

*Routine Proceedings*

Churches and of other religious groups in the Soviet Union.

[*Translation*]

It has become very clear that the question of nationalities and of ethnic minorities is fundamental to the nature of the Soviet Federation and, ultimately, fundamental to the future of the Soviet Union itself. Problems elsewhere, in other nations, pale in comparison with the tremendous challenge facing President Gorbachev in governing a country of such enormous diversity and profound divisions. We see evidence of those problems every day on television: in Armenia, in Georgia, in Moldavia and elsewhere. The strains in the fabric of the Soviet Federation are serious and no one appears to be more conscious of them than President Gorbachev himself. He indicated to me that he is determined to respond to those strains positively and with imagination before they degenerate further into greater instability.

[*English*]

His resolve to seek greater equity and fairness for nationalities and minorities is equalled by his determination that this new level of social and political justice be found within the federation, a federation that will allow the various republics greater autonomy, particularly in culture, language and the economy.

In our discussions with President Gorbachev and with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, we also focused on today's often tumultuous international agenda. In the political declaration President Gorbachev and I signed in Moscow six days ago, which Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has subsequently characterized as a "milestone" and as "an intellectual breakthrough" for both nations, the Soviet Union recognized the benefits of change and endorsed the right of countries to make their own way in the world without outside interference by anybody.

The regional conflicts in Central America, southern Africa, Indochina, the Middle East and Afghanistan were covered quite comprehensively, particularly, in extensive meetings between Mr. Shevardnadze and the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

President Gorbachev and I discussed the rapidly evolving situation in eastern and central Europe very frankly. We reviewed these areas not only in terms of develop-

ments unfolding in that part of the world but, equally important, in terms of their impact upon the over-all relationship between East and West.

Change has come to eastern Europe rapidly, unevenly and unpredictably. Every day seems to bring more dramatic news and more unforgettable images: former Czech Prime Minister Alexander Dubcek making a triumphal speech before hundreds of thousands of people in Wenceslaus Square; breaches, at last, in the Berlin Wall as millions stream through to satisfy themselves first hand about western values and western institutions; non-communist political parties exercising power in Poland and the Prime Minister of Poland being received two days ago with warmth and encouragement by President Gorbachev in Moscow; the privatization of economic activity on a growing basis in Hungary; and exciting new freedoms of speech and protest and movement for peoples throughout the east which, for 40 years, has known little of freedom and less of its benefits. The pace of change has become torrential, overwhelming in some ways our capacity to assess the transformation that we are in the process of witnessing.

A revealing insight in this regard appeared yesterday, I thought, in *The New York Times* where Harvard professor Michael Sandel commented that "the most appropriate response now is not caution or boldness—we are beyond all that—but attentiveness and appreciation because, when history turns this fast, what we want from statesmen are not vain attempts to control events that have a momentum of their own, but that they be alive to the possibilities that these events will leave in their wake."

I think that is important advice from Professor Sandel, and it is advice that the government and the Parliament of Canada, I suspect, will follow.

[*Translation*]

The world is now clearly departing from a sterile period of East-West confrontation and embarking on one of immensely more fruitful relations, a course that ultimately promises genuine democracy in Eastern Europe, more liberalized trade and investment opportunities across that vast region, more predictable relations with the Soviet Union and profound reductions in the emphasis on defence in all capitals of the world. Eventually, as governments continue to emerge in Eastern