

## Soviet new thinking spells

# Trouble for the ANC

**LONDON:** The ANC has begun to talk about negotiations. More accurately, has begun to talk about why it can't contemplate negotiations now.

The reason for this talk, the national executive and the latest edition of African Communist would have us believe, is that Pretoria and various Western Powers (ANC national executive) or those suffering from illusions (African Communist) have been raising the prospect of a negotiated end to conflict.

It is not, they wish to assure us, because the ANC has finally realised that its previous talk of "transfer of power" was based on a massive over-estimation of township conflict or an equally erroneous under-estimation of the strength of government.

Neither is it, they add, because the ANC is coming under pressure from its sponsors the Frontline states and Moscow - to get its act together and realises that being the world's oldest liberation movement is a dubious distinction.

Given this, I am forced to accept that my hearing was deficient when I thought I heard an ANC executive member tell me that the one thing the SA regime had effectively accomplished was to cut off its mass supply line or, as he ambitiously put it: "Our Ho Chi Linh line".

reach Pretoria.

I could go on recounting the failings of my auditory system. But the publication last week of a study by Harvard Academic Kurt Campbell on "Southern Africa in Soviet Foreign Policy" leads me to suspect it might not be all that bad.

His central observation is that Soviet foreign policy has switched from a traditional view that "wars of national liberation are historically inevitable" to a belief that negotiated settlements for local conflicts are possible.

The Soviet Union, he says, wants to assume an internationally-accepted role in Third World diplomacy which is commensurate with its position as a super-power.

In addition to this fundamental change in policy - also reported recently from other sources - Campbell says there has been a change in personnel which has a direct bearing on the ANC.

Gorbachev has replaced all the party secretaries holding foreign portfolios and reshuffled nearly all the senior officials in the foreign ministry.

"In the last two years," he adds, "each of the Frontline states has received a new Soviet

logical fervour, it is now dominated by pragmatists who see "ultimate revolution in SA as still years away, and have begun to explore possible political outcomes in SA which underline the need for negotiations".

For the ANC, this means having to cope with Soviet analysts like Gleb Starushenko and Victor Goncharov, of the Moscow Institute for African Studies, who are contemplating scenarios which are "breathtaking, given the orthodox analysis of earlier years" and a whole new ball game in its Frontline sponsor states, in particular Angola and Mozambique.

The author notes that far from reducing commitments to Angola, the Soviet Union under Gorbachev has stepped up aid.

He reasons that not only is Soviet pride at stake, but perhaps, most importantly that the almost US\$2bn the

Angola has been paid for from oil revenues. However, he adds, the supply of Angolan petrodollars is running thin.

Campbell goes no further, and rumours that Angola is preparing to use ANC bases as a bargaining chip in negotiations over Unita remain pre-

good.

Mozambique - the world's poorest nation - is another kettle of fish.

Campbell concludes that relations between Mozambique and the Soviet Union are now more unsure than ever.

The British Foreign Office agrees, and it is not alone in identifying Mozambique as presenting a golden opportunity for the West to snatch a former client state out of the Soviet ambit.

For the hardliners in the ANC, this is certainly not good news.

Joaquim Chissano's ministers are explicit, if not yet in public, about their support for a free market economy.

And if it could bring respite from Renamo attacks, how much longer will it be before they - like their greatest benefactors, Margaret Thatcher's Britain - start questioning the twin pillars of ANC strategy - armed struggle and sanctions?

The ANC is already of its links with the SACP and its somewhat tenuous relationship with Zimbabwe's ruling Zanu-PF, any move into the "ideological enemy camp" will come as a devastating blow.

Which brings us back to negotiations. Perhaps the most accurate assessment Thatcher has made of SA in the last year



● Gorbachev.

however, applies not just to the regime but to the opposition.

Under pressure from the Soviets and the Frontline states, the ANC may at last

be forced to consider undoing the noose it has placed around its neck in exclusively pursuing sanctions and armed struggle.

Selectively applied as at present, sanctions are not going to bring the South African economy to its knees. The chances of them being widened are negligible in an in-

er, Kohl and Takeshita, though the US might be the exception.

As for armed struggle, the ANC freely admits, more than 27 years on, that it cannot begin to contemplate engaging the SADF.

If Che Guevara is not turning in his grave, the Soviets and the Frontline states are certainly beginning to have second thoughts. Perhaps with this talk of negotiations, the ANC is seriously beginning to reconsider



the Frontline states and Moscow - to get its act together and realises that being the world's oldest liberation movement is a dubious distinction.

Given this, I am forced to accept that my hearing was deficient when I thought I heard an ANC executive member tell me that the one thing the SA "regime" had effectively accomplished was to cut off its arms supply line or, as he ambitiously put it: "Our Ho Chi Minnh line".

My hearing was also at fault, no doubt, when a Zambian minister suggested that stupidity was a reason for the ANC's reluctance to ditch the SA Communist Party.

It was also in question when he cast doubts about its security. And when I heard his assessment that it took less than an hour for an item of information imparted to an ANC member by a Frontline state to

its position as a super-power. In addition to this fundamental change in policy - also reported recently from other sources - Campbell says there has been a change in personnel which has a direct bearing on the ANC.

Gorbachev has replaced all the party secretaries holding foreign portfolios and reshuffled nearly all the senior officials in the foreign ministry.

"In the last two years," he adds, "each of the Frontline states has received a new Soviet ambassador. "The International Department of the Central Committee, which, until very recently, was responsible for conducting communications with revolutionary elements in the Third World, has now apparently been directed to oversee all Soviet moves on the international scene".

Previously staffed at the senior levels by Third World specialists noted for their ideo-

under Gorbachev has stepped up aid.

He reasons that not only is Soviet pride at stake, but perhaps, most importantly that the almost US\$1 billion

Soviet Union has invested in Angola has been paid for from oil revenues. However, he adds, the supply of Angolan petrodollars is running thin.

Campbell goes no further, and rumours that Angola is prepared to use ANC bases as a bargaining chip in negotiations over Unita remain precisely that. But there is no smoke without fire and the omens for the ANC are not

they - like their greatest benefactors, Margaret Thatcher's Britain - start questioning the twin pillars of ANC strategy - armed struggle and

The ANC is acutely aware of its links with the SACP and its somewhat tenuous relationship with Zimbabwe's ruling Zanu-PF, any move into the "ideological enemy camp" will come as a devastating blow.

Which brings us back to negotiations. Perhaps the most accurate assessment Thatcher has made of SA in the last year is that change will be glacial.

The glacial process,

however, applies not just to the regime but to the opposition.

Under pressure from the Soviets and the Frontline states, the ANC may at last be forced to consider undoing the noose it has placed around its neck in exclusively pursuing sanctions and armed struggle.

Selectively applied as at present, sanctions are not going to bring the South African economy to its knees. The chances of them being widened are negligible in an industrialised world led by opponents of sanctions like Thatch-

• Gorbachev.

er, Kohl and Takeshita, though the US might be the exception.

As for armed struggle, the ANC freely admits, more than 25 years on, that it cannot even begin to contemplate engaging the SADF.

If Che Guevara is not turning in his grave, the Soviets and the Frontline states are certainly beginning to have second thoughts.

Perhaps with this talk of negotiations, the ANC is seriously beginning to reconsider its strategy. - Mike Robertson for Business Day.

## Compromise signs emerge

GENEVA: Signs of compromise have emerged in a new round of indirect peace talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

UN mediator Diego Cordovez, who shuttles between the two delegations in the talks which resumed yesterday, said both sides were agreed on the need for a broad-based government during a Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

## Nuclear massacre planned

PEKING: China denied yesterday that late communist leader Mao Tse-Tung sought to lure US troops into China's heartland and massacre them with nuclear weapons.

The soon-to-be-published memoirs of Soviet president Andrei Gromyko charge that Mao tried to enroll Soviet help for the plan, the New York Times said last week.

The newspaper said Gromyko, Soviet foreign minister from 1957 to 1985, said he travelled to Peking in August, 1958, to reject the plan. He quoted Mao as saying that even if a nuclear war wiped out 300 million Chinese, there would still be plenty left to beat off intruders.

Sapa-Reuter

# JOHN MEINERT

STÜBEL STREET 49 · P.O. BOX 56 · WINDHOEK 9000  
TEL. (061) 225411

# pioneers of modern