

Africa

SOUTH AFRICA

THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTS SECRET CONTACTS BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PRETORIA. (Izvestia, Dec. 31, p. 6. 750 words. Condensed text:) **Editors' Note.**—The American newspaper the Washington Post has published an article by L. Weymouth, which we are publishing in abridged form.

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The peace treaty signed in Brazzaville, the Congo, appears to mark an event much more important than the end of the war in Angola. It attests to incipient diplomatic relations between South Africa and the Soviet Union, relations that could possibly play a decisive role.

Moscow and Pretoria would seem to be strange partners in the international political arena, and at this stage their relationship is unofficial and secret. However, some American officials believe the two countries will likely resume official diplomatic relations in the next few years. Relations were broken in 1956.

The contacts between Moscow and Pretoria take several forms:

Secret meetings were held this year in the framework of the negotiations on a peace settlement in Angola. ... At one of the secret meetings, the South Africans asked how the Soviets view a restoration of relations.

During one of the final rounds of the negotiations on Angola this month, South African Foreign Minister "Pik" Botha held a two-and-a-half-hour discussion with a Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Anatoly Adamishin, on arrangements for monitoring the withdrawal of Cuban troops and on other issues of interest to the two countries. It was the first time since relations were severed that high-ranking officials of the two countries had met on an official basis.

A Soviet journalist working for Izvestia recently visited South Africa, the first to do so in many years. ... At the same time, several prominent white South African journalists

were recently permitted to visit the Soviet Union.

This year, the Soviets prevented South Africa's expulsion from the International Atomic Energy Agency. As a high-ranking South African official explained, they did so "by waging a behind-the-scenes struggle and by using their influence with the Group of 77—the group of nonaligned countries." As he put it, the [Soviet] actions were "a vivid example of what the Soviets can do for us."

Business contacts have also played a certain role in relations between the Soviet Union and South Africa. The two countries have successfully cooperated in trade deals involving gold and diamonds. According to the American scholar Kurt Campbell, 95% of all Soviet diamonds are sold through the Central Buying Organization in Europe, which is controlled by a South African firm, De Beers. As for gold, Campbell observes, the Soviets and South Africa together control a sizable share of the total volume of deliveries and sell their gold through Geneva. "There's no doubt that they act in concert, but nobody can prove it," he pointed out.

One of the most significant changes in Soviet thinking is doubtless the Soviet Union's new approach to South Africa, an approach that bears witness to the new principles guiding M. S. Gorbachev's diplomacy. As one high-ranking Soviet official put it, the Soviet "assessment of the situation in South Africa has become more pragmatic." Moscow no longer feels that the only way the South African regime will fall is as a result of armed struggle.

Two Soviet African specialists who have long dealt with this issue, Gleb Starushenko and Viktor Goncharov, who are Deputy Directors of the Africa Institute, have taken new and unexpected positions. Goncharov has criticized the African National Congress, an organization that is supported by the Soviet Union and that leads the struggle against apartheid, for dogmatic formulations. (V. Goncharov denies this.—Ed.) Starushenko has said that the South African government that comes to power after apartheid must protect the rights of the white minority.

The process of reaching a peace settlement in Angola could indeed serve as a model for how the superpowers can create something that was lacking during the first stage of detente—namely, a structure for resolving conflicts in the third world. If the spirit of cooperation continues, it could help solve what is perhaps the most intractable regional problem—the problem of South Africa.