

South Africa is a racist problem - not a capitalist-socialist one say Soviets

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WASHINGTON/ As news of the visit to South Africa last week by the Soviet deputy foreign minister emerged, a group of Soviet academics touring the US said that the South African problem should be seen as one of racism, not of capitalism versus socialism.

The academics were invited by the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker non-profit organisation, to attend a week-long seminar with their US colleagues, *writes a correspondent*.

They were speaking as deputy foreign minister Anatoli Adamishin said in Moscow that the Soviet Union would not restore diplomatic links with South Africa - broken off in 1956 - until apartheid was dismantled. Adamishin reportedly flew to Johannesburg, and was taken on a tour of the Pretoria Witwatersrand industrial area by helicopter. At a Washington press conference on Wednesday Vladimir Kokorev, from the Soviet Institute for African studies, said: "We don't want to see it as an East-West problem or a capitalist-socialist problem but only in terms of a racism problem."

The academics said Soviet foreign policy recognised the need to see beyond "black and white issues" and find new ways of changing the situation in South Africa. The liberation movement had to find allies in the white community. All sides must talk to have a constructive political dialogue, they said.

Leonid Fituni, a senior official in the institute, said he would personally prefer a "Zimbabwe-like solution."

As news of the first high-level visit to South Africa in decades sank in, Soviet academics described their former approach as "very abstract". Now the Soviet Union is trying to be "more specific" in its policy

"There is a realisation that we can't be dogmatic in our approach because that will lead to further polarisation in South Africa," he said.

The scholars stressed that the Soviet Union still supports the African National Congress as the most representative and respectable group and will continue to give it military aid.

"It is impossible for us to recognise the apartheid regime or have diplomatic relations with it as some Western media reports have suggested," said Kokorev.

The earlier Soviet approach towards Southern Africa had been "very abstract", but now the Soviet Union is trying to be "more specific" in its policy. Soviet officials are talking to white South Africans who oppose apartheid and "this aim does not contradict the aim of the liberation movement," Kokorev said.

Under President Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika, the Soviet Union is trying to adopt a

policy of "non-interference" in political struggles in other countries. "The international community must avoid any kind of interference in South Africa. We must not impose anything from outside," he added.

When asked about the situation in Namibia, the Soviets said they were not able to form impressions because they had been in the US for the past ten days and reading only Western reports. But Fituni explained the Soviet vote in the United Nations in support of the reduction of UN forces in Namibia by pointing to shrinking Soviet foreign currency reserves.

Kokorev criticised Frontline States for indulging in "a complex intellectual game" and not taking care of domestic problems.

"They have real problems of economic development and rebuilding. Mozambique has the problem of hunger. They (frontline governments) try to use socialist slogans for their own gains," he said.

Meanwhile, a statement released by the Presid-

ium of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee has rejected reports that Soviet support for the ANC is declining.

"The Soviet Republic views with deep concern the campaign recently mounted in the Western, especially British, mass media directed at discrediting the traditional support of the Soviet Union for the liberation movement in South Africa," the statement said.

Statements of Soviet academics and public figures had been distorted "to drive a wedge through the traditionally friendly relations between the USSR and the ANC."

The committee reaffirmed its "unfailing solidarity with the South African liberation movement led by the ANC, and its recognition of the liberation movement's right to choose the necessary means, including the armed struggle, to attain the eradication of apartheid."

It confirmed its readiness to develop relations with all groups in the country opposed to apartheid. The recent visit by leaders of the United Democratic Front, and the forthcoming trip to the Soviet Union by a delegation from the Institute for a Democratic South Africa, should be seen in this light.

And a joint communique between the ANC and the committee after a visit by an ANC delegation led by secretary-general Alfred Nzo, reiterated both groups' preference for a political solution.

Nevertheless, they pointed out that "the South African people is fully entitled to choose its own ways and means of struggle, including armed struggle."