

Britain's new link with Ukraine

MOSCOW — Signalling growing interest in the individual republics of the Soviet Union, Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary, announced yesterday that Britain would open a consulate in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, writes *Helen Womack*.

Margaret Thatcher, anxious not to offend Mikhail Gorbachev, ruled out such a move when she toured the Soviet Union last year. But Mr Hurd, who visited Kiev before coming to Moscow, said the decision reflected the "evolution" of the political situation. The consulate would be under the direction of the British embassy in Moscow, while a Ukrainian diplomat would represent the interests of his republic at the Soviet embassy in London.

Mr Hurd was a little late in bringing this news to reporters because he had been meeting the leader of another restive republic, Boris Yeltsin of Russia. "We had a fascinating conversation but it would spoil it if I told you too much about it," Mr Hurd said.

The Foreign Secretary made it clear that Britain regarded the Soviet Union as a single state with Mr Gorbachev in charge: "We support the continuation of reform as associated with President Gorbachev. The continuance of the Soviet Union — albeit transformed and voluntary — is, we believe, in the general interest."

Mr Gorbachev seemed satisfied with this assurance. A Tass report of Mr Hurd's meeting with the Soviet leader yesterday said the President noted Britain's position, which proved there was "trust and mutual understanding between the two great states".

One purpose of Mr Hurd's visit was to meet Alexander Bessmertnykh, the new Soviet Foreign Minister. The two ministers had no significant differences on post-Gulf war security but there are disagreements on the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty.

On growing Soviet debt to British firms, which stands at £120m, Mr Hurd said clarity on who was responsible for what in the Soviet Union was essential before there could be large-scale investment.

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A STRIKING Soviet miner in the Urals city of Chelyabinsk urges no return to work. Negotiations with the miners also failed in the Ukraine yesterday, writes *Susan Viets from Kiev*. After his talks with the Ukrainian Prime Minister, Vitold Fokin, Yuri Boldyrev, the miners' leader, said: "If we strike for two more weeks the metallurgical industry will be

paralysed . . . We want two to three billion more roubles for wages but Fokin's afraid to give it to us because he's under strict orders from Pavlov [the Soviet Prime Minister] and Gorbachev not to give in." The strikers are demanding President Gorbachev's resignation, the dismissal of the Soviet parliament and a new constitution for the Ukraine.