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THE SUPERâ\200\224PUwERS AND THE THIRD wonLo:

ALTERNATIVES T0 compztglggg.

NEW SOVIET THINKING ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA.

COLIN chgg

VIENNW} JUNE 21, 1989

The new Soviet policy of 'Openness' and the election of a ham United States
Administration should give hope for the reduction of tensions not only between them~
selves, but also between them and Q
the Third world;
but how can this best be
achieved?

This was the theme of a non~governmental international conference
organised jointly by the Institute for Europeanâ\200\224Latin American Relations, based i
n
.Nadrid, and the Geonomics Institute based in Middlebury, Vermont, United States.
Although the main focus was on South America - as shown by the attendance
of many prominent Latin Ameripan personalities and academics - the conference also
devoted itself to other parts of the Third world.

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An important sign of the changing times in international relations is that no fewer than seven Soviet academics were among the participants and, even more

significantly, they were not averse to putting forward differing views.

One of

the keynote speakers, Victor Kremenyuk of the USA and Canada Studies Institute

in Moscow (Lskan) said that experience had shown that the direct use of force by

the Superpowers in the Third world was both counterproductive and inefficient;

creating unnecessary crises which affected the entire international system.

The logical conclusion for the future policies of the Superpowers, he

went on to say, was that the direct use of military force by either of them in

the Third World should be absolutely excluded.

This should also apply to powers

the task of encouraging its development in a more civilised, democratic and moral. Form and against the reactionary one, such as apartheid for example.

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It is this policy that will best serve the real national interests of the Soviet Union, encompassing the tasks of preserving and developing its positions in the settlement of the regional problems and achieving a democratic form if possible; and second, to ensure the USSR's diplomatic influence in the world, and its regional economic interests, including the billions of roubles already invested'.

Dr. Vasilkov says the Soviets main national interest now seems to

be a regime of 'non-apartheid' - a democratic, non-racial and stable government

with which the Soviet Union will be able to establish mutually advantageous diplomatic and economic relations, without harming the rest of its Foreign policy interests.

This embraces a sensible view of the White community's legitimate interests, real power and a contribution to South Africa's development.

It also

embraces the need for securing the interests of the Black majority and of all its political forces, including the ANC and the SA Communist Party, a fair place in the country's future.

That's why, he continues, 'the single active element in the Soviet approach towards South Africa until recently - support of the ANC - is unilateral and narrow, as the ANC is not the only opposition force in the country'.

The monopoly of

Soviet support can lead the ANC towards orienting itself on complete and uncompromised victory that may give rise to dogmatism and scare away both White and Black support. Meanwhile, the USSR has taken a passive position towards the rest of the country's other opposition forces and to the government itself.

This paradox should be overcome,

For it encourages not only deadlocking the conflict but delaying its resolution'.

Vasilkov suggests that Soviet-American agreement on the four guarantees

he proposes may not at present open the way to getting a negotiated settlement since the situation in South Africa is not yet mature enough for such negotiations'.

He quotes the ANC and SA Communist Party leaders, as well as some Western sources

(for example the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group), for the view that Pretoria is not yet ready to negotiate seriously.

'Though the Right-wing resistance is a

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powerful reason, for, this reluctance he suggests that 'e feeling of uncertainty among the white minority is not the least reason. It is to overcome these \ uncertainties that he suggests the offer of guarantees.

The ANC, he adds, sees a negotiated settlement at present as unreliable since it doubts whether Pretoria's sincerity can be trusted and because its own influence in the country is not yet great enough.

Uesilkov concludes that even if commonsense arguments do not prevail and apartheid produces a bloody conflict, Soviet-American cooperation could at least contribute to limiting the conflict and helping the peoples of Southern Africa from becoming involved in a senseless but dangerous rivalry in the region; hopefully, it would allow all the sides to rid themselves of extremism, which can never be justified.

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than diminish and so, tee, is the influence and future role of non~alignment'.

The sharpest critic; of past Soviet policies, especially in Africa, was

Dr.Vitale Vasilkov, a research fellow at Iskan and an academic regarded as one of the key thinkers on African problems.

He stated that in the past,

â\200\230 events in

Southern Africa were solely interpreted in Moscow as a tvictory} of the East (in Angola) and a 'defeat' of the west, and as a factor strengthening the Soviets and ensuring further 'intensification of the fight against imperialise'.

He criticized

the speculative calculations of the }notorious balance of forces' arguments, the i'bookish theories of 'socialist orientation', and the striving for 'ideological purity'.

These, he said, have all ietood the USSR in bad steaeS.

He quoted President

Podgorny as saying in Maputo in Narch/April 1977

that Mozambique's boundaries with Rhodesia and South Africa were not 5just interâ\200\224 state

but class frontiers'.

Speaking of a possible peaceful solution, Podgorney declared

that all he could say to South Africa and Rhodesia umu= just one thing: â\200\230Transfer ,

gentlemen, the power to the majority of the pepulation, that is, to the Africans in the person of their genuine representatives; eliminate the apartheid policies, and the problem will be removed'.

The Soviet Union, Uasilkov continued, found itself 'in the role of the stabilising force for the regimes in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, who took power with its help.

But if the power of confrontation contains anything positive, the evidence is that no serious regional conflict can be settled without the cooperation of the great powers.

Considering what

tetws might be oftered to South Africa

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induce its reg%wgiiï-\201wppqggggt}9n in avoiding the prospect of a protracted

conflict, he suggested the need for Four possible guarantees that might thelef
alleviate PretgiÃ©afs feats and meet the demands of the opposition.

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First, Pretoria should have firm guarantees about the elimination and nonâ\\200\\224 w
renewal of any armed attacks from outside;

this meant the abandonment of the armed

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strUlee by the

ANC and an undertaking by the Frontline States that their territories;lf%â\\200\\234

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would not be used for the transport of guerillas or the sopply of arms for the ANC'S

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armed wing.

In return, South Africa should legalise the ANc and other Black politicallffgf

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organisations, guarantee them freedom, release all political prisoners, stop military support for UNITA, cease armed attacks on Frontline States, and help in the realisation of the independence of Namibia.

Such suggestions}, Dr. Uasilkov said, may at first glance look unacceptable to the apartheid fighters.

However, this was not really true, taking into consideration that some of these suggestions have already been widely acknowledged terms of the Angola and Namibian agreements signed in 1988.

Besides, the armed struggle against apartheid is significant only as a means of stirring up mass support as the single real way of action for Black South Africans...

But, on the whole, the armed struggle has never played the principal role in anti-apartheid activities....

50, discontinuance of the armed struggle may in no way be considered as a tactical dismantling of the ANC, provided it is given normal access to politics.

By legalising the political movements of Blacks, Pretoria in its turn could contribute greatly to the canalisation of political strife in a more civilised and constructive direction. The very fact that Pretoria has agreed to sit down around the negotiating table with the parties previously treated as "enemies" may prove that diplomacy is not a weak tool in dealing with its domestic issues as well'.

The second guarantee would be a willingness by the outside world to recognise the usefulness of South Africa's attempts at reform;

this would of course depend on further progress and on the beginning of a dialogue between all South African political forces.

Third, if the conditions set out under the first guarantee are met, a further guarantee should be offered that no new sanctions would be applied; and if the conditions required in the first two guarantees are fulfilled, those sanctions already introduced could be lifted.

Fourth, that as South Africa is the most industrialised country in the 1..

region and has natural economic interests there, it should be recognised that it

would be counterproductive to prevent its efforts from widening its financial, technical and other help to neighbouring states.

In a longer paper written for future publication, Uaailkov addresses the question of what the real interests are of the US and the USSR in the region.

Both,

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he says, face the same dilemma:

either to strive for internationally~reognised,
widely acceptable and stable compromise to seek stable and peaceful develOpment
in the interests both of the local nations and in their own interests; or else to
soport their traditional 'historioal' allies to the utmost, with the purpose of
ensuring victory for their own sides.

In other words, the alternative is either
joint or parallel actions, or confrontation'.

Uasilkou identifies the US interest as being genuinely involved in changing
the apartheid regime for a number of reasons:

it discredits capitalism, hinders
economic progress, radicalises the regional situation, threatens a social outburst .
that could threaten the economy, complicates relations with America's allies,
contributes to sharpening ethnic differences, offends human rights, etc.

The US

is also concerned that the USSR might use crises situations in the region to gain
its own interests, says Vasilkov.

While the Soviets have always condemned apartheid, Vasilkov suggests that
its official interest in South Africa has not so far been officially declared. He
questionsi Gorbachev's assertion that 'the Soviet Union does not have any special .
interests in South Africaâ\200\231becauue it makes it appear as if the USSR is spending
billions of roubles, not necessarily at home, for purely philanthropic reasons.

'Frankly speaking,â\200\230 he says 'nobody believes it'.

The USSR has not been a passive
observer in Southern Africa;

it has been actively engaged in the Southern African
conflicts by soporting national liberation movements.

If there is, then, no

Soviet interest,

a policy declaration of no interest 'prouokes bewilderment', both
at home and abroad.

Vasilkou goes on to say that it would not be a shame for the USSR to admit that
it has certain practical interests.

'It is high time to admit, for instance, that

nationalism may well be a principal ideology in the majority of developing nations, thus making a contest for gaining Eastern or Western ideological 'allies' counterâ\200\224

productive and unworthy.

It is also true that the development of capitalist relations may often be more historically justified and thus progressive in these countries than artificially imposing pseudo~socialist models, which only discredit real socialism.

That way of thinking, instead of striving against capitalism, put

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like China, France and Great Britain.

1'For the sake of keeping the global balance

intact, they should unilaterally, or on the basis of multilateral agreements, cease their forays into the affairs of the Third World.... irrespective of political developments in those nations'.

At the same time, he added, it should be accepted that the problems of the Third world cannot be settled through foreign intervention or through military force, but only through a sustained international effort to promote their social and economic development.

A new note struck by Victor Kremenjuk and all the other Soviet participants was the emphasis the USSR now puts on a renewed role for the United Nations.

Dr. v.3. Benevolensky, also of Iskan, said

the Soviet Union is now

seriously concerned with the need for a breakthrough in the world market, realising that further economic isolation from the world market economy has a negative effect not only on its internal economic and social development, but also for its position in the system of international political relations and for its status as a great power.

He continuedzfiiï-\202â\200\231course the USSR still has a long way to go to reach a level of integration into the world economy to reach the standard of most of industrialised countries today.

But on a policy level, there is already a firm understanding of the necessity to do so};

Like the other Soviet participants, Dr. A. Utkin, also of Iskan, declared:

3Ue see one overwhelming tendency: the world community enters the epoch where as a basis For all development, we shall see a global view of the main problems}.

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Soviets, he added, had come to the conclusion that national and regional approaches to development did not give impressive results'.

The only guarantee, he felt,

was throUQh the global out-reach of the United Nations.

The most senior of the Soviet participants, Prof. George Mirsky, reviewed

the role of the non-aligned movement as a source of Soperâ\200\224power rivalry, and concluded:

I'The world picture has become multiâ\200\224coloured; instead of two hostile monoliths facing

each other across the globe, many independent actors have now entered the stage;

Seen in this light, the importance of the Third world is certain to increase rather