

# Nyet to ties, deals with South Africa Star 22/2/89

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The Soviet government newspaper *Izvestia* asked Yuri Yukalova, head of the USSR Foreign Ministry African Department, to comment on these speculations. Will South Africa open its embassy in Moscow in the years to come or is *The Washington Post* mistaken? Yes, it's mistaken. *The Washington Post* is a respectable newspaper. But the suppositions expressed by the author of the article are incorrect. Perhaps, he was guided by good intentions and wanted the USSR to play a more active role in changing the existing South African regime. Sadly, the newspaper cites not eyewitnesses but people who just heard of certain events. So in such a situation concoctions are inevitable. The Soviet stand on the apartheid regime remains unchanged. We'll never establish diplomatic relations with that regime in its present form. But does the USSR and South Africa maintain any "secret contacts?" There have been no "secret contacts", at least during the talks on settlement in South West Africa. A Soviet observer always played an active role at these talks. All negotiators, Pretoria and Washington included, noted our constructive contribution to the attainment of the agreements. It's only natu-



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ral that we had also contacts with Pretoria officials within this framework. We neither advertised nor concealed these contacts, regarding them as a normal way of solving such a complicated problem. Several years ago, closed contacts took place. But they were aimed at releasing Soviet geologists captured by MNR units in Mozambique. *Izvestia* covered this problem in detail. Then we had to be cautious and avoid publicity. Have you got any new information on the geologists? Sadly, we still don't know anything about Gavrilov and Istomin's fate. So the USSR continues holding its consistent stand, and believes that

diplomatic relations with the apartheid regime are impossible. But has anything changed in the Soviet views on the south of Africa? The restructuring and the new thinking made it possible to more realistically appraise the situation in the region and search for a new approach to it. One of the examples of such an approach is the Soviet role in unblocking the conflict in South West Africa by political means.

Does this mean that the USSR will advise the African National Congress to halt military operations? In what way can the Soviet scholars' statements cited by the newspaper be estimated?

I don't know whether those were exact citations. But scholars can hold their own views differing from official ones. I welcome the pluralism of opinions. Let scholars argue, search for new approaches, and hold non-standard viewpoints. But one thing is certain. The USSR will continue backing the democratic forces in South Africa who combat apartheid under ANC leadership.

Do you stand in favour of revolutionary violence? We've never absolutised (sic) armed struggle. We call for relying on political wisdom and not on the force of arms while settling acute conflicts. The ANC leadership also doesn't consider violence as the preferred and sole way of establishing a democratic and civilised South African state. It's only a reaction to the racist regime's violence against its citizens, both blacks and whites. The apartheid regime has elevated this violence to the rank of its official policy.

*The Washington Post* writes that the USSR helped to prevent South Africa's expulsion from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Not only the USSR but the majority of the IAEA members voted for preserving South Africa's membership. We want the South African nuclear industry to remain under international control and not be used for military purposes. At first there existed different views on this score but then we came to a common conclusion. Does the USSR maintain any

economic ties with South Africa?

The USSR strictly observes UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on sanctions and favours comprehensive sanctions against Pretoria to promote the earliest elimination of apartheid. We've never violated sanctions and have not concluded any secret deals with South Africa.

What about the reports regarding "spheres of influence" on the diamond and gold markets?

*The Washington Post*, incidentally, wrote that no one can prove this. One can maintain anything he likes and give no evidence of it. What's your attitude to Soviet newsmen's trips to South Africa?

The Soviet public needs to be provided with detailed information about developments in South Africa. Such trips have nothing to do with political ties and recognition of the apartheid regime. Many readers, USSR Foreign Ministry officials included, displayed keen interest in the dispatches of your correspondent from South Africa, which were published in *Izvestia* lately.

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