

## РОССИЯ – АФРИКА

### RUSSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA: HISTORICAL MEMORY

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*Its first part, on relations between the Liberation Movement of South Africa and the Soviet Union, is authored by Professor Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu who leads the South African research team. The second part of the article is devoted to sources from the central state archives of Russia. Written by a team consisting of Professor Vladimir Shubin, Doctor Alexandra Arkhangelskaya, Doctor Vasily Sidorov and PhD candidate Darya Turyanitsa of the Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, it will be published in the next issue of the journal.*

#### Part 1

### SOLIDARITY, DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND THE SOVIET UNION: A BRIEF NOTE ON ARCHIVAL SOURCES AND HISTORY WRITING

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**Abstract.** *In order to prove that the relationship between South Africa and Russia began well before the democratic dispensation in South Africa, the author is of the belief that the present Russian state inherited the mantle of the former Soviet Union state and therefore the two place names are used interchangeably. The timeline for this article begins from the 1960s to the present, particularly the era after the formation of post-1994 democratic South Africa. The themes to be analysed relate to the writing of a brief ‘diplomatic’ history of South Africa and the Soviet Union and will focus on progressive internationalism, diplomacy, foreign policy, communism and anti-communism in South Africa.*

**Keywords:** *African National Congress, Soviet Union, Russian-South African relations, archives, oral history*

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#### Introduction

In terms of research methodology, the primary evidence used in writing this brief history will include documentary material and oral history testimonies. Therefore, the analysis of the various themes depends largely on sources that include newspaper articles, documentary

archives and recorded oral history testimonies that are footnoted. These are located in multiple archives, namely the National Archives of South Africa, South African National Library, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, University of Fort Hare, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Free State and the South African Democracy Education Trust.

The last section of the paper, which should also serve as a conclusion, is based on oral history testimonies and interviews conducted with former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, on his views about the meeting between President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union and O.R. Tambo, President of the African National Congress (ANC) during the late 1980s and the official visit to the Republic of South Africa by President Vladimir Putin on 5-6 September 2006 – the first ever undertaken by a Russian Head of State to South Africa. The oral history interviews will also focus on the early years of trying to establish a diplomatic relationship between South African and Russian Science Councils in the field of Science and Technology, specifically cementing collaboration between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of South Africa and the Russian Academy of Sciences. This early initiative will be instructive for the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa and the Russian Foundation of Basic Research, the two Science Councils which fund collaborative projects in the humanities. Therefore, this article is also based on collective memories and viewpoints of participants. This is because the voices and experiences of those who were active participants in historical events and in history making, including limitations reflected by these collective memories, come much closer to the “truth” than history, political science books and other secondary sources that lack such voices, eye-witness accounts and experiences, however skillfully written. We are certain that readers will learn more from the unprocessed words and sometimes halting memories of the participants than from anything written about some of the historical events they capture on the role of South Africa in world history.

### **Progressive internationalism and diplomacy**

The long-standing role of the African National Congress (ANC) in the international arena challenges state-centric theories of foreign policy and international relations. The idea of a political liberation movement as the centre of analysis rarely features in studies of foreign affairs, diplomacy and international relations [1]. This arises from the fact that studies of foreign policy, international relations and diplomacy are more often than not replete with notions that the level of analysis is concerned with individual leaders representing the state, a given government, or the international system. The ANC’s role in diplomacy and international relations is as old as the liberation movement itself, and anti-colonial internationalism led the ANC to develop effective strategies and tactics which enabled the liberation movement to establish a united front and networks with multi-lateral organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO), World Peace Council (WPC), World Council of Churches (WCC) and the worldwide anti-apartheid solidarity movements that operated in a range of other communist countries such as the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic and Cuba, among others.

In the early to mid-1920s, the ANC relapsed into relative inactivity. At its convention in June 1927, it elected Josiah Tshangana Gumede as president-general. Gumede helped draft the ANC constitution in 1919. In the same year, he accompanied the South African Native National Congress (SANNC, which later became the ANC) deputation to England and Versailles, a disillusioning experience that may have accounted in part for his increasing inclination towards political radicalism and working-class sentiments. He was one of the ANC leaders involved in encouraging African mineworkers to strike on the Rand in 1920.

In February 1927, Gumede attended the International Congress of the League against Imperialism held in Brussels, Belgium, together with James La Guma, who represented the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). This conference took place from 10 to 15 February.

Josiah Gumede, together with his two colleagues from South Africa, J.A. La Guma and D. Colaraine, drafted a joint resolution as South African delegates before it was adopted by the Congress. The resolution demanded the right for self-determination through the complete overthrow of capitalist and imperialist rule. This was surely a significant step forward because this resolution introduced a concept later incorporated in the CPSA slogan about the Native Republic or 'Black Republic'. In October 1927, Gumede, now the president of the ANC, accepted an invitation from the All-Union Society for Promotion of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Russia became part of the USSR in 1922. Gumede was to attend its World Congress to be held in Moscow from 10 to 12 November 1927. Gumede also had a meeting with Joseph Stalin at the Kremlin and visited Georgia [2].

This congress of the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' formed an integral part of the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Such a relationship underscored by progressive internationalism was bolstered during the 1960s.

In terms of international solidarity, the exiled leadership of the ANC had to take strategic and tactical decisions which were articulated by Joe Matthews, one of its exiled senior members. Therefore, regarding establishing a relationship with the Soviet Union as one of the super-powers, Matthews elaborates:

The exiled leadership of the ANC recognised that, historically, any liberation movement faced with a difficult struggle, had to have either a middle or a super-power in terms of support, we looked at the United States' war of independence and asked would these colonists have won against Britain without the support of France – and France was a feudal state, completely different from the people they were supporting. But France was supporting them because of its rivalry with the British empire, and they backed the independence movement. So, we said, it's not a question of ideology, it's a question of practicality, which power will support a struggle such as this, or which powers will not support us. We knew that the African states, generally speaking, were too weak... So, we took a decision, it might look like an obvious decision now, – look, we have got the Soviet Union as the other super-power, the Western powers are the trading partners of our country, they are not going to be involved in supporting any armed struggle. So, we have to establish a relationship with Russians [3].

In addition, the liberation movement had to establish relationships and consolidate solidarity with countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. On progressive internationalism and solidarity, Thabo Mbeki remembers that the first time he visited the Soviet Union and Moscow, was in 1964, barely two years after he arrived in exile and settled in England. That year the USSR Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee hosted a public '*international (mock) trial against apartheid!*' The ANC sent Mbeki to Moscow from London to appear as a 'witness' at this mock trial, at which he appeared. The Soviet hosts initially allocated to Mbeki a young woman member of the Soviet Komsomol (the CPSU Youth League), who would serve as his guide and interpreter. During their work together, she shared opinions among the members of the Komsomol to convince Mbeki that something wrong was taking place in the USSR, which was resulting in a certain level of disaffection among even the Soviet youth who were members of the Komsomol. Unfortunately, some time before the end of the '*mock trial*', Mbeki's Soviet hosts replaced his Komsomol guide and interpreter. They replaced her with a relatively young man who would only interact with Mbeki strictly on matters which had to do with the '*mock trial*' and his stay in the USSR [4].

Leading to the time Mbeki was at the Lenin (Party) School in Moscow 1968/9 the School admitted as students only those who were chosen by some of the fellow Communist parties of

the CPSU from the rest of the world. There were no students at this School from national liberation movements such as the ANC. There were also no students at this particular School from the USSR or any other socialist countries. The reason for this was that the Lenin School focused on training Communist cadres in countries that still had to struggle for the victories, alternatively but dialectically interlinked, of the national liberation, democratic and socialist revolutions! Accordingly, the Lenin School (syllabus) taught:

- the theory and evolution of Marxism-Leninism (dialectical and historical materialism);
- the history of revolutionary practice relating to the national liberation, democratic and socialist revolutions;
- the Soviet (CPSU) experience from before 1917 to date; and,
- practical skills in the conduct of struggle in the conditions prevalent in the countries of the particular students at the School.

In the case of South African revolutionaries, the School gave practical training in (i) the functioning and operations of an underground organisation; and (ii) printing propaganda material in conditions of illegality. The latter included hand compositing of the texts which would be printed on the underground printing presses. The Lenin School Library contained books and magazines which covered not only the areas of relevant study as mentioned, but also surpassed the areas indicated. For instance, it had novels, poetry books, scholarly works such as those on literary criticism, translations of articles from major Soviet publications such as the CPSU newspaper *Pravda*, and other material. For instance, relying on this Library, Mbeki had the possibility to read:

- a vast amount of literature about the then ‘Sino-Soviet dispute’, as it was called at that time: [our official history syllabus in South Africa did not provide for any formal teaching on this important geopolitical topic];
- the views of Soviet literary critics about such matters as the Shakespeare plays; and,
- the then 800-year old epic poems by the Georgian poet, Shota Rustaveli, entitled ‘*A Knight in the Tiger's Skin*’, translated into English by Soviet translation professionals.

Thabo Mbeki elaborated that it was during his studies at the Lenin School that he came to understand the critical importance of translated books, including in such challenging areas as poetry and drama, which fundamentally help weld humanity into one interdependent whole, across political and other boundaries! The immaculate professional translations by the Soviet translators helped immensely to ensure, for instance, that Soviet citizens would feel as moved by Shakespeare’s Hamlet as they would, though being far away in the Soviet Union!

Another great benefit of the Lenin School was that it helped further to expose South African revolutionaries to situations in other countries elsewhere in the world, and thus further empowered them in terms of understanding their internationalist responsibilities. Among fellow students were Communists from such countries as Brazil, Paraguay, Canada, India, Palestine, Iraq, among many others, all of whom enriched our understanding of the situation in terms of our international struggle against imperialism! This gives an indication of the enriching experience that one would derive from their presence in the School, at the same time, of revolutionary cadres drawn from what came to be known as the Three Continents, with additions of Communist parties from within the ‘imperialist countries’ [5].

The School used the ANC and CPSA revolutionaries presence in Moscow to introduce them to various parts of the Soviet Union. It was in this context that the South African cadres gained familiarity with distinctly Russian and Soviet treasures such as the Moscow Red Square, the Tretyakov Gallery, the Bolshoi Theatre, the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), as well as the architectural and other treasures of Uzbekistan and other former Soviet Republics, including such phenomena as the Casbah in Baku, Azerbaijan, and the sites for the launch of space rockets from Kazakhstan. Mbeki was unaware and had no knowledge

that the School could at any time obstruct interaction between South African comrades and the ordinary Soviet citizens as a means to stop the latter from sharing their honest views about their own country with the South African comrades. He elaborated:

In this regard I am not suggesting, in any way, that our hosts sought to manage our interaction with the Soviet public in such a way as to produce a predetermined outcome, invariably a positive view of the USSR. However, I am arguing that my own 'unguided' excursions at least into Moscow communicated the same message to me – that the Soviet population had complaints about their country, but supported the social system it represented [6].

According to Mbeki, what the Lenin School communicated to him and others was the central message that as Communist revolutionaries they had a responsibility:

- honestly to communicate to the masses of our people the message that they have a responsibility to liberate themselves;
- to conduct ourselves as leaders of the struggle, in a manner befitting the leaders of our national democratic revolution; and,
- to help provide the direction to the national liberation movement what had to be done to ensure the victory of the national democratic revolution.

In the final analysis, Thabo Mbeki's viewpoint is that the Lenin School worked very well in terms of its parameters as a political school. It worked well within these parameters because:

- it had a clearly defined mission and purpose;
- it attracted students chosen specifically to access the defined syllabus of the School;
- it had the necessary complement of teachers effectively to address the syllabus of the School;
- it had a library which contained academic texts which would support the syllabus, in all languages;
- it had sufficient flexibility to help empower each of the students at the School to confront the challenges in their own countries;
- it encouraged its students to understand that the most effective exercise of leadership required that the leaders must generally be well-educated, and open minded enough to understand the imperative to act in a manner consistent with available human knowledge, outside the parameters of ideological belief! [7]

Finally, Mbeki emphasised that in the end you could only assess the Lenin School in the context of the pursuit of a global socialist outcome by the two left tendencies described as:

- the 'Third International of Social Democracy', ultimately represented by the then (Bolshevik) Russian Communist Party; and the opposed;
- 'Second International of Social Democracy', represented for instance by the then Swedish Social Democratic Party,

The main international issues over which the Second and Third International trends clashed were those of colonialism and war. Revolutionaries, such as Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, fought hard to move the Second International to adopt consistent socialist policies towards millions of oppressed people of the world, enslaved by colonialism and imperialism, and to demand independence for the colonies. But the reformist right-wing opportunists constantly evaded this question and betrayed their duty to assist the oppressed people of the world. Vladimir Illich Lenin, in his masterly essay *Imperialism; the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and other publications, exposed the roots of their thinking and conduct. When the First World War was about to commence, both Vladimir Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg pressurised the Congress of the Second International held in Basle to oppose the war and adopt a strong resolution, urging the workers to fight to prevent the outbreak of the war, and should it nevertheless break out, to fight

for the overthrow of their respective governments and destroy the ruling capitalist class. It was only a victory on paper. As soon as the war broke out, the big socialist parties in all main capitalist countries ignored the resolution of the Second International. The German Social-Democratic Party, the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party and others each decided to support its own capitalist government, and called on their workers to shoot down fellow workers in other countries. This betrayal was a deathblow to the Second International as an expression of working-class, socialist internationalism. After the war, the leaders of the socialist parties came together to 're-establish' the Second International, and indeed some sort of Committee was established [8, p. 77].

But in Russia, the Bolshevik Party, did not support the First World War, it stood by the Basle Resolution and called for the overthrow of the Russian monarchy. In South Africa, the Chairman of the Labour Party, Bill Andrews, opposed the war in Parliament. Right-wing, jingo elements began a witch-hunt against him and his supporters and hounded him out of the leadership. Undeterred, Andrews, Ivon Jones, Sydney Bunting and other militants formed the International Socialist League, which continued with the struggle. It was necessary to make a clean break with the Second International after the war. This was after a historic victory for the workers and the oppressed people in the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917; the revolutionary Marxist parties of all countries came together to form The Third International, or Comintern (Comintern) [9].

### **The apartheid regime, anti-communism and anti-Soviet Union sentiments**

Whilst the ANC made it a point that it maintained diplomatic relationships with the Soviet Union, the apartheid regime ensured that this would not have been the case. When one analyses archival material of the Nationalist Party (NP), the Department of Foreign Affairs (now renamed the Department of International Relations and Cooperation), and other cabinet ministers of the apartheid regime held at the University of Free State, one gets the impression that Russians were all over South Africa, fermenting the revolution. This archival material also includes newspaper articles and parliamentary debates (Hansard). As an example, while the violent and elaborate security system was being created and unleashed on township residents by the South African government during the 1980s, the number of those who resisted apartheid increased, which was indicative of the growing crisis facing apartheid rule. Former NP cabinet Minister, Stoffel van der Merwe, believed the fear of socialism was as strong as the fear of communism, suggesting again an economic consideration rather than a purely ideological one:

The ANC reinforced our view that they were communists. The basic tenets of communism were there in all the publications of the ANC. It was difficult to distinguish between communism and socialism. The way in which the ANC received support from the East Bloc, the communist bloc, left you with little doubt that if they came into power, they would try a socialist experiment, which we thought would lead to a Mozambique-type situation. And the evidence was there that many of the African states opted for socialism after they gained their independence [10].

An analysis of John Vorster's archives kept at the University of Free State offers snippets concerning anti-communist propaganda, wilfully fermented by the South African state and their supporters. Some of these supporters were overseas based, specifically in western countries. I will provide a narrative related to the type of correspondence focusing on the Soviet Union and anti-communism that was forwarded to John Vorster, the prime minister, by these anti-Soviet Union supporters. In a letter written to the prime minister dated 3 February 1997, Theo G. Meineke of Randfontein wrote:

I have been annoyed at what I heard over the 7 am news service, and can you blame me, being a born and bred South African. Mr Clark and [Andrew] Young are both young politicians...and they have very little experience of world affairs...They make my blood turn with anger. I have drawn you a rough map of the whole of Africa, where you will at a glance see what foothold Russia has in Africa, as I have shaded these parts, so that you can see how very serious the position is. Yet America, with such men in power, are turning a blind eye to all. They should be in South Africa to strengthen their foothold and [protect us against Russia] [11].

Another interesting letter was written by David C. Cavaness, an American soldier stationed in Fulda, West Germany; it was dated 25 May 1977. In his introduction, he specified the following to Vorster, 'I am presently stationed here in East German border to prevent the Communist from invading and destroying our Western civilisation, which I am proud to do!'. Cavaness was also joined by Vatcho Koboureff, another US citizen from Florida, who also penned a letter in the form of an article addressed to the South African prime minister. In this article, Koboureff was irked by, among other things, Andrew Young helping Russia to 'take and communise the entire continent of Africa'. This was apparent because Young had dared to assert that, 'the United States gets into difficulties in Africa, because it makes COLD WAR; assessments of development there are based on PARANOIA about communism. America should not be afraid of communism...it is racial segregation which causes problems in the African continent'. Seemingly this statement made Koboureff see red! He offered the South African prime minister a free lesson in geopolitics and his lecture was entitled 'Soviet Colonialism in Africa' [12].

In this propaganda and anti-Soviet Union piece, Koboureff argues that the downfall of colonialism in Africa began with the establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War. At the same time, the Soviet imperialists drew plans for replacing colonialism with imperialistic communism. Russia knew that free from colonialism, the new economically weak countries in Africa knew little of freedom and would be easy prey for the communists with small financial help, bribes and propaganda. The unsuspecting UN members were eager to free Africans from colonisation without suspecting the behind-the-scenes pressure which Russia exerted for early decolonisation. But during the 1970s, it became apparent that colonialism in Africa would be replaced by Russian imperialism and Africans did not know anything about freedom and communism. Koboureff contended that the US was focusing on solving internal problems whilst the Russian juggernaut was communising the African continent. He pointed out that in North Africa, Libya and Algeria were under Russian influence, if not full control. In the east, Eritrea and Ethiopia were involved in a guerrilla war for separatism that was supported by the Soviets. Soon, Russia would be controlling Ethiopia, and the super-power established naval and military bases east of French Somalia and short of conflict, the Soviet Union was involved in a shuttle diplomacy to unite hostile Somalia with Ethiopia under Russia's domination [13].

According to Koboureff, in southern Africa, the Russians, helped by Fidel Castro's army in Angola, would slice Africa into two parts. Castro's recent visit to Angola, Zambia and Ethiopia, and his meeting with Soviet President Podgorny, was a survey of conquest, so far well done, and to further military action towards South Africa. Apparently, Russia engaged in such action because Africa is rich in minerals. Raw materials, such as copper, zinc, chrome, uranium, cadmium and iron, were ready for the taking. These were essential industrial materials, noted Koboureff, which free countries in Europe and 'we at home needed to sustain our free economy and survival'. If the mineral rich African countries were dominated and controlled by Russia, 'America will face an industrial crisis within ten years. The energy crisis of today and tomorrow will look like a blessing'. He warned the South

African prime minister that after Russia had gained control of the African continent, Castro's guerrillas, now in training in Angola, would turn to South Africa and the Horn of Africa. That implied full Soviet control of strategic shipping routes from the east, which meant control by the Soviet Union of all routes from Arabia and Iran, military and naval bases in East, South and West Africa and open sea routes towards South America. Kobourovoff reminded Vorster, that this should not be allowed by the free world, and emphasised: 'one must perish between the dictatorial Soviet power and our free enterprise system'. It was clear to all and sundry who should perish as far as Kobourovoff and the prime minister were concerned. The University of Free State archives are stacked with layers and layers of such correspondence and impressive collections on the apartheid regime, communism and anti-communism in the Africa.

### The Treason Trial and Communism

The Treason Trial of 1958–1961 was really a trial against communism, and it represented the South African government's efforts to implement the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. Through censorship, detentions without trial and capital punishment – that is, deaths by hangings carried out by the state's hangman based at the Pretoria prison – the South African regime banned the possession of revolutionary propaganda, particularly that on communism. When the apartheid regime came to power in 1948, those possessing supposedly 'communist' literature and archival material and many owners or writers of such archival material ended up in jail. This 'communitistic' literature was used frequently as evidence in court, for example, the Treason Trial of 1956 to 1961. Censored books, pamphlets, leaflets, banners and posters 'promoting communism and the Bolshevik revolution' were gathered up by the apartheid state and kept under lock-and-key at the South African National Archives in its Cape Town depot. These books were unavailable for readership by the public. Books, which were banned and used as evidence during the Treason Trial of December 1956 to March 1961, included those such as *The Soviet Union in World Politics*; *Lenin, Revolution and Power: A History of the Soviet Union, 1917–1953, Volume 1*; *A History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Is the Red Flag Flying?*; *The Soviet Union in the Third World*; *Comparing Public Policies: United States, Soviet Union and Europe*; *Education in the Soviet Union: Policies and Institutions since Stalin*; *Discovering the Soviet Union*; *The Training of Scientists in the Soviet Union*; *Learning a Trade in the Soviet Union*; *The Soviet Union Demystified*; and *The Soviet Union: Domestic Policy, Economics and Foreign Policy*. The list is endless [15].

Among the journal articles previously censored by the apartheid government and now made available in the South African National Archives, are F.T. Epstein, 'Archives Administration of the Soviet Union', in *The American Archivist*, 20, 2 (April 1957); 'History of the Archives in the Soviet Union', *Nederland Archieven Blad*, 95, 2 (June 1991); H.D. Langley, 'Hunt for American Archives in the Soviet Union', *The American Archivist*, 29, 2 (April 1966); and P.G. Grimsted, 'Archives in the Soviet Union: Their Organisation and the Problem of Access', *The American Archivist*, 34, 1 (January 1971).

In one newspaper report about the Treason Trial, Helen Joseph commented, through Professor Andrew Murray's testimony on behalf of the state and the prosecutors, 'we found ourselves travelling from Africa to the Soviet Union and China, from the USA to North Korea' [16]. In one of her publications, Joseph further elaborated about Murray, the 'star witness' for the state:

...a strange sight to see this man of letters passing his comments on a steady stream of books and journals, some four hundred altogether, pulled from the bookshelves of one hundred and fifty (defendants) during four years of security



police raids. It became monotonous, mechanical, almost hypnotic. (He would open a book, journal or a bulletin) and pass judgement on it with terse statements such as 'straight from the shoulder communism' or 'contains communist matter' or 'communist propaganda'... [17]

The state prosecutors were given a challenge by the judges concerning the evidence which they had planned to use against Robert Resha and Duma Nokwe. This incriminating evidence consisted of communist literature in the form of books, which were seized from the accused during police raids. The archival materials, such as the *New Age* newspaper, provide a full context of the court proceedings, concerning the heated exchanges between Judge Rumpff, Judge Bekker and Judge Kennedy, representing the bench, and the prosecuting team, represented by J. de Vos [18].

### **Post-1994: Diplomatic ties and scientific collaboration between South Africa and Russia: an oral testimony**

On the meeting between USSR's President Gorbachev and O.R. Tambo, President of the ANC during the late 1980s, discussing *perestroika* and the future of the diplomatic relationships, Thabo Mbeki opined:

We were there as a delegation of the ANC, and then Gorbachev says he wants to have a one-on-one meeting with O.R. [Tambo] at the time... The meeting with Gorbachev will just be the two of them, myself and my Soviet counterpart, Gorbachev's scribe. So, Gorbachev says, we are discussing with the Americans in the context of the changes, the policy changes we are undertaking here in the Soviet Union, that is, *perestroika*. We are also discussing with the Americans what to do about regional conflicts around the world. Because up to now, for instance, you would have conflict in Angola and on this side is the MPLA, the Soviet Union and Cuba, and on the other side is UNITA, the Americans and the apartheid regime... all these conflicts. So, Gorbachev says, you see, we have got conflicts like that, so what we are saying to the Americans: rather than perpetuate a position of that kind, why don't we, Soviet Union and US, why don't we sit down together and discuss that. Here is a conflict in this region...

On the relationship between the ANC and the Soviet Union, Mbeki asserted:

...then Gorbachev says, but I must explain to you [Tambo] that we have made it very clear to the Americans that the fact that we are saying to them, that we must cooperate in terms of helping to resolve regional disputes, rather than fight against each other, does not mean we are changing our position with regard to support for the struggles towards national liberation. Our position remains unchanged. So, as far as the ANC is concerned, and the Soviet Union, nothing has changed. When we discuss with the Americans, we are not talking about making compromises, we as the Soviet Union, about support for the ANC; no. Now I am saying, this is Gorbachev explaining to O.R. [O.R. Tambo], not to the South African Communist Party (SACP), he knows the SACP, and the leader of the SACP, and also Gorbachev knows that the leader for the liberation struggle in South Africa is ANC. So, in order to explain the official position of the Soviet Union at that point relative to the struggle for national liberation in South Africa, he had to officially talk to the ANC... And the SACP had informed their comrades, in the CPSU, that Tambo is our leader in terms of the national liberation struggle. So, the position was known, no confusion and no problem about that [19].

On his positive relationship with President Putin of Russia, Mbeki emphasised:

...When I was in Government, we had a very good relationship with President Putin, when I was the Deputy President and also President of South Africa. I could talk to him about anything. Even when I sent him [a message that] elections would take place and he won... I would send him a note congratulating him, he would actually write back to say thank you. We had very good relations...

The visit by President Vladimir Putin on 5-6 September 2006 was the first ever undertaken by a Russian Head of State to South Africa. The historical importance and symbolism of the visit could therefore not be underestimated. The official visit was indicative of growing bilateral relations between South Africa and Russia; the main aim of the visit was to consolidate and strengthen these relations in order to reach its as yet untapped potential. As Mbeki indicated, the strategic nature of South Africa-Russian relations was significantly consolidated over a number of years through continued high-level political dialogue with the Russia Federation. Russia remained a major power internationally, despite losing its status as a super-power since the end of the Cold War. During Putin's official visit, Russia was current Chair of the Group of Eight Industrialised Nations (G8) and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (P5). Also, Russia had enormous international economic and political influence. This power could be utilised to South Africa's advantage as both countries maintained similar positions on international issues, such as Iraq and Iran, and Palestine and Israel matter. Though Russia did not have the economic power of other G8 countries, its technical and scientific know-how was strong in terms of playing a crucial role in the reconstruction and development of the African continent. This aspect was, and still is, underutilised despite a political will that exists in Russian ministries to concretise such co-operation on African projects. Russia also differed, and still differs, from other world powers as it has an abundance of natural resources and fuel, and therefore its interest in the African continent are not mostly limited to the exploitation of natural resources, like other world powers. In this regard, according to Mbeki, Russia could easily become a partner in mutual development for South Africa and the African continent.

About his first official visit to Russia, when he was the Deputy President of South Africa, and attempts to establish working relationship between the Science Councils of South Africa and Russia, Mbeki recalls:

I visited Russia, when I was still Deputy President of South Africa. It was an official visit. And a number of things were discussed there during my official visit. For instance, we needed to import some of the highly skilled people from Russia to South Africa – people in the Science and Technology field and scientists, like those who had become unemployed there with the collapse of the Soviet Union. But focusing on skills that we would need here in South Africa. We established a relationship with the Russian Academy of Sciences, to link up with a similar body here, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). It was before the National Research Foundation (NRF) was formed in 1999. For instance, there were members of the Russian Academy of Sciences who had done sterling work focusing on the recovery of gold from unused mine dumps, like you have here in the mining region of South Africa. They had actually developed a new technology; they were saying to us: you don't know how much gold is still there, in the mine dumps, which you can recover with the new technology. And they wanted to share that technology with us through this cooperation with scientists from the Russian Academy of Sciences, to do that with their counterparts in the CSIR. You had South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Soviet Union, who are principal producers of platinum and the platinum group of metals.

Deputy President Mbeki was serious about the potential of this new development and future possibilities in terms of scientific collaboration:

We discussed that at a higher level between the two governments, why don't we form something like OPEC, the OPEC of the PGMs, that is, platinum group of metals, because that would help us in terms of marketing these metals globally, so now these were the official discussions we were having here in Moscow and agreeing cooperation across the spectra. Now the reason it was possible to do that, have those kinds of discussions, is because the people we were talking to are people who knew about the relationship between the Soviet Union and the ANC, so as far as they were concerned there was no need to change that positive and constructive relationship. The fact that we were now Russia instead of the Soviet Union, doesn't mean that we, as individuals have changed, our position towards the ANC [has changed]. These were old comrades who were now in senior government positions in Russia. But their attitude towards the ANC had since remained the same now as when they were the Soviet Union.

To prove this point about the very strong comradeship between the Russian government and the ANC now in power since 1994, Mbeki noted:

So, there was no change in terms of our relationship, which was decades old. I will give you one particular instance. It is very specific. There was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was Yevgeny Primakov, he was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He ended up at some point as Russian Prime Minister – at the time that I visited Russia, he was Prime Minister. So, I mean I know the name because we had been working with the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. So, and then when he then gave me a gift, a gift of a book, what do you call it? Coffee table book. They have got an impressive gallery in Moscow, one of the famous, the Tretyakov Gallery, one of the galleries with a collection of famous Russian painters. A big gallery. Now the Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, – the reason he gave me this book, is that when we were at the Party School, we had one of our teachers there at the Party School who celebrated a birthday while we were there, so I had bought her a pictorial book like that from the same gallery, Tretyakov Gallery, and given it to her. So, he thought I liked that book that's why he bought me that book. Now this was after 1994. That's why I am saying that I was at Party School in 1969, so he knew that I bought the book for one of my teachers because he is part of the old leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. So, by the time I talked to him, now I am Deputy President of South Africa. I am talking to another Comrade. So, they have not changed their minds about their attitudes towards the ANC which is now in government here in South Africa. And in fact, their view was, you know for the Russian Federation... one of its strongest partners internationally is South Africa, because now we have got the ANC comrades in leadership, who are the same comrades who we were working with in the Soviet Union. So that was the positive attitude.

About the failure of the collaboration between the South African and Russian Science Councils, Mbeki elaborated:

We ran into some problems here in South Africa as a result. Because then, you know, you have got these Science Councils here, but for decades they were controlled by a staff which paid allegiance to the apartheid regime regardless of the fact that the ANC was in power. They grew up in an anti-Russian and anti-communist environment. But then when the matter was now raised by the Minister of Science and Technology here about working with these highly skilled Russian scientists, the

CSIR and other Science Councils here in South Africa were the stumbling block. They looked down upon the Russian Academy of Sciences' expertise; they come with unfounded argument that for Russian scientists to work here they must undergo re-training and re-examining of their qualifications. These are very highly skilled people from Russia, uh, uh! They say to us, it is according to our decade-old rules and regulations which we had changed by then when we came to power. But I am saying to our Minister, that we were setting up a relationship with Russia, which was going to work, because the people who were in senior positions across the board, whether these were intelligentsia, government, academia were people whom we worked with before and during the Soviet Union era. These were actually highly trained and highly qualified people from the Soviet Union, whose attitude towards the ANC had not changed. The Soviet Union did not exist then, but the actual leadership in the Russian Federation didn't change much. Many of them, not all, but many of them didn't change their minds about their attitudes to the ANC. So, it was possible to construct a particular relationship. But I don't think it worked. Because our comrades here did not pursue this relationship vigorously enough. We did not.

During the interview, particularly when we discussed the issue of the possibility of scientific collaboration between the Science Councils, Mbeki was at his diplomatic best as he narrated what happened. But I could not help thinking about the ignorance, arrogance and smugness of both the South African authorities and Science Councils that analysed everything in pro-west Cold War perspectives and stuck to their old ways of worshipping Western systems, to which they were wedded, including tragic commitment to the Oxbridge and Ivy League 'standards'. If Russian scientists belonged to a poor knowledge system, how come they were successful at developing and becoming the leading country in terms of space, science and technology? But the situation improved during Mbeki's ascendance from Deputy President to the President of South Africa. As soon as he assumed the reigns, there was solid progress in the field of science and technology relations, especially in terms of the presidential policy objective of establishing South Africa as a key player in international astronomy and deep space research which characterised the relationship between South Africa and Russia. I wish the newly established relationship between the NRF and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research grows from strength to strength regardless of earlier failed attempts. Maybe our Russian counterparts can play a constructive role and collaborate with their counterparts in terms of mining engineering and resolve the challenges posed by underground waterfalls in the Witwatersrand's flooded, abandoned old mines. This acid water threatens the city of Johannesburg and the surrounding urban areas.

Bilateral relations also expanded significantly under the umbrella of the Intergovernmental Trade and Economic Committee (ITEC) between South Africa and the Russian Federation. Strategic direction and a structured and disciplinary framework resulted in substantive action, taken by respective governments in the strategic minerals and energy sector, inter alia through the establishment of a joint Task Force of Minerals in support of each country's objectives. South Africa's economic interaction with Russia does, however, not reflect its potential and leaves much room to increase the already existing Foreign Direct Investment from Russia to South Africa.

The promotion of the African agenda, when Thabo Mbeki was South Africa's President, rested on the fact that Russia had traditionally strong links with the African continent. However, these were (and still are) often limited to political and defence ties. During the G8 Summit held in St. Petersburg, in its position as the Chair, Russia used the three core themes of the Summit to address the international need to bring the Millennium Development Goals to fruition. This strategic approach reflected Russia's willingness to address and discuss

pressing developmental issues, and President Putin's visit to South Africa created an opportunity to engage Russia on the goals and objectives of the New Partnership of Africa's Development (NEPAD). It also provided an opportunity to discuss conflict areas involving countries such as Sudan, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo with a key UN Security Council member. The following bilateral agreements were signed during President Putin's visit to South Africa:

- Treaty of Friendship and Partnership between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Russian Federation;
- Agreement on Co-operation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes;
- Agreement on the Continuation Airworthiness between Civil Aviation Authorities of the Republic of South Africa and the Russian Federation;
- Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Health Care and Medical Sciences;
- Agreement on the Reciprocal Protection of Intellectual Property Rights related to Defence-Industrial Co-operation; and
- Agreement between South Africa and Russian Federation on Co-operation in the Sphere of Water Resources and Forestry;
- Agreement between Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of South Africa on Co-operation in the Field of Energy [20].

### **Conclusion**

From the above article it becomes obvious that colonialism, imperialism, internationalism, communism and anti-communism are indelible and undeniable facets, underpinning the history of the national liberation struggle in South Africa. This includes the unquestionable role played by the Soviet Union and Russia in this just struggle. This is despite the fact that South African history is now afflicted by denialism promoted by 'liberated' academic historians, scholars and intellectuals. They now propagate irrational views, arguing that there is a virus they call 'struggle fatigue' affecting the academic echelons of the country. If they had their way, the cure would involve banning the writing, teaching, reading and production of history focusing on international solidarity and progressive internationalism, which underscored the relationship between the ANC, as a liberation movement, and the Soviet Union. The position of these scholars and academics is adopted for ideological reasons simply because 'the affected academics and scholars' are 'disinterested' in such research. The group is represented by an undemocratic clique, a powerful minority who happen to occupy strategic positions in the academe, and it has been trying by every means possible to control the production of historical knowledge since the advent of democracy in 1994. It acts as a self-appointed gatekeepers' club that opposes the writing and teaching of history on the national liberation struggle in South Africa. The important question remains; what is to be done to ensure that the role of the Soviet Union in the struggle for national liberation in South Africa, as integral part of World History, is integrated into the History curriculum taught at universities and secondary schools.

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## РОССИЯ И ЮЖНАЯ АФРИКА: ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ ПАМЯТЬ

*Данная статья написана в рамках совместного исследовательского проекта «Международная солидарность с борьбой против апартеида. Историческая память в России и Южной Африке», осуществляемого при поддержке Российского фонда фундаментальных исследований (№ 19-514-60002) и южноафриканского Национального исследовательского фонда (RUSA 180 7043 494 44).*

*Ее первая часть, посвященная отношениям между освободительным движением Южной Африки и Советским Союзом, написана профессором Сифисо Мксолиси Ндлову, который возглавляет группу исследователей из ЮАР. Вторая часть статьи, подготовленная коллективом в составе профессора Владимира Шубина, кандидата исторических наук Александры Архангельской, кандидата экономических наук Василия Сидорова и аспирантки Дарьи Турыницы из Института Африки РАН, будет опубликована в одном из ближайших номеров журнала. Она будет посвящена историческим источникам, находящимся в центральных государственных архивах России.*

### Часть 1

#### СОЛИДАРНОСТЬ, ДИПЛОМАТИЯ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ МЕЖДУ ОСВОБОДИТЕЛЬНЫМ ДВИЖЕНИЕМ ЮЖНОЙ АФРИКИ И СОВЕТСКИМ СОЮЗОМ: КРАТКИЙ ОБЗОР АРХИВНЫХ ИСТОЧНИКОВ И ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ

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**Аннотация.** *Статья посвящена истории отношений между Южной Африкой и Советским Союзом, связанных по большей части первоначально с «прогрессивным интернационализмом» Африканского национального конгресса, а затем отношениям между демократической ЮАР и Россией, включая научное сотрудничество между двумя странами.*

*Ее временные рамки охватывают в основном события, начиная с 1960-х, но с упоминанием также более ранних событий, и по настоящее время. Особое внимание уделяется периоду после 1994 г.*

*Основными источниками статьи стали документальные материалы архивов ЮАР, а также личные воспоминания участников событий, видных политиков – президента Южной Африки Табо Мбеки, министра по делам президента Эссона Пахада и заместителя министра общественной безопасности Джо Мэтьюза.*

*По мнению автора, через призму такого рода личных воспоминаний можно узнать больше, чем из написанного кем-то об исторических событиях, определивших роль Южной Африки во всемирной истории.*

*В заключении статьи автор отмечает, что в научной среде ЮАР есть те, кто по идеологическим причинам выступает против написания и преподавания истории национально-освободительной борьбы, и поднимает вопрос о том, как сделать, чтобы роль Советского Союза в борьбе за национальное освобождение в Южной Африке не была включена в учебные программы по истории в университетах и средних школах этой страны.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Африканский национальный конгресс, Советский Союз, российско-южноафриканские отношения, архивы, устная история*