in the political, social, scientific, information and propaganda spheres once centred around the notion of the "Soviet threat". They accused and suspected us, not believing a word of what we said. The growing hostility and accusations corrupted the international situation and fuelled the arms race. Today, only die-hard reactionaries continue talking about the "Soviet threat", though this does not mean that anti-Sovietism is no longer used as leverage by the authors of military budgets, the power holders in the military-industrial complex and ideologues of anti-communism. The fear of the USSR which was for decades nurtured in Western public opinion has, however, begun to disperse, being less and less of a burden for serious-minded statesmen.

The new situation was strikingly, and in many respects for us unexpectedly, manifested in the global reaction to the earthquake in Armenia. Nothing like this was possible, or happened, in similar circumstances only two years ago. The compassion, support and help, which were accepted with unprecedented openness and gratitude, acquired such a scale and character that they became a true sign of the drastic changes in the international moral climate.

And today hardly anyone would deny the fact that a changed attitude toward the Soviet Union means a great



deal in real terms not only to our country but also to the entire world. Human and moral factors are becoming increasingly important and significant in international affairs, another gain of new thinking!

Our foreign policy, relying on the principles of free choice, de-ideologisation of inter-state relations, balanced interests and an internationalisation of many issues, is open to contacts and cooperation with various contemporary world forces. As it turned out, we can find a common language and a necessary minimum of understanding even with representatives of such quarters and states with whom, as it seemed only a short while ago, we could have nothing in common.

We are not, however, omnivorous, nor do we manipulate our principles to achieve our selfish ends. Rather, we perceive the realities and respect the ability of all members of the international community to participate in the overall advance towards universal peace.

We have yet to come to grips with major global problems, of course, and there are some which will take effort and time to resolve. But it is evident, and this fact is admitted by all serious-minded politicians, that the world has become a safer and quieter place in which to live.

We hear ever more frequently from the most authoritative voices, from statesmen in the NATO countries that the Cold War is receding into history. Is all this unconnected with our security?

The question, however, is even more fundamental. For the first time in the post-war period and, perhaps, even in history, our country's security has been strengthened not by means of a build-up of military power and not through an increase in spending on defence, enormous as it is. On the contrary, we have been able to begin reviewing our military doctrine in an unequivocal defensive spirit. We have initiated considerable reductions in the Armed Forces and armaments, are cutting military spending, and have launched

the partial conversion of military production towards meeting civilian needs.

Our foreign policy also serves the cause of perestroika in the sense that it clears the way for more extensive economic cooperation with the outside world, for the country to join in the world economic processes. We are drastically changing external economic activity with a view to enabling the USSR become a full-fledged participant in the international division of labour and are also prepared to work with others on the establishment of a new world economic and political order which would serve as a reliable guarantee for the preservation and development of civilisation.

Information, cultural, tourist, public and simply human contacts with other countries are going through some sort of boom. We are increasingly opening to the world, and it is increasingly opening to us.

This is a very important process objectively conditioned by the world's growing integrity. At the same time it is an extremely complex process, because it represents not a borrowing of whatever comes our way, even if fashionable, not a mixture of heterogeneous values, and even less so currying favour, but it is a sign of such an important thing to peace and progress as the truthful knowledge of each other, as the interaction of cultures in an atmosphere of self-esteem and mutual respect.

These are the major components of the deep positive change in the Soviet Union's international status. All of them promote socialism's renewal. In its turn, socialism itself is ever more actively joining in the process of making history which involves all mankind.

All peoples who have made the socialist choice must themselves define the forms, means and methods of building a new society that meet their historically developed national values, economic opportunities and cultural and intellectual potential.

Many socialist countries are now seeking ways and



forms of moving to a new quality of life, to a society based on revealing the potential of socialist democracy. Every country resolves its problems in a sovereign way, seeks its own answers to the questions of the life of its own people. The variety of roads towards the essentially common goal is a source of socialism's vitality and strength.

In accordance with these conclusions from the new thinking, we are not merely theoretically, but also in practice restructuring our relations with the socialist countries.

Complete independence, full equality, absolute non-interference in internal affairs, the correction of distortions and mistakes resulting from the previous history of socialism, more profound and scientifically sound analysis of mutual interests, solidarity and mutual assistance imply responsibility of the parties and governments of all socialist countries to their peoples. Furthermore encouraging these new processes in one's own country means promoting the cause of world socialism and advancing the general progress of mankind. These are the immutable principles and rules of socialist international relations.

One needn't be a prophet to say that the socialism that will enter the 21st century will differ from our present socialism. It will not be free of problems, but by placing all its material and intellectual potential at the service of the people and drawing the necessary conclusions from its past experience, it will fully demonstrate its possibilities and become a constructive factor for general progress.

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Comrades, this is the first election held under the new electoral law. I think you all remember how passionately and scrupulously its draft was debated. All useful comments and proposals have been taken into

consideration, but only practice can show to what extent the new election system meets the requirements of the restructuring and democratisation of society.

The voting is still ahead, but it is clear even now that it will not be a formal procedure but a genuine election of the people's representatives to the highest bodies of power. And it is a major forward step in comparison with our past practices.

True, there have been some snags and we are aware of this. The election campaign must be thoroughly analysed for the future. Even now, however, one can say that we shall have an effective body of deputies, capable of successfully tackling the immediate tasks of restructuring.

Many people, especially workers, justly note that we need not a parliamentary debating club but a truly popular body with supreme power.

We have embarked upon an ambitious new project, which requires not only a bold and well planned search, unconventional solutions and methods, but also courage. We need courage to discard the old practices and attitudes resulting from obsolete concepts of socialism and we also need courage to foil the attempts to belittle and discredit the values of socialism and the aims of perestroika and move us from our chosen path.

While safeguarding the noble and unadulterated revolutionary ideals and socialist convictions, which have survived in spite of everything, we must fully understand what prevented their free and reasonable implementation. Now we must concentrate on carrying out the policy of perestroika and we must learn to deal with all problems, large and small, from the point of view of socialism's main goal, that is the well-being of people, their interests and needs. We shall be able to achieve this goal only through the policy of perestroika, which has become a cause for all the Soviet peoples.





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