

# From the <sup>W.M.</sup> <sup>23-30</sup> <sup>3/81</sup> mouth of the <sup>p.6</sup> bear: Moscow on Pretoria

**We've heard everyone's views of the Soviet 'thaw' on South Africa except that of the Russians. Here is a view from Moscow, specially written for the *Weekly Mail* by **ALEXANDER DEVITT**, Political Analyst of the *Novosti Press Agency* in Moscow**

IF — and only if — apartheid is replaced by a democratic system, will "the restoration of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Pretoria be possible", says Yuri Yukalov, head of the African Administration of the USSR's foreign ministry.

This "bottom line", which contradicts many recent reports about changing Soviet attitudes to South Africa, emerged during a round-table discussion in Moscow sponsored by the Novosti Press Agency. It was attended by Yukalov and other leading Soviet Southern Africa specialists.

Yukalov described prospects for a peaceful settlement in the sub-continent as "bleak but not hopeless," and said "we should be realists in assessing the difficulties in the way of removing the root cause of the conflict."

"That cause is Pretoria's apartheid, which includes an aggressive policy in the region and uses tough coercive measures on the home scene," Yukalov said the Soviet Union "preferred a political settlement, and a political solution to the apartheid problem."

Moscow's view was that "armed struggle is not the sole means (of fighting apartheid). There are others, including sanctions."

"The isolation of apartheid will continue as long as it exists. But this does not mean that we should only use our fists in dealing with the government of South Africa."

Yukalov cited the Angola/Namibia peace process as an example of the drafting of agreements in which there were neither winners nor losers: "all sides stood to gain", he said. The presence of a balance of interests allowed for a compromise capable of ensuring a lasting peace, and real stability in the sub-region.

The Soviet diplomat stressed, however, that the agreements reached in New York have yet to be implemented. "A great deal depends on how honestly Pretoria intends to live up to its obligations," he said: "We have no doubts about Angola and Cuba's conduct, but Pretoria has a big temptation to 'leave in order to stay'."

If Pretoria's *bona fides* were proved by sincere co-operation, however, "the emergence of an independent, multi-racial and stable Namibia on Africa's map will be an important step on the way toward the solution of the problems of the whole region, including that of making South Africa a democratic state", he said.

However, Yukalov said it remained the Soviet view that there had not yet been "promising signs" of a substantial change in the situation within South Africa. He said Moscow "took note" of some statements made by new ruling party leader FW de Klerk, but would prefer to see "real deeds". Moscow's assessment was that the struggle within the leadership of the

National Party continued, but that for the moment, the "last word" remained with the State Security Council.

This view was confirmed by academic Anatoli Gromyko, who recently attended the much-publicised meeting between Soviet and South African scholars in London.

The National Party had entered a period of instability, he said, and added that the way forward lay in the establishment of a "national forum" with the participation of all political forces. This would form a pivotal part of efforts toward a political settlement, which would then elaborate a feasible programme for the dismantling of apartheid.

Multilateral diplomacy and the "abandoning of attitudes based on confrontation" would give South Africa and the neighbouring states their "best chance", said economist Ida Kuklina, of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations in Moscow. But the efficacy of international efforts would depend, above all, on political consensus among the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Kuklina said no such consensus had yet been achieved, and accused Western powers of applying the premise "strength against the wishes of the majority", by vetoing security council resolutions.

The head of the South Africa department in Moscow's Institute of African Studies, Andrei Pokrovsky, argued that "stability" in South Africa under the Nationalist government is "an illusion".

He said the government could simply not survive without reforms, adding that "even such serious reforms as the constitutional changes" had not changed the political essence of the system. One only needed to consider the unaltering opposition of the black majority to accept the depth of the "regime's crisis", he said.

Yukalov — with the support of the other participants in the Novosti discussion — pointed out that the position of favouring political over conflictual solutions for South Africa was one that the Soviet Union shared with the African National Congress.

He said the position was reaffirmed during ANC president Oliver Tambo's recent visit to Moscow. "There are no differences in our positions," said Yukalov. "The USSR and the ANC believe that the elimination of apartheid by political methods would be in the interests of all South Africans, black and white."

"It is necessary to create conditions excluding violence. This, however, depends on Pretoria rather than the Soviet Union or the ANC."



Oliver Tambo