

Extracts from Reports to II Soviet-African Conference "For Peace, Co-operation and Social Progress" by Gleb Starushenko, USSR Academy of Sciences (Africa Institute) Moscow 24 June 1986.

The regime in South Africa embodies what is the most evil and despicable in the capitalism of the imperialist stage — superexploitation, militarism, contempt of any human being that does not belong to the elite. Being doomed by history for this reason alone, this regime, anachronistic as it is, drags on preserving colonialism and racism in the form of apartheid and depending upon them for its existence. These two institutions, like slavery, have been rejected and outlawed by all states. The regime that sponsors them is basically anomalous¹ in the modern world and must be eliminated without delay. This, in fact, is the opinion of most of the people of South Africa and practically of all states. The controversial issue, however, which is the object of acute political struggle not only on the world scene, but in South Africa itself, is that of means and ways to achieve the desired end. This practical aspect of the problem acquires special significance in the light of the latest developments in South Africa that tend to aggravate international tension to a dangerous limit and call for concerted actions to clear up the conflict situation.

... In the past two years the anti-racist struggle in South Africa has risen, according to a prominent African nationalist, to a qualitatively new level. The selflessness of young patriots and the heroic deaths of over 1 500 demonstrators have plunged Pretoria's regime into an unprecedented crisis. The "upper strata", i.e. the ruling classes together with their state and socio-economic institutions have clearly demonstrated that they are no longer capable of exercising their power by old methods. They are forced to manoeuvre and dodge, resort to cunning and trickery, concede concessions and reforms. These tactics testify to the emergence of one of the key elements of a revolutionary situation described by Lenin as "crisis of the upper strata".

The above mentioned events have also precipitated the "crisis of the lower strata", i.e. the emergence of other prerequisites for a revolution. The op-

¹ Anatoly Gromyko. *The crisis in the South of Africa*. M., 1981, p.6.

pressed classes are not only demonstrating their unwillingness to live as before, but intensifying their struggle against the existing order. According to an African leader, the people want to gain freedom immediately. They want to rule their country and be the arbiter of its destiny today, but not to-morrow. They are sick and tired of the harangue about the need to postpone liberation to a later time for some reason or other. They now see the purpose of their life exclusively in the fight for freedom. They have lost their fear of death because "to live" for them means "to be free".

There exists a danger, however, that the struggle against apartheid may lose momentum and even bog down at the present pre-revolutionary stage. The historical experience of other countries attests to the fact that if revolution does not go ahead, does not set any new tasks and does not gain appreciable results, it is bound to sustain a defeat. Considerable strata of South African society still keeps away from the struggle. Moreover, even the forces participating in mass protests not infrequently fail to co-ordinate their efforts. The abrogation of the laws prohibiting the blacks to use the same trains and visit the same restaurants as the whites, banning interracial sexual relations and mixed marriages, i.e. the abolition of the so-called small apartheid has failed to defuse the situation in South Africa. To provide a real solution to the crisis, it is necessary to abolish the production relations based on the system of apartheid. This system cannot be changed, it must be destroyed.

The anti-racist struggle in South Africa and the national liberation movement of the Namibian people directed against the colonial oppression join in a single revolutionary torrent. This amalgamation tends to enhance the revolutionary potential of both liberation armies and expand the scope of South African revolution. Yet the solution of the Namibian problem is seriously hampered by the interference of external imperialist forces and shows practically no signs of real progress.

The support of the international community of states to the liberation movements of South Africa and Namibia, important as it may be, is still not sufficient. Here are a few facts:

- the numerous UN and Security Council resolutions recognizing the illegal character of the occupation of Namibia by South Africa and mapping out concrete steps for the liberation of that country are being ignored;

- despite the fact that most of the states have been demanding comprehensive sanctions against the regime of apartheid for over a good quarter of a century, the means that have been imposed are not only very limited in scope, but completely disregarded by many countries, particularly the Western states;

- in defiance of the opinion of the absolute majority of the states that recognize the right of the people of Southern Africa to armed struggle for their liberation (some of these states even render them direct material and military support), South Africa and the USA label such struggle as inter-

national terrorism and engage under this pretext in a virtual war against the Frontline States.

The problem of the elimination of the regime of apartheid in South Africa and the regime of colonial rule of Namibia has two aspects, the internal and the international ones. In view of the fact that imperialism has embarked on the road of neo-globalist, i.e. interventionist policy in Southern Africa, like in other parts of the world, the importance of the international aspect greatly increases.

We are firmly convinced that the solution of all internal problems of the liberation movement is the sovereign right of the people and their political parties. Proceeding from this universally recognized principle, I should like now to outline our general approach to certain issues that are currently in the focus of ideological and political struggle.

The process of the shaping of a revolutionary situation which we now witness in South Africa is far from being completed. Protest demonstrations are largely confined to African townships around big cities. The broad masses of the black population, particularly in bantustans, often stay aloof. The main participants in anti-racist action are students and the unemployed. The South African working class has not yet thrown the full measure of its enormous revolutionary potential into the scale of revolutionary struggle. It is to be expected that the establishment of a powerful trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) will greatly intensify not only the political, but also the economic struggle in the country.

The broader the scope of the participation of the South African proletariat in the liberation struggle will be, the closer will be the co-operation between the South African Communist Party, the recognized and experienced leader of the South African workers, and other anti-racist forces.

It is also noteworthy, that the communists play an important part in raising the level of the scientific guidance of the movement. In the past few years their theoretical journal African Communist has given a thorough analysis of the current situation in the south of the continent and has drawn important political conclusions. Proceeding from the objective laws of social development, the communists do not advance at the present stage of social development any other slogans but general democratic ones. They believe the restructuring of South African society along socialist lines is a matter of the future and will be possible only after the necessary conditions have ripened.

Being internationalists as they are, the South African communists stand firm against adventurist plans of all kinds of leftist organizational movements of the so-called Black Consciousness (Pan Africanist Congress, AZAPO, National Forum, and others) convincingly and authoritatively, showing their reactionary nature. The slogans of such organizations are the armed struggle against the whites without any compromise, for

nation of black South Africa (Azania), the establishment of the rule of the blacks, etc. might lead the masses away from the actual struggle for their independence and do irreparable damage to the liberation movement. The negative attitude of the communists of South Africa to leftist demogagy clearly shows that the CPSA comes out not only as an organizing revolutionary force, but as a factor of stability, a guarantor against adventurism, black chauvinism and racism.

It was only to be expected that the activity of the United Democratic Front, very heterogeneous as it is, would bring up numerous and complex problems. One can hardly accept the prediction of certain Western politologists that the current trends lead to the enhancement of the prestige of the UDF at the expense of the ANC. These amalgamations are not rivals, they are acting in one direction. The manners in which they act are essentially different, since the former is a legal organization, whereas the latter is outlawed. One should not forget, however, that they have a common programme, the Liberty Charter, and that they fight against a common formidable enemy. In the view of Soviet analysts the strengthening of understanding between the ANC and the UDF is dictated by the need to prove the organization of the anti-racist actions. The United Democratic Front which is not infrequently their initiator and direct organizer still represents an amorphous amalgamation some members of which are not even willing to participate in mass campaigns. Since the ANC is more homogeneous and has amassed considerable experience of struggle for the unity of anti-racist forces, it can and must make a valuable contribution to the formation and consolidation of a single united national front of patriotic forces.

In this context yet another internal problem deserves mention — the policy of the anti-racist forces towards the ruling white minority. As is known, the privileged groups have begun to show signs of a split over the character of the reforms which are aimed at preserving the present regime, and not at its liquidation. Unlike the white bourgeoisie, which is not tied to the chariot of apartheid and appears to be inclined to enter into negotiations with the ANC, the middle and lower strata of the white community facing the possibility of losing their privileges tend to support the most reactionary parties, more rightist than even the ruling National Party.

It appears that there exist real possibilities for widening the cleavage which has not yet been sharply defined. First, the programmes of the anti-racist forces do not advance plans for a broad nationalization of capitalist property as an indispensable condition and are ready to give the bourgeoisie the corresponding guarantee. Second, far from all members of the white community, even those belonging to its middle and lower strata, are willing to die in the ditch in defence of the "camp" as they are urged by the right extremists. Obviously, they would prefer a compromise and can hardly be expected to sacrifice their lives and join in a massacre as deadly to the indigenous population

as to themselves. Third, already today the ANC might work out comprehensive guarantees for the white population which could be implemented after the elimination of the regime of apartheid. Such guarantees would suit both the liberals and the pragmatists from the white community, neutralizing at the same time the die-hards.

The examples of Kenya and Zimbabwe where the white minority feel absolutely safe attest to the practicability of such a solution. The above precedents need not be regarded as rigid models. For instance, the parliament may consist of two chambers: one formed on the basis of proportional representation and the other, possessing the right of veto, on the basis of equal representation of four communities.

The elaboration of the constitutional principles of the future anti-racist state would be instrumental already today in promoting good relations and eliminating mistrust between the communities.

The new state might also be a unitary system with autonomous components. The forms and substance of such autonomy should be defined with due regard for the will of the population revealed, for instance, in referendums, through negotiations, etc. Concrete issues related to the functioning of such a system might become the object of a national conference, its main participants being the government of the Republic of South Africa and the true representatives of the non-white population.

The work of the Committee for elimination of racial discrimination clearly shows that the existence of multiracial societies in the modern world without serious discrimination and antagonistic contradictions is not a Utopia. This conviction shared by the Soviet representatives with their colleagues in the Committee is based on the reports of 24 signatories to the International Convention on Elimination of Race Discrimination. Such reports are submitted periodically to the Committee and give detailed accounts of the way the states fulfil their obligations in accordance with the convention. The population of most African states is very heterogeneous not only from the ethnic, but also from the racial viewpoint. True, some of them are not yet free from certain tensions arising from relations between different races or ethnic groups, but no country has such a dire record of racial hatreds as the regime of apartheid. As regards the relations between the black and white populations in South Africa, the same African continent provides examples of peaceful co-operation between these races. The misgivings of a certain part of the South African white population viewing majority rule in their country in terms of Doomsday horrors are largely traceable to racist propaganda combined with hoary provincialism and downright ignorance.

In view of the fact that racial and political tensions in South Africa are now aggravated to a breaking point and the sides are distrustful and suspicious of one another, the peaceful settlement of the conflict might be expedited by resorting to the institution of international guarantees, the sides selecting the

guarantors by agreement from among prestigious international organizations or individual states.

We are convinced of the possibility of Namibia's and South Africa's liberation not only because we believe in the objective laws of social development and in the historical inevitability of the elimination of colonialism and racism. Our confidence is also based on the investigation by Soviet scientists of the concrete trends of social development in Southern Africa and of the growing prerequisites for an anti-racist revolution: its objective and subjective factors. However, in order to allow the inner processes in South Africa to take their natural course and enable the people of the country to take their destiny into their own hands, it is necessary to exclude any possibility of foreign intervention and export of counter-revolution.

The policy of the Soviet Union in Africa, as well as in other regions of the Third World is based on the generally recognized principles of inter-state relations. The USSR does not participate in the exploitation of natural and manpower resources of the countries of this region, has no mines or factories on their territory, does not interfere in their internal affairs and does not seek to change the existing regimes. For this reason the basic interests of the Soviet Union in Africa are not affected by any current changes in the political and economic life of the region. This has been borne out by the decisions of the latest 27th Congress of the CPSU, the ruling party of the Soviet Union which have defined the strategic aims of Soviet foreign policy for 1986–1990 and for the period ending in 2000.

The aim of the policy pursued by the Soviet Union is to ensure to the maximum possible degree that all African states develop in accordance with objective historical laws and that their social and state systems are determined exclusively by the results of the struggle of internal class and political forces without any outside interference. The Soviet Union is a resolute opponent of any export of counter-revolution and revolution, of any interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Its aim is to help consolidate the political independence of young states and to expedite their advance towards economic independence. The Soviet Union seeks to achieve this aim primarily by political means, and also by granting newly-formed states economic, scientific and technical aid. It stands to reason that the methods of attaining the set goals are modified or altered in accordance with changes in the international situation. Today the Soviet Union lays special emphasis on the need to eliminate or lessen the menace of thermo-nuclear war. . .

. . . International law is an important element and one of the great achievements of human civilization. The norms regulating today's relations between states are a product of many centuries and even millenia. The observance of generally recognized norms of international intercourse is an identification sign of membership in a civilized society. The importance of the norms of international law can hardly be exaggerated in the nuclear age, when even a

minor error in making an international decision may trigger a global catastrophe and annihilation of the human race.

... Let me outline our approach, which is incidentally, shared by many African states. In our opinion, the settlement of any conflict situation should be based on due regard for legal interests of all states, since it is only under this condition that the settlement once achieved can be stable. The system of international security proposed by the Soviet Union cannot be stable if it does not provide for the interests of all its participants. Indeed, a system implies interconnection of its parts and failure to integrate one of its elements inevitably upsets the system as a whole. . . .