

USSR: apartheid must go first

The USSR is prepared to play a constructive role in bringing about a political settlement in South Africa according to an IDASA delegation which recently spent 10 days in Moscow and Leningrad.

THERE is no prospect of medium term or even long-term diplomatic relations between the USSR and South Africa as long as white minority domination or any aspect of apartheid policy continues. This does not mean that, because of dynamic developments of the situation in South and Southern Africa there will not be contacts between the government of the USSR and those in power in South Africa.

However, such contacts cannot be construed as a precursor to, or a desire for formal diplomatic contact by the USSR. They arise out of the practical imperatives of the immediate situation.

These are some of the conclusions of an IDASA delegation which returned recently from a 10-day visit to Moscow and Leningrad as guests of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. The delegation consisted of IDASA's director of policy and planning, Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, Mrs Jane Slabbert, Mr Enos Mabuza, the Chief Minister of Kangwane, and Professor Johan Degenaar of the political philosophy department of the University of Stellenbosch.

A statement issued by the delegation reflected on the "exceptional hospitality and friendliness" they had experienced during their stay. Their hosts arranged visits to some cathedrals in the Kremlin, monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church in and around Moscow, the Bolshoi Ballet ("Romeo and Juliet"), Moscow circus, shopping centres and street markets. Of political and intellectual interest were discussions with: activists and members of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee; members of the Institute for African Studies (or the African Institute); members of Moscow University with special interests in South and Southern Africa; members of the Institute of the World Socialist System; staff members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with special responsibilities for South and Southern Africa; representatives of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet

Union; South African students at the Patrice Lumumba University.

The latter meeting, according to the delegation, was a particularly moving and exciting experience. "Some of them had left South Africa after the 1976 Soweto riots and were very keen to get information about the latest developments at home."



Kangwane leader Enos Mabuza meets the first man to walk in space, General Leonov, during the recent Soviet tour.

In Leningrad they were mostly involved in "wonderful" sightseeing, visiting the Summer and Winter palaces and the magnificent Hermitage Museum. They also managed to see an exhibition of Georgian folk dancing and singing and had discussions with staff and students from the department of African Studies from Leningrad University.

One of the main purposes of the visit was to gain first hand knowledge of Soviet Union policy toward South and Southern Africa. In this they were greatly assisted by extensive and in-depth discussions with the following persons: Ambassador Vasily Solodovnikov (vice-chairman of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee); Viacheslav Tetiokin (permanent staff member of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee); Dr Victor Goncharov (deputy director of the Africa Institute); Dr Leongard Goncharov (deputy director of the Africa Institute); Dr Alexei Vasiliev (deputy director of the Africa Institute); Dr Vladimir Tikhomirov (research worker of the Africa Institute); Dr Lyudmila Vialemaa (research worker of the Africa Institute);

Vladimir Petrov (staff member of the ministry of Foreign Affairs); Dr Vladimir Shubin (international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union); Dr Andrei Urnov (deputy head of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union); Dr Irina Filatova (Institute of Asia and Africa, Moscow State University); Dr Valentin Gorodnov (Institute of World History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR).

IDASA's delegation noted that the Soviet Union is going through a challenging and exciting period of political reform and renewal.

"This is reflected by a great degree of open intellectual and academic debate — also with regard to the Soviet Union's role and policy towards South and Southern Africa. We found this to be particularly true of the academics we met from the various institutes of research and

higher learning," the group said in their statement.

It continued: "It would be a dangerous distortion of reality to seize upon the **personal** view of any single academic or official to determine what the **official** policy of the USSR is or how it has possibly changed with regard to South and Southern Africa.

"South and Southern Africa are going through a period of dynamic transformation and this is naturally reflected in assessments and analyses from various quarters in the USSR who have an interest in that part of the world.

"There is a clearly and often stated desire by the USSR for a **political** rather than a **violent** settlement of the conflict in South Africa. It is also clear that the USSR is willing to co-operate with other governments, for example the United States and United Kingdom, to assist in bringing about such a settlement. We were left in no doubt that the USSR regards it as the primary responsibility of those in power in South Africa to create the practical conditions which would make such a settlement probable."

than a **violent** settlement of the conflict in South Africa. It is also clear that the USSR is willing to co-operate with other governments, for example the United States and United Kingdom, to assist in bringing about such a settlement. We were left in no doubt that the USSR regards it as the primary responsibility of those in power in South Africa to create the practical conditions which would make such a settlement probable."

These practical conditions included the release of detainees and political prisoners; the unbanning of banned and restricted organisations; the dismantling of apartheid structures; the lifting of the State of Emergency and negotiating the transfer of constitutional power to a new democratic dispensation for all the people of South Africa.

"We found no evidence at all that the USSR is putting pressure on the ANC to abandon the armed struggle before the conditions for a negotiated settlement had been created by those in power in South Africa, or that the USSR is considering abandoning support for the ANC in favour of closer contact and relations with those who are in power in South Africa at present.

"This was also confirmed to us by the ANC representative in the USSR, Simon Makana, and we believe it would be a dangerous delusion for interest groups in South Africa to proceed on distorted or wrong assumptions in this regard."

The statement concluded: "With the above qualifications kept in mind, it is our view, from these discussions, that the USSR is prepared to play a positive and constructive role in bringing about a political settlement in South Africa and to reduce the potential for escalating violence in that region."

Van Rooi Beer tot Russiese heer!

Vyandbeelde werk nie meer nie, sê Rapport in dié onlangse hoofartikel.

HOE gerieflik was dit nie oor lange jare om die Rooi Beer as 'n gerieflike slaan-sak te hê nie. Was dit dan nie hy wat hoofsaaklik agter die "totale aanslag" gesit en alles wat daarmee gepaard gegaan het nie?

Maatreëls wat in wese ondemokraties was, kon, indien deur niks anders nie, ook maar as 'n noodwendige uitvloeisel van die allesomvattende bedreiging geregverdig word.

En nou? Skielik word met die Rooi Beer gepraat, en hóé! Sonder Sowjet-hulp, so lyk dit, sou sake nie reggekóm

'Ook ander vyandbeelde — byvoorbeeld Mandela en die ANC — word al plek-plek in 'n effens ander lig gesien'

het in Suidwes/Namibië in die mate dat dit wel reggekóm het nie — hoewel 'n mens daarvoor nie te vroeg wil oordeel nie.

Kykers van ons televisiediens (altdy erg sensitief vir veranderinge in amptelike houdings) moes seker 'n slag of twee diep asemhaal om gewoon te raak aan die gesig van 'n simpatieke Russiese heer wat simpatieke geluide oor Suid-Afrika maak. Dieselfde hoë Russiese

heer het later glo per helikopter oor die Witwatersrand gevlieg.

Ja nee, altyds iets nuuts uit Afrika . . .

Waarmee nie gesê wil word dat dit verkeerd is om met Russe of wie ook al te praat waar wie ook al bereid is om met óns te praat nie. Waarmee wel gesê wil word dat 'n mens nie kan ontkóm aan 'n sekere mate van skeptisisme oor die wyse waarop die Ryssiese vyandbeelde en vele ander vyandbeelde in die verlede in stand gehou is nie.

Nie dat daar nie 'n eksterne en interne bedreiging en selfs 'n "aanslag" was nie, totaal ofte nie. Daarvoor was die bewyse wel daar. Maar die vraag is geldig: Is Suid-Afrika gedien deur die wyse waarop daardie vyandbeelde só lewend gehou is dat talle in wese verkeerde maatreëls om verkeerde redes of glad geen redes nie ingestel kon word? En is dit nie so dat meermale by die stembus die kiesers se stem gewerf is op so 'n negatiewe basis soos die "totale aanslag", eerder as op die basis van positiewe beleidsrigtinge?

(Ons laat die vraag daar of die strategie so goed gewerk het omdat die kiesers gehoor het wat hulle wóu hoor.)

Die ironie van die saak is dat dit só gerieflik geword het om agter totale en ander aanslae te skuil dat ons die perfekte verskoning gehad het om te sê dit wat ons weet móét gedoen word, sal ons nog doen — net nie nou nie.

En nou is die Rooi Beer se vyandbeeld, indien nie daarmee heen nie, nie meer wat dit was nie! Ook ander vyandbeelde — byvoorbeeld Mandela en die ANC — word al plek-plek in 'n effens ander lig gesien. Hopelik sal ander (paaiboelies?) wat mag oorbly, dieselfde paadjie volg.

Terwyl die land weer eens 'n verkiesing tegemoet gaan, laat dit dan sonder onnodige gehamery op bedreigings en aanslae wees. Die Nasionale Party en sy leiding wat hom die jare negentig moet binnelei, kan dit doen in 'n klimaat wat meer as in 'n lang tyd gunstig daarvoor lyk om te hamer juis op die geleentheid wat wag om aangegryp te word.

Daarmee kan hy nie alleen sy nuwe uitdager, die Demokratiese Party, se bestaansreg in die gedrang bring om leier van ons toekoms te wees nie, maar aan almal in Suid-Afrika wat moeg geword het van vyandbeelde, die beelde van hoop bring wat mense bo alles tog van hóm verwag.



In Moscow . . . Enos Mabuza, Jane Slabbert, Simon Makana, Van Zyl Slabbert, Vasily Solodovnikov, Lyudmila Vielemaa, Johan Degenaar, Slava Tetiokin, Vladimir Shubin.