

# ECAS 2013

5<sup>th</sup> European Conference on African Studies (Lisbon)

June  
27-29



African Dynamics in a Multipolar World

ISCTE - Lisbon University Institute

## **ECAS 2013**

5<sup>th</sup> European Conference on African Studies

*African Dynamics in a Multipolar World*

©2014 Centro de Estudos Internacionais do Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL)

ISBN: 978-989-732-364-5

## **THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL AND AFRICA: 21CENTURY**

**Vladimir Shubin**  
Institute for African Studies  
Russian Academy of Sciences

[vlgs@yandex.ru](mailto:vlgs@yandex.ru)

## **Abstract**

*The paper will be devoted to important but insufficiently researched issue of activities of the Socialist International in Africa and its relations with political parties on the continent. Its importance is underlined by the fact that the 24<sup>th</sup> Congress of Socialist International took place last September in Cape Town. It is based on the study of documents and publications as well as on field studies, primarily in Southern African countries.*

*In particular it examines why African political parties join Socialist International, and how influential is Socialist International in Africa in comparison with other international political formations.*

**Keywords:** Socialist International, Africintern, Commission for Africa, SI 24th Congress

The policies of the Socialist International (SI) and its member-parties towards the African continent, the African parties of the social-democratic orientation and their association, African Socialist and Democratic International (Africintern) were a subject of many works of Soviet scientists in the 1970 's-1980 's.

The last major work on the subject, the monograph "The modern social democracy and Africa" was published in 1990, but since then the interest in this area has declined dramatically, that was obviously a reflection of change in the world and in Russia.

For the ruling political circles of our country the international social democracy is no longer an ideological rival and at the same time potential and, on a number of issues, real partner, as was the case in the USSR.

Besides, the "Socialist orientation" ceased to exist in Africa, although, it should be recalled that the Africans themselves, in contrast to a number of Soviet scientists, barely used this term, while Africintern was extremely weak organism. After his "midwives," the President of Senegal Léopold Senghor (1906-2001) and President of Tunisia Habib Bourguiba (1903-2000) descended from the political scene, he still continued to exist when their successors Abdou Diouf and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and as part of an overall convergence with the international social democracy the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had established contacts with it. But in 2000, the Senegalese President was defeated in the election, and the Tunisian President chose in 1998 to dissolve his Socialist Destourian Party and established a Constitutional Democratic Party (RCD), and Africintern quietly passed away.

However, a sort of paradox is that systematic research of the Socialist International in Africa virtually ceased in Russia at a time when the Organization had achieved considerable success in spreading its influence on the African continent as ideologically and organizationally.

In the first half of the 1990 's several influential parties in African countries joined the SI. Among them was the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO, Namibia), who were previously national liberation movements and turned into the ruling parties after independence. Then, in 2000, a member of the Socialist International was joined by the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, the oldest political party in the continent, that heads the Government in the most developed African country and has great influence not only in Africa, but also abroad.

The total number of African member parties of the Socialist International, over the past two decades has risen from 7 to 20 full (18 countries) members, apart from 5 Parties with consultative status and 7 observers. 12 of them are ruling parties and two are part of the coalition government<sup>253</sup>.

At the last Congress of the Socialist International, in addition to the President, former Prime Minister George Papandreou of Greece, 33 individuals were elected Vice Presidents. They include 7 from African countries: it is the President of the ANC (South Africa) Jacob Zuma, General Secretary of the MPLA Julião Paulo Mateus (Dino Matross), the then Secretary General of SWAPO Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, the leader of the Assembly of Democratic Forces (Mauritania) Ahmed Oul Daddah, Senegalese Socialist Party leader Ousmane Tanor Dieng, Chantal Cambiwa of Social Democratic Front of Cameroon and Nuzha Chekrouni, Socialist Union of Popular Forces, Morocco (the latter two are female). Besides, Mohamed El Yazghi, also of USPF, was elected one of 15 Honorary Presidents of the Socialist International<sup>254</sup>.

---

<sup>253</sup> <http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticlePageID=931>

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

It is useful to compare this data with the participation of Africans in other international political associations. There are only three African full member parties and three associate members in the centre-right International Democratic Union (it is often called the Conservative International), and all of them are in opposition. However, its African wing, Democratic Union of Africa contains 11 Parties<sup>255</sup>. In the Liberal International there are 11 members from Africa, mostly in the opposition, and four parties with observer status<sup>256</sup>. Another Association, the Centrist

Democratic International (CDI, formerly Christian Democratic International) has 10 full members and three observers from Africa, including such "democratic", as the Angolan UNITA and the Congolese Liberation Movement<sup>257</sup>, whose leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former personal aide to Mobutu, is on trial in the Hague for war crimes.

Thus, the advantage of organized social democracy in the influence in Africa in comparison with other international political currents is obvious.

Attention paid by the Socialist International to Africa, and the increased degree of its influence on the continent were confirmed by the fact that his latest, 24th Congress took place in Cape Town on 30 August to 1 September, 2012. Its slogan was "For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity".

It appears that convergence between African parties and international social democracy has occurred for a number of reasons. One of them is certainly the demise of the "world socialist system", followed soon by the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has led to a sharp narrowing of the international relations of a number of African political parties early close to Moscow and its allies and, therefore, required to seek new political partners. On the other hand, some parties that

---

<sup>255</sup> <http://www.idu.org/member.asp>

<sup>256</sup> [http://www.liberal-international.org/editorialSingleIndex.asp?ia\\_id=509](http://www.liberal-international.org/editorialSingleIndex.asp?ia_id=509)

<sup>257</sup> <http://www.idc-cdi.com/parties.php>

“dropped” the ideology of Marxism-Leninism at the turn of the 1990-ies, remained however committed to the socialist perspective and saw in the SI an alternative to the current dominant neoliberal trends in the international arena.

An important role in defining the relationship of African parties to the Socialist International has been played and continues to be played by the pragmatism: by the wish to establish close relations with political power, which to a large extent determines African policy of Western countries, including the provision of economic aid, debt relief, etc. Member parties of the SI parties are represented, though not regularly, in the governments of the states of Western and Central Europe. The socialists are currently in power in France, and recently headed the Government and other leading European countries, Britain, Germany, Spain. Spanish Socialist Javier Solana has long been a focal point of the European Union's foreign and defence policy, Labour Lord Robertson was the NATO Secretary General, and Domenic Strauss-Kahn headed the International Monetary Fund and was regarded as a likely candidate for the post of the President from the French Socialist Party.

During long years of struggle against colonialism and apartheid some social-democratic parties established links with the national liberation movements. It should be noted, however, that the position of members of the Socialist International in this regard was not uniform. I remember how ANC President Oliver Tambo said at our meeting in Moscow in 1978, that while some of them had provided practical assistance, others were "intolerable"<sup>258</sup>.

Indeed, the Governments led by Social Democrats, albeit belatedly, provided substantial material assistance to liberation organizations in the Portuguese colonies, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. Particularly active were the Scandinavians, Swedes first and foremost. So,

---

<sup>258</sup> Discussion with Oliver Tambo, Moscow, 5 October, 1978.

after the victory of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid in southern Africa a group of researchers led by Tor Sellström was established the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in the Swedish city of Uppsala. During seven years it released six volumes under the general title "National Liberation in Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries"<sup>259</sup>.

In 1999 the NAI, together with the South African Robben Island Museum and Mayibuye Centre of the University of Western Cape in 1999 organised in the former prison for political prisoners the International Conference on "Nordic Solidarity with the Liberation struggles in Southern Africa and Challenges for a Democratic Partnerships into the 21st Century". Being present there, I had become an involuntary witness of the conversation between and the Scandinavian social democrats and the ANC representatives about the prospects of joining the Socialist International.

However, the process of convergence between the ANC and the SI began even earlier. The ANC government facilitated the meeting of the General Council of the Socialist International, second in importance to the congress took place in Cape Town on 10 to 11 July 1995. The then President of the Socialist International (and former Prime Minister of the Socialist Government of France) Pierre Mauroy, opening the session, spoke about the crisis in Africa that lasted for 10-15 years. He counterpoised the position of the SI and of those "certain political and financial groups", which in public made impressive "lyrical" declarations, but in their private conversations strongly sounded "music of refusal"<sup>260</sup>.

---

<sup>259</sup> National Liberation in Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries. Uppsala, Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2001. A series of six volumes by Christopher Munthe Morgenstjerne [Denmark], Iina Soiri and Pekka Peltola [Finland], Tore Linné Eriksen [Norway] and Tor Sellström [Sweden], three volumes.

<sup>260</sup> Speech by Pierre Mauroy, President of the Socialist International. Council of the Socialist International. Cape Town. 10 July, 1995, p. 1

It will not be a mistake to say the ANC leadership established the special relationship on the eve of and during the first years of the new century with the leader of the British Labour Party, Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was distinct for his particular interest in Africa among other prominent figures of the Socialist International. On his initiative (and with British financing) the Commission for Africa was established in 2004, consisting of 17 individuals, including such prominent Africans, as the then President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and South Africa Finance Minister Trevor Manuel. In addition to Blair two more prominent leaders of his party were members: Gordon Brown, Chancellor of Exchequer (and future Prime Minister) and Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development.

The Commission's report, "Our common interest"<sup>261</sup> was presented at the March 11, 2005 in London and in Addis Ababa. Its drafters had not been excessive modest, calling it "the most important document of our time". But the reaction to this publication clearly disappointed organizers of the Commission. By the time the African countries had already developed its own programme, The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the emergence of another programme was met on the continent very cool. For example, a prominent Ugandan scholar, late Dani Nabudere expressed concern that Blair would deprive African leaders of their initiative, Blair will become a "colonial Governor", the process of recolonization will begin<sup>262</sup>.

---

<sup>261</sup> Our common interest: an argument. By the Commission for Africa. L., 2005. A new version of the report was published in 2010, Still Our Common Interest. - <http://www.commissionforafrica.info/articles/commission-for-africa-launches-review-of-progress>

<sup>262</sup> Quoted in: International Affairs. London. October 2005, p. 931



Alex Vines and Tom Cargill of the Africa programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in their article on the "New Labour" policies in Africa named one of its sections, "The rise and fall of the Commission for Africa"<sup>263</sup>.

Tony Blair was also active in advancing another initiative, of regular "center-left" Progressive Governance Conference. Such a conference was held in London in July 2003, with the participation of over 600 "politicians, thinkers and strategists" from 30 countries, including 12 "world leaders"<sup>264</sup>, including the then leader of the ANC, South African President Thabo Mbeki<sup>265</sup>. The preparatory meeting discussed seven reports on the challenges faced by modern Social Democrats, took place directly in Tony Blair's residence at 10 Downing Street.

Following this, in a regional African Progressive governance conference took place in South Africa in 2005<sup>266</sup>, and then, in 2006, the Summit of the group<sup>267</sup>. It is interesting to note that in a speech before the "progressive governors" Mbeki referred to Karl Marx, though he was "very much out of fashion". "But, 150 years ago plus, when he saw the development of this global capitalist market, he said it would no longer be possible for the workers of one country to defend their interests acting on their own. And that is why he said, 'Workers of all countries, unite'. That process of globalisation has gone much further now than it was then, but perhaps we should also say, 'Progressives of all countries, unite!'"<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>263</sup> Vines A., Cargill, T. Novaya leiboristskaya politika v Afrike: soglasovannost ili besporyadok? //Aziya I Afrika segodnya, 2006, № 6, p. 53-56.

<sup>264</sup> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1996786/posts>

<sup>265</sup> <http://mg.co.za/article/2003-07-14-rich-states-must-pay-up-to-tackle-poverty-says-mbeki>

<sup>266</sup> <http://www.policy-network.net/event/460/Progressive-governance-2005-Africa-conference>

<sup>267</sup> <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/110375314/Progressive-Governance-Summit-2006>

<sup>268</sup> <http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/docs/2005/tm2005/tm072805.pdf>

All this gave researchers reason to talk about a particular policy similarities Mbeki and Blair<sup>269</sup>. One needs to note that both in the past, when the ANC was led by Thabo Mbeki and after Jacob Zuma became the ANC President in 2007, this party positioned itself as a "broad church". Cyril Ramaphosa, elected the ANC Deputy President at its Congress in December 2012 (he is a multimillionaire, he has gone from a miners' leader and a fiery champion of socialism to the second richest African in his country) emphasized in a recent interview: "The ANC is a political organization that welcomes everyone. It welcomes socialists, communists, capitalists, rural people, urban people, the poor, the wealthy, the professionals, the - all of those people are all welcome within the ANC. What binds us all together is the objective that the ANC is seeking to achieve."<sup>270</sup>.

Socialism has never been proclaimed as such objective, at least in official documents, although in 1970 's-1980 's. members of the South African Communist Party were in the majority of its leadership. Jacob Zuma characterised the ANC as "a disciplined force of the left, a multi-class mass movement and an internationalist movement with an anti-imperialist outlook. Being non-racial in outlook and character, the organisation will continue to have a bias towards the poor and the working class, the majority of whom are black and African, until we have achieved equality and socio-economic freedom"<sup>271</sup>.

An interesting detail: the slogan of the International Solidarity Conference convened by the ANC in Pretoria last October was "United for a progressive, better world", the progressive, and it is consonant to the SI slogan, "Progressive politics for a fairer world".

---

<sup>269</sup> <http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/docs/2005/tm2005/tm072805.pdf>

<sup>269</sup> *Eidelberg Ph.* ANC, New Labour and the Post-Keynesian neoliberal World: A Comparison // Moscow, Vostok, 2006, № 5, h. 89-100.

<sup>270</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1301/08/ampr.01.html>

<sup>271</sup>

<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=350068&sn=Marketingweb+detail>

However, much more clearly the preference of the social-democratic orientation has been expressed by the ruling party in another leading African country, Angola. Democratic socialism was proclaimed as its “strategic goal” by the MPLA 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress in December, 1990<sup>272</sup>. Journal "Estudos e Opinões", published by the Division for the coordination of education and analysis of the MPLA, dedicated one of its recent issues to "Democratic Socialism is an ideology of MPLA." In an extensive article, Roberto de Almeida, Vice-President of the party, the veteran national-liberation struggle, explained, in particular, the reasons for the departure of MPLA from Marxism-Leninism, which was its official ideology from 1977 (when the movement MPLA was transformed into the MPLA - Party of Labour) until 1990. In his opinion its principles constrained creativity of the party, the pluralism of ideas, the right to freedom of expression, and did not help to foster national unity; the "crisis of the Socialist bloc" has been mentioned as well. However, de Almeida stressed that the MPLA remained the “party of the left” (um Partido de Esquerda)<sup>273</sup>.

Let us now consider now the position of the Socialist International and its leading members on the critical issues facing the African continent. It was quite detailed at the 24th Congress in Cape Town, which was convened for the first time in Africa under, speaking frankly, a not very clear slogan - "For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity".

The congress was attended by representatives of 130 parties and organizations, including 6 parties - guests from Africa. It is worth noting that the membership of African parties again expanded at the Congress, - Tunisian Democratic Forum for Labour and Liberties has become a

---

<sup>272</sup> Revista Estudos & Opinões. Luanda. 2011, № 7, p. 10

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

full member, United Democratic Party of Gambia and Egyptian Social Democratic Party have received consultative status and the Labour Party of Kenya has become an observer.<sup>274</sup>

The Congress discussed four key themes:

- For an economy with jobs, growth and social protection: the social democratic response to the financial crisis;
- The struggle for rights and freedoms: strengthening representative democracy and gaining new democracies in the world;
- For a common road to peace, sustainability and cooperation: the need to secure multilateralism; and
- For a new internationalism and a new culture of solidarity among people and between nations<sup>275</sup>.

Deputy President of South Africa and of the ANC, Kgalema Motlanthe, opened the Congress with a welcoming speech. Having noted the similarity between the foundations of the ANC and the SI, “both being inspired by the desire to change the world for the better, for freedom, social justice and solidarity”, he urged the Congress to come together to find a clear way forward on the issues of reducing the control of wealth by transnational corporations, the homogenisation of the media, and reforming a weakened system of global governance<sup>276</sup>.

On the first agenda item African speakers were South African Minister of Planning Trevor Manuel, a representative of the Socialist Union of Popular forces, former Finance and Economy Minister of Morocco Fatallah Oualalou and SI Vice- President Ousmane Tanor Dieng

---

<sup>274</sup> The ruling parties of Tunisia and Egypt, Constitutional Democratic Rally and National Democratic Party were the SI members earlier, but the organization promptly got rid of them after the collapse of Ben Ali and Mubarak’s regimes.

<sup>275</sup> For a New Internationalism and New Culture of Solidarity. Resolutions and Decisions. L.: Socialist International, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

of the Socialist Party of Senegal. A unanimously adopted resolution contained a number of reasonable proposals and requirements, including the creation of “a new multipolar Global Financial Architecture ”. It stressed that a lack of action would slow global economic growth, widening inequalities between countries, and threatening the progress and implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals<sup>277</sup>.

The tone of discussion on the second theme of the Congress was set by a "special address" by President Zuma. He highlighted the impact of globalization, which although “has produced profoundly positive effects”, at the same time “has also caused extremely negative consequences. Three quarters of the global population have become victims of the globalisation process, and now suffer deepening poverty and inequality”. Speaking of the widening gap between rich and the poor and vulnerability to military conflict, he stressed the need for "a democratic multilateralism were needed, rather than the increasing unilateralism that can be seen today”<sup>278</sup>.

Resolution on the second theme was also adopted unanimously. In it, inter alia, expressed support “for the Arab Spring nations of Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Bahrain”. In Africa, in particular, “a deep concern” was stated over the situation in Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau an full support of effort to restore democracy an secure the integrity and unity of Mali. There were also usual for the SI calls for “the release of all political prisoners in Belarus, where the social democratic leader "release all political prisoners in Belarus" and concern “over over increasing state sanctioned threats to democratic principles and institutions”

---

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. pp. 19-24.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. p.11

in Russia<sup>279</sup> (although the host country, South Africa has friendly relations with Minsk and Moscow).

The ANC representative, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who was after the SI Congress elected the Chairperson of the African Union Commission was a keynote speaker on the third theme. Once again the importance of multilateralism has been stressed, and especially the role of the United Nations which she called "the greatest collective achievement of humankind"; and at the same time the need to reform the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions<sup>280</sup>.

With regard to Africa, the resolution on this issue addressed the situation in Western Sahara, where the SI is involved "in the search for a just, peaceful and lasting solution to this conflict"<sup>281</sup>.

On the final fourth theme, a keynote address was made by the representative of Africa, former Prime Minister of Mali Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who in July 2013 was elected to the post of President. After discussion on the importance of a renewed solidarity between people and nations, the resolution claimed that "this new internationalism and new culture of solidarity forms both the road and the requirement to achieve a just global society of rights and freedoms for all" but these terms have not been specified<sup>282</sup>. In his closing remarks Jacob Zuma emphasized the increasing role of Africa in the world<sup>283</sup>.

The future will show how this provision will be reflected in the practical activities of the SI and its member parties, and it seems that a lot will depend on the activity of the SI Committee on Africa, one of the nine regional committees of the organization. It should be noted that as distinct from Africintern, Committee on Africa seeks to respond to the most important events on

---

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. p.30.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid. p.14.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid. p.15. It is worth reminding the Front Polisario is a SI member

<sup>282</sup> Ibid. p.17.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid. p.18.

the continent. Its meeting was convened on 17-18 March of this year in Niamey, the capital of Mali's neighbour Niger, where a member of the Socialist International, the Party for Democracy and Socialism is in power.

Since this was the first meeting after the Congress in Cape Town, the election of the Committee's leadership took place. Emanuel Golou, the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Benin became its Chair, and Ebrahim Ebrahim, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa, a veteran of the struggle against the apartheid regime, who spent many years in racist prisons, Vice-Chair<sup>284</sup>.

The main theme of the meeting was the situation in Mali and its impact on the region and the African continent as a whole. Judging by the report, published by the SI Secretariat, headquarters, its participants quite deeply analysed the causes of the Malian crisis, such as errors in resolving past conflicts, when Government forces withdrew from the northern areas, the weakening of democratic institutions, "a vacuum within the democratic opposition", which emerged, due to the so-called consensus which had been applied since 2002, whereby all political parties represented in the National Assembly were part of the government.<sup>285</sup>

The Committee has correctly stated that "The Libyan conflict has also been an aggravating factor of the crisis with consequences affecting the whole of Western Africa and the Maghreb. Drug trafficking and terrorism have become a major threat to the security of all the states in the region", but have not elaborated in the causes of this "conflict". The Committee members were also right to say that the mandate of the UN forces "needed to be clearly defined", and that the result of the military intervention should be "a full recovery of the territorial

---

<sup>284</sup> Supporting peace, democracy and solidarity in the Sahel.

<http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticleID=2213?>

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

sovereignty for Mali. As for French military intervention in Mali, it has been mentioned in the Niamey Declaration adopted by the Committee, only in passing<sup>286</sup>”.

The crisis in Mali is not the only one in Africa, and the member parties of the Socialist International, both in "the North", and on the continent, have considerable ability to resolve conflicts and to address other problems of the continent. Let us hope that this opportunity will be implemented and will not remain mere declarations.

---

<sup>286</sup> The Niamey Declaration. <http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticlePageID=1734>