

Visiting Soviet academics: pressure led to changes

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JOHANNESBURG — President F.W. de Klerk's reform initiative was the result of pressure from democratic forces and struggles within and outside of South Africa, two top Soviet academics, who arrived in Johannesburg last night as guests of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa, said.

They also told a news conference that if South Africa became more "democratic", then its diplomatic relations with the USSR would improve.

Professor Irina Fila-

tova and Professor Apollon Davidson, two top academics at the Moscow State University and both specialising in African history, will be visiting towns and townships around South Africa.

According to Idasa, the main purpose of their visit is to meet and speak to South Africans about recent developments in this country.

"We're here because we want to see South Africa. Many South Africans have visited our country and we have some good friends here like Alex Boraine, (Dr

Frederik) van Zyl Slabbert and Archbishop (Desmond) Tutu," Prof Filatova said.

Commenting on the ANC, the two said the Soviet Union would never abandon the ANC and the South African "struggle".

The stress in Soviet policy to Southern Africa was previously military, but had recently altered to a more political outlook, they said.

They said political solutions were never ruled out, and the Namibian settlement was a good

example of this.

Political decision making was an important part of President Gorbachev's perestroika. His reforms aimed at creating a more democratic and humanitarian state, and an efficient economy.

Asked if they thought capitalism would be a better system for the Soviet Union, the academics said if capitalism was instituted immediately, then their country would end up playing a subordinate role to countries who had many years of capitalist development behind them. — Sapa