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Party members not originating from the Volga area, are prepared to go along with the suggested new kind of autonomy. The newspaper comments that Girenko's offer, made on Gorbachev's instructions, was sowing the germ of dissension among those representing German interests in the Soviet Union. No mention was made of the possibility of granting the Soviet Germans territorial autonomy in Kaliningrad Oblast although the Soviet Germans themselves are said to be increasingly interested in this option. (Ann Sheehy)

**TBILISI ANNIVERSARY MARKED.** Yesterday tens of thousands of people gathered in Tbilisi to mark the first anniversary of the military crackdown on nationalist demonstrators in which 20 people were killed. Western correspondents in Tbilisi reported that last night 60,000 people attended a commemorative ceremony at a stadium in the Georgian capital. Speakers criticized the Soviet military and the drafting of Georgians, and others called for unity among Georgians in their drive for independence. Earlier in the day, several thousands marched to the headquarters of the Transcaucasian Military District and shouted slogans against the Soviet military presence in Georgia. (NCA/Bess Brown)

**NEW PRO-INDEPENDENCE GROUP IN UKRAINE.** A new Ukrainian political association seeking Ukrainian independence held its founding congress in Lvov on Sunday. Organized by a number of prominent former political prisoners and members of the Ukrainian nationalist resistance movement of the 1940s and early 1950s, the "Association for Independent Ukrainian Statehood" is the latest radical nationalist group to emerge in Western Ukraine. According to one of the founders, Oles' Tsaruk, a Ukrainian activist from Riga, the new organization sees itself as a natural ally of the Ukrainian National Party and the Ukrainian Christian-Democratic Party. The congress elected the former jurist, Helsinki monitor and long-term political prisoner Ivan Kandyba as its leader. It also issued a number of statements, including one addressed to Lithuania's president Vytautas Landsbergis expressing support for Lithuanian independence and another addressed to the US government, stressing the importance of Radio Liberty's Ukrainian broadcasts and urging that they be expanded. (Bohdan Nahaylo)

**CHANGES IN BELORUSSIAN LEADERSHIP.** TASS announced on April 7 that Mikhail Kovalev has been released from the post of Prime Minister of the Belorussian republic at his own request in connection with his retirement. His replacement is 54-year-old Vyacheslav Kebich, head of the Belorussian Gosplan. TASS asserted that Kebich is popular in the republic because of his efforts to guide Belorussia's transition to full republican *khozraschet*.

The real reason behind Kovalev's retirement is not yet known, though he may have been feeling the impact of public resentment over his role as one of the main "culprits" in the cover-up of the Chernobyl' disaster. Kovalev was prime

minister at the time of the accident but, unlike former Belorussian leaders Nikolai Slyunkov and Georgii Tarazevich, he did not change jobs. The retirement of one "Chernobyl culprit" has been offset by the promotion of another, however. Alyaksei Kamai, the first secretary of the Gomel Oblast Party Committee, recently replaced Igrunov as second secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party after the latter was appointed chief editor of the journal *Partiinaya zhizn*. Of all the regions around the Chernobyl' plant, Gomel appears to have been the most affected by radioactive fallout. (Kathy Mihalisko)

**AGREEMENT ON EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION.** High-level officials from 42 countries reached final agreement on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, according to a Reuter report of April 9. French president Francois Mitterrand launched the idea for the bank last year as the best way of directing international economic financial support to the battered economies of Eastern Europe. The bank's capital base will total some 12 billion dollars and the countries of the European Community will hold 51 percent of that. The US will have 10 percent of the bank's capital and the USSR 6 percent. Moscow has agreed not to borrow more than its capital contribution for a period of three years. (Some countries had voiced concern that Moscow's sizeable economic problems could drain the bank's capital, leaving little or no money for the smaller countries.)

The bank's capital will be held in ECUs (European Currency Units), 70 percent of which will be kept in reserves. 60 percent of the bank's lending will be directed toward the private/cooperative sectors of Eastern Europe, including joint ventures. The remaining lending will go to public projects. There was no decision on where to base the bank, but London, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam are leading candidates at this point. The statutes of the bank are to be signed by all partners on May 30. (John Tedstrom)

**EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES PLEDGE MOVE TO MARKET ECONOMIES.** The Soviet Union and the East European countries signed a document on Monday in which they pledge to take further steps to adopt private property, free enterprise, and multi-party democracy, according to a Reuter report of April 9. The document is the product of the East-West Economic Conference, a spinoff of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). Though not legally binding, the document represents a commitment by the socialist economies to engage more fully--with the cooperation of the other CSCE member states--in political and economic democratization. (John Tedstrom)