

Ideology and Politics

East-West: From Rivalry to Cooperation in the Third World

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On the threshold of the third millennium mankind seems to have opened a new chapter of its history which might turn out to be the last one—in case humans fail to avert the danger of nuclear holocaust and ecological self-destruction. But the chapter may also become a transition to an epoch during which mankind will develop into an association of equal peoples and states building their relations on the principles of consensus. This will be possible when all people start abiding by the laws of justice and morality. We all need, each one in his own way, to overcome the past; we should free international relations of elements contradicting the normal human ideas of good and evil. We all should strive to deliver the world from enmity, suspicion and distrust.

Deideologization of interstate relations is one of the first steps toward this end. Ideological incompatibility has long been regarded as an axiom of the time. In my view, the nuclear age makes ideological compatibility a must for all people.

An ideology-dominated political thinking has become a mirror distorting the actions of the opposite sides. It distorts the picture of the world beyond recognition and is responsible for wrong assessments and decisions.

In conditions of ideological confrontation between East and West, their assistance to Third World countries turned, as a rule, into a tough rivalry between the two social systems: socialism and capitalism. This caused irreparable damage to the development of Third World countries.

New political thinking begins, in my view, with the recognition of the fact that a narrow national or class approach to security and development issues has no future. It also implies the impossibility, in the nuclear age, of ensuring a nation's security at the expense of other countries.

No doubt, we live, in a contradictory and at the

same time interdependent, interconnected and integral world. The integrity is determined by the common destiny of all states and peoples, all humans inhabiting our small planet, which, due to the scientific and technological progress, is "shrinking" all the time. The common destiny is linked with the problem of mankind's survival. Common sense dictates that the survival of the human race will depend on our ability to switch over from confrontation to cooperation.

Today, we must actively seek ways of organizing international life on the principles of justice and reason. This is not just rhetoric, but a vital imperative of modern time. This way of organizing international life implies a non-violent and nuclear-free world providing for a balance of interests of all countries. The right to a free choice in such a world must be combined with tolerance toward the choice of others, the defence of one's interests with the recognition and support of the legitimate interests of other countries and peoples. The world community will gradually renounce the tradition of power policies.

The survival of mankind, as it becomes ever more evident, is linked with such global problems as elimina-

tion of backwardness and poverty, hunger and disease, illiteracy and other obstacles to the development of Third World countries.

Of special concern is the situation in Africa which has already become a disaster continent. The life conditions of tens and hundreds of millions of people in Africa, a kind of "fourth world", have become not only inadmissible but also dangerous for civilization.

Today hunger is the lot of no less than 100 million Africans, while almost a third of the 600-million-strong population of the continent is undernourished. Today, Africa's self-reliance in food is at a low level. Besides, in recent years the continent has experienced frequent droughts and devastating locust attacks on crop fields. The desert is advancing on the savanna and tropical forest, annually depriving people of thousands of square miles of land. In the heart of the continent, far away from the Sahara and the Kalahari, new areas of desert are appearing.

Africa is undergoing a population explosion. Given the archaic forms of land-tilling and cattle-breeding, people's demands continue to exceed the admissible biological load on local ecosystems. The ecological crisis in Africa is of a relatively recent origin but it has already assumed a frightening scale and knows no state boundaries. The paradox of the situation is that while the whole world is threatened by ecological consequences of industrialization, Africa has become their victim on the threshold of industrialization.

An ecological crisis in Africa is taking place as a result of natural calamities, intensification of traditional ways of economy and, to a lesser degree, as a consequence of industrial development. The impact of growing activities on the environment involves not only rapacious destruction of the tropical bush and forests but also the use of ecologically dirty technologies. As a result, environmental pollution per unit of production is 50 or 100 per cent higher in Africa than in the industrialized countries. At the same time, the capacity of the atmosphere here to "process" the pollutants is three times lower than in the countries with a moderate climate. Further delay in the fight against environmental degradation on the African continent is inadmissible. Even today the situation is slipping beyond control. To halt the degradation collective efforts of the international community are needed, supported by scientific research into the ongoing processes.

Bringing Africa back to normal ecologically seems a formidable task. "Efforts to protect the environment should not obstruct development", maintain Africans. This can be understood. Economic backwardness and low rates industrial growth stand in the way to the solution of many problems.

An economic crisis in Africa is manifested by the sharply rising foreign debts which soared from \$11 billion in 1970 to \$230 billion in 1988 making up three-fifths of the continent's GNP. Developing Africa is obliged to spend about half of its export revenues to service its foreign debts. The continued siphoning of many billions of dollars from the continent's economy undermines the capacity to create better living standards for Africans. Financial shortages have an adverse effect on medical care and education. Against the background of general economic depression many African countries show increased social tension and political instability.

One of the reasons for the present-day difficult situation on the continent is considerable spending of Africa's scanty resources on the import of weapons. According to some estimates, African states allocate for military purposes six times more money than they spend on public health and twice the sum they spend on education. Over the past two decades their share in the world arms spending went up from 0.4 to 3.8 per cent. According to the estimates of the Institute of Africa under the USSR Academy of Sciences from 1976 to 1987 African countries spent for these purposes about \$140 billion, or the

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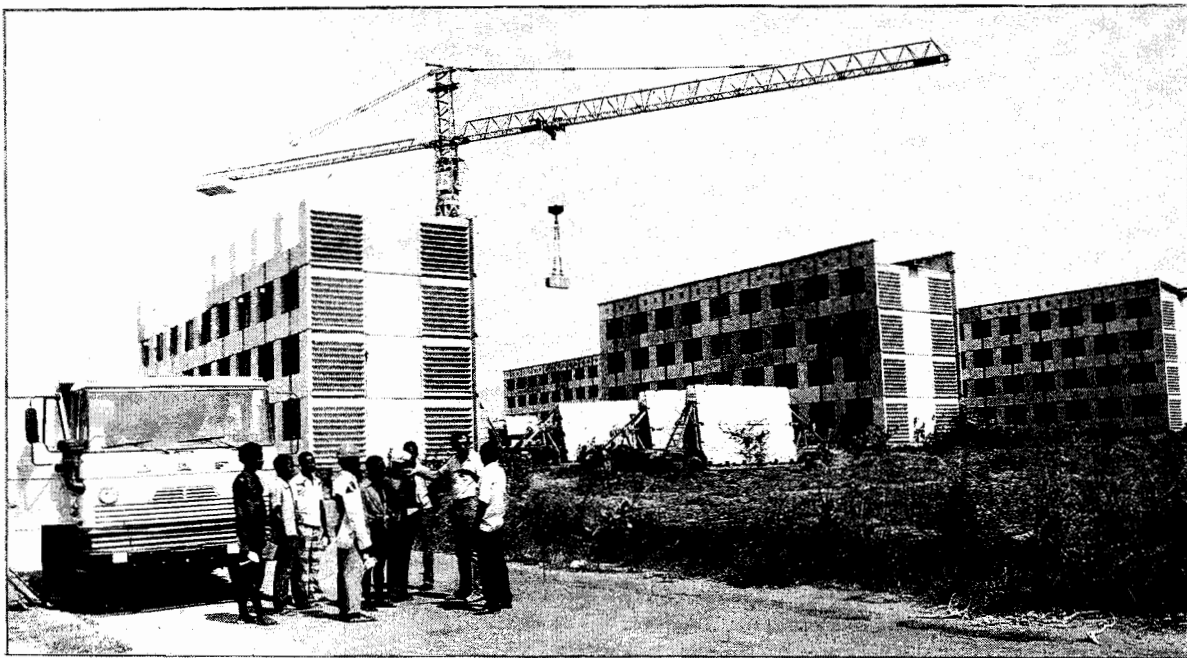
Economic and technological cooperation between the Republic of Ghana and the USSR is going on. In the photo: Soviet specialist Panchenko of Kiev and his Ghanaian colleagues at the construction site of the prefabricated concrete modules factory in the town of Tema.



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Soviet
builders
assist their
Ghanaian
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in housing
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in the town
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equivalent of two thirds of their combined foreign debt.

What does this mean? I believe, Africa is fast becoming a disaster area. It will be possible to break this dangerous trend only through the joint efforts of developed and developing countries. Africa's disastrous situation concerns the interests of all states and peoples of the world; it is a challenge to our ability to act jointly.

The industrialized countries' moral responsibility is especially great. And not only on account of the gap in the development between them and the majority of African countries, a gap that widens with every passing year. And even not so much because former colonial powers bear a certain share of historical responsibility for the crisis in Africa and that it is time to settle accounts. In my view, the main problem is that Africa has become the ground for a "tug of war" between East and West.

Boasting a great economic and military potential, the developed countries have repeatedly exerted substantial influence on the course of regional conflicts, on the processes taking place on the continent. The views and actions by the East and West have often been guided by class bias, born of ideological tenets and stereotypes.

Of course, not every contradiction and problem of Africa is rooted in the East-West rivalry. However, it is obvious that this rivalry has, on the whole, made an adverse impact on the development of many African countries, if only because it precluded international cooperation in Africa between, say, the United States and the Soviet Union.

East and West, by joint efforts, will be able to do a great deal to change the situation for the better on the African continent. But to join efforts it is necessary to learn to look at the world without ideological blinders and recognize the right of various African countries to choose their own ways of development.

A deideologized world view opens wide prospects for East-West cooperation. There are all the necessary prerequisites for that. It has long been proclaimed at the Institute of Africa under the USSR Academy of Sciences that the African continent is not a zone of vital interests for the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist community.

At the same time, as far as the mankind's survival is concerned, Africa is a zone of vital interests for the whole world. Therefore, it is in the interest of the majority of the industrialized countries and African states that relations of rivalry in the region be transformed into mutually advantageous cooperation.

A gradual demilitarization of the continent and settlement of all regional conflicts could be the first step toward a stably developing Africa. In the long run, when the task of ensuring security of African states has been solved by political means, a full embargo on arms deliveries to Africa could become a lever for putting a permanent end to military conflicts on the continent.

It is absolutely clear that the way to a violence-free order in Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, will not be easy. It will require more energetic and joint African and international efforts.

Now that new political thinking has become part and parcel of world politics, there is the real possibility of not only settling conflicts, but of demilitarizing the African continent step by step.

One of the key goals in East-West cooperation, aimed at African development, should be the elaboration and realization of measures, agreed with debtor-countries, on settling the foreign debt issue.

A basis for seeking a consensus in this problem can be provided by Soviet proposals put forward by Mikhail Gorbachev in his speech at the UN on December 7, 1988. The Soviet Union proposed to recognize that the accumulated debt of the developing countries can neither be paid back nor exacted on the original conditions. The USSR expressed readiness to establish a long-term (up to 100 years) moratorium in the repayment of foreign debts for the least developed countries, and in a number of cases to completely write off the debts. Besides, the Soviet Union proposed that the international community consider the question of limiting the repayment of foreign debts by other developing countries, depending on the economic indices of each of them or declaring a long-term deferment of a substantial portion of payment. As a practical step in this direction, the Soviet Union announced that it was writing off the debts of 22 developing countries, most of them

potentials and needs of the sides. Typical of these relations are a narrow commodity structure of bilateral trade and a lack of dynamism in the development of economic and scientific-technological cooperation.

The Soviet Union maintains meaningful economic relations with several African countries: Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar. These countries account for over 90 per cent of Soviet trade with Africa. While assisting them the Soviet Union pays insufficient attention to agriculture, though it is a vital branch of African economy. Until recently our cooperation mainly focused on major projects that take a long time to accomplish and pay off. Small and medium enterprises, cementing the economy and quick in bringing returns, most often remained outside the interest of Soviet organizations. Cooperation was mainly maintained with the state sector of the economy. The structure of assistance, as well as forms and methods of cooperation, used by Soviet organizations, often overlooked the real needs and changes on the African market.

The Western countries' assistance to Africa has not always been effective either, especially in recent years. Due to the worsening financial situation in African countries, the financial aid rendered by the West has most frequently been used to repay previous credits. Obviously, such assistance could have been more effective if it had been used to build highly profitable enterprises with a short period of payoff. This point is brought home by the Egyptian newspaper *Saut al Arab*, which reported that in 1975–1986 the USA, having granted Egypt credits to the tune of \$22 billion, had not built a single industrial enterprise in that country. On the whole, the economic policy of the West towards the developing world is meant to support international financial stability and quite often contradicts the policy of development pursued by African countries. The latter are interested in the growth of productive forces and would prefer non-stable development to stable backwardness.

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International Year of Literacy

Some 162 million people in Africa can neither read nor write, Mr. Mapuranga, Deputy General Secretary of the Organization of African Unity, said in Addis Ababa. To end such an unpalatable situation, he said, OAU member-states should take an active part in the activities of the International Year of Literacy to be marked in 1990 upon UN decision.

African. The total debt of these countries makes up 15 per cent of the entire sum owed by developing countries to the Soviet Union.

Regrettably, numerous hitherto adopted programmes of action and projects of revitalizing the economy have hardly yielded any tangible results. The plight of Africa continues to deteriorate. The population explosion, degrading environment, hunger and disease, political instability and social tensions are bringing to naught the attempts of the rest of the world to help Africans. On the whole, the economic and technological aid to Africa from the industrialized countries can be regarded unsuccessful in its results and consequences. Some separate positive examples do not change the overall negative picture.

The scale of trade and economic relations between the Soviet Union and African countries is not, in my opinion, in keeping with the economic

It is in everyone's interest to solve the problem of Africa's survival. Finding a way out of the economic crisis for this continent must be put at par with the problems of disarmament and environmental protection. That is why I think it is incumbent on Africanologists in all countries to mobilize world public opinion for the solution of this problem. What we need in the first place are not flights to Mars but "flights to Earth", including those to Africa. There is no higher duty for us than to work out a comprehensive system of concrete scientific and practical measures capable of halting Africa's slide towards catastrophe.