POSSIBLE SOVIET-AMERICAN COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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The Southern African conflict, being a totality of several coflict situations - dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, Namibian independence, cessation of destabilisation activities in several front-line states (FLS) - at the same time forms a single whole. It seems that the settlement in South Africa is a central issue in the region, and the rest are derivative or peripheral ones. Besides, some problems are inherited historically, the others were introduced from abroad. But all of them are so closely interconnected that it's possible to examine them saparately just in theory.

This is not to say, that a simulteneous solution to all these conflicts is the only one workable. Probably, settlements of Namibian, Angolan and other peripheral problems will preceed the most complicated decisions on apartheid and in some ways may serve as a prerequisite for them. But at the core of the problem lies the fact that in this case the process of settling these peripheral issues should include at least some preliminary arrangements for the solving of the central problem. Otherwise any settlement will be necessarily temporary. The success of "the staged" variant in Zimbabwe has been the first and probably the last one, as it convinced South Africa that she has no perspective left but a staged narrowing of her sphere of influence and finally a collapse of her power.

Therefore in the early 80's the South African government apparently came to the conclusion that his cooperation in resolving the region's peripheral problems will not help making a breakthrough in the country's political isolation in Africa and worldwide at all but, on the contrary, will worsen the state of the regime. As a result it has adopted a "total strategy" of freesing or even sharpening of these problems which aims may be summarised as follows.

For the South African government this strategy was:

1/ a device to ensure the state security by transferring the struggle for survival with the outside world, seen as inevitable, to the "forward lines", that is out of national boundaries;

2/ a way of keeping order within the country aiming to facilitate the process of reforming apartheid according to his own scenario, in fact a way of expanding abroad the "reforms-repressions" package, already having been adopted at home;

3/ an instrument to overcome international sanctions using the neighbouring states, economically dependant on the RSA, either as hostages or as potential foreign trade channels bypassing the sanctions;

4/ a possibility to preserve the regional interests of the country connected with a perspective of establishing the "Constellation of Southern African states" on the base of their economic and political integration.

If South Africa is convinced that under the complex political settlement in the region these interests will be taken into account and will not suffer substantially, she will probably agree to a solution acceptable to the opposition, to herself and to the outside world as a whole. In the absence of such guarantees South Africa will have nothing left except trying to attain them by her own, that is to strive for a maximum favorable decision with a wide margin on the base of "who will win".

Such a "decision" comes either to making puppet regimes in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique, or to a preservation of a permanent crises there, that inevitably will lead to dragging out the reforms within the country itself. South African military, financial and economic capabilities seemingly enable her to have both versions carried out for some time though at high cost. And there are hardly anybody in the world capable to prevent her from doing so, despite of the fact that nobody is interested in such an outcome. It is not the best option for the RSA either, but she would be merely left in a position to choose the lesser of two evils, as she sees them.

Now, what do the guarantees for South Africa on the above mentioned 4 points really mean? What guarantees is it possible to demand in return? And what is in the long run the most promising alternative: to get a political decision on this basis or to face a perspective of a protracted conflict in the region?

First, if Namibia, Angola, Mozambique etc. are seen by Pretoria as "forward defense lines" of the beleaguered state, than she should have firm guarantees of elimination and non-renewal of any armed attacks from outside. That means the abandoning of the armed struggle by the SWAPO and the ANC and the denying by the FLSs the use of their territories for transporting the guerillars and armaments of the "Umkonto ve sizwe", as well as the complete withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. Elections should be also hold in Namibia and Angola under international control and with the participation of opposition groups.

In return, South Africa shall legalise the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the SWAPO and other black political organisations, shall guarantee them freedom of political activities, shall release all the political prisoners, shall really quit any military support of the UNITA, Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) and armed attackes against the FLSs after withdrawing her forces from Angola and Namibia, and shall contribute to the realisation of the UN Security Council resolution No 435.

Such suggestions may at a first glance look unacceptable for the apartheid fighters. However, this is not really true, taking into consideration that some of these suggestions have already became widely acknowledged terms of the agreements on the South-West African region, signed in 1988. Besides, the armed struggle against apartheid is significant just as a mean of stirring up mass support, as the single real way of action for the black South Africans, having been driven into a desperate plight by denying them any rights and any legal ways of striving for them. But as a whole the armed struggle has never played

the principal role in anti-apartheid actions. Demonstrations, strikes, boykott campaigns have appeared to be more effective measures. The more that the armed struggle is fraught with extremism, on the one hand, and provoke the authorities to tighten repressions, on the other. So, discontinuance of the armed struggle may in no way be considered as a tactical dismantling of the African National Congress, provided that it will be given a normal access to the politics. By legalizing the political movements of the blacks Pretoria, in its turn, will contribute greatly to the canalisation of political strife in a more civilized and constructive direction. The very fact that she has agreed to sit down at the negotiation table with the parties, previously treated as "enemies", may prove that diplomacy is not a weak tool in dealing with Pretoria, on her domestic issues as well.

Second, if South Africa believes that the war will help her secure time for reforming apartheid, than the outside world should recognise the usefulness of these reforms. Of course, it will demand to reach certain amount of understanding between South Africa and the world community on the further progress along the path of reforms and on the beginning of a dialogue between all South African political forces.

Third, if this is a way of overcoming sanctions, than new sanctions will not be applied and those introduced will be lifted in case Pretoria fulfil the first two points.

Fourth, as to the regional issues, it seems necessary to admit that South Africa as the most industrialised country in the region has natural economic interests there and it would be counterproductive to prevent her efforts aiming at the widening her financial, technical and other help to the neighbouring states.

Now we are supposed to answer several difficult questions: what are real Soviet and American national interests in Southern Africa? Can the two superpowers elaborate on this basis a common platform for securing the RSA these guarantees? Do they have any alternatives?

To begin with the end, the Soviet Union and the United States face the similar dilemma: either to strive for internationally recognized, widely acceptable and stable compromise peacefully both in the interests of local nations and in their own ones, or to support their traditional "historical" allies to the utmost with the purpose to ensure their individual victory. In other words, the alternative is either joint (parallel) actions, or confrontation, the latter being just a theoretical possibility taking into account the following interpretation of the great powers' interests.

The Unites States interests in Southern Africa have been not once formulated officially in detail. Among the most successful attempts seem to be the Secretary of State George Shultz's statement, that "apartheid is not only morally indefensible, it's

in the long run unsustainable". 1 / It follows that the USA is sincerely interested in changing the apartheid regime, and proceeds from the assumptions that apartheid politically discredit the capitalist system in the eyes of the whole world, became an obstacle for the South African economic progress, hence - of the Transnational corporations' profits, radicalises the regional situation and is fraught with social outburst which may result in a protracted wreck of the RSA's economy and in this way deny the West of the reliable access to the region's raw materials, complicate the relations with the allies, provoke public indignation throughout the world, contribute to the sharpening of ethnic relations and human rights problem in the Western countries and so on. A considerable role for the USA also play the concerns that the USSR can use the crises situation for gaining unilateral benefits.

The Soviet interests in Southern Africa, as in the other Third World regions, have not been officially declared yet, taking aside the constant condemnations of the apartheid regime since the early 1950's. That's why the grave repugnance and complete unacceptance of apartheid by all successive Soviet governments and by the public opinion in the Soviet Union have long history and are obvious. The Soviet Africanists have also traditionally limited themselves to declaring the single interest of the USSR to be "an assistance to the liberation of the South of the continent", reducing the real actions to "non-recognition and resolute condemnation of the racist regime, participation in all kinds of boycotts and sanctions against it". 2 /

First, not all the Soviet interests are mentioned here, second, the described real policy is interpreted as a policy of a passive observer. The more untrue seems Michail Gorbachev's assertion that "the Soviet Union does not have any special interests on the South of Africa". 3 / It appears as if the USSR is spending billions of roubles, not unnecessary at home, for a pure philanthropy. Frankly speaking, nobody believes it. In practice the USSR have not been a passive observer in Southern Africa for a long time. It has been taking an active part in the Southern African conflict, by rendering help to the FLSs and national-liberation movements, and sustaining considerable material and political costs. But if the policy exists and the interests are officially nonexistant, then the situation provokes abroad and at home a bewilderment at best or a wish to formulate them for the USSR at the worst. So the necessity for such official act was riped long ago, and will be not a shame at all to declare that the USSR has certain practical interests.

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1 /Jeorge Shultz. Southern Africa: Toward an American Consensus.- Department of State Bulletin, June 1985, p. 22.

2 /See, for example: Aktualniye problemy otnosheniy SSSR so stranamy Afriki (Urgent Problems of the relationship between the USSR and African countries), Moscow, Mezhdunarodniye Otnosheniya Publishers, 1985, p. 6.

3 /Michail Corbachev. Perestroika and new thinking, p. 196.

The USSR indeed remains committed to the support of the peoples struggle for independence and souvereignty but this interest may not be always so diametrically opposite to the respective interests of the West, as it has been considered for a long time. The more so that the anti-colonial struggle is practically over now. What is even more important, due to the global ideological confrontation this interest was almost complitely absorbed by the task of opposing any Western moves in every possible way, all of them being interpreted as inimical and demanding automatic counter measures. The same logic, which absurdity has been shown above, commanded the Western policy. The new political thinking, while not ignoring differences, sometimes serious ones, which may occur among the national states in the international arena, as distinct from ideological differences, suggests some more enlighted vision of the Third World. It's high time to admit, for instance, that nationalism may well be the principal ideology in the majority of the developing countries, thus making a contest for gaining Eastern or Western ideological "allies" counter 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 artificial and premature imposing of pseudo socialist models, which only discredit real socialism. That way of thinking, instead of striving against capitalism, put the task of encouraging its development in more civilized, democratic and moral formes and against the reactionary ones, for example, such as apartheid.

It is this policy that will best serve the real national interests of the Soviet Union, containing the tasks to preserve and develop its positions in Southern Africa, first, as a means of participation in the region's settlement to achieve as democratic form of it as possible, second, to ensure the USSR's diplomatic influence in the world and his regional economic interests, including the already invested billions of roubles.

But the main national interest of the USSR now seems to be a regime of "non-apartheid" in the RSA, i.e. a democratic, non-racial and steady government, with which the Soviet Union will be able to establish mutually advantageous diplomatic and economic relations without making harm to the rest of its foreign-policy interests. This embraces a sensible view on the white community's legal interests, real power and contribution to the South African development. This also embraces the securing for the black majority and all the political forces, including the ANC and the SACP, a fair place in the future of the country.

That's why, the single active element in the Soviet approach toward South Africa until recently - the support of the ANC - means unilateral (as the ANC has a worldwide relationship) and narrow (as the ANC is not the only opposition force in South Africa) Soviet dependence on this organization's policy (i.e. now preference for the armed struggle) to the same if not to the larger extend as the United States policy means dependence on Pretoria's position. More than that, the monopoly for the Soviet support can lead the ANC to the orientation on complete and uncompromised victory, that may give rise to dogmatism and scare away both the whites and the blacks. Meanwhile the USSR has occupied a passive position as to the rest of the country's op-

position forces and the government itself. This paradox should be overcome for it is encouraging not the deblockading of the conflict but the delay of its resolution.

At these terms the USSR and the USA may be expected to find a common ground to guarantee South Africa the "4 points" jointly, judging by the coincidence of some Soviet and American interests in the region, and the fact that a unilateral move of this kind would be too risky and beyond the capacity of each side. This line of action seems to be the optimum way of securing both their own interests and the most favorable settlement in Southern Africa possible. It does not preclude their unilateral actions in respect to the RSA. Such a cooperation would also help to overcome the obvious unilaterality of the attempts to resolve regional conflicts having taken place until now: all their decisions have touched upon only external aspects of the problems - the limitations on direct foreign intervention. Certainly, it was the necessary starting point. But to put a dot here pretending that nobody has anything to do with the internal reasons, having given rise to the conflicts, would resemble the disreputable position of Pilate washing his hands.

True, it may well be that the situation in South Africa is not mature enough for the negotiations. According to the estimates by the ANC and SACP leaders as well as some Western observers (the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group being an example) the South African government is not ready for negotiating seriously the future of apartheid. Though the right-wing resistance is a powerful reason, a feeling of uncertainty in the white minority is not the least one either. It is this feeling that the suggested "4 points" program is aimed at dispelling. Simultaneously, the ANC also sees the negotiated solution unreliable as it doubts whether Pretoria can be sincere and his own influence in the country is high enough. For the dissipation of these doubts the "4 points" may also be helpful as they cover the opposition by the international guarantees either.

However even if the common sense arguments do not work and any real negotiations on apartheid are doomed to be preceded by a bloody "probe of forces", the Soviet-American cooperation will make at least maximum for encouraging the all sides to the negotiation table, to limit the contest and mainly to save themselves and Southern African peoples from involving in a senseless but dangerous rivalry in the region. It will hopefully allow all sides to get rid of extremism, which whatever good intentions it is justified, is uncapable to built anything worthwhile on.

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