

Council Meeting of the Socialist International
New York, 8-9 October 1990

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Since our last meeting in Cairo the activities of our International have reflected our ongoing global commitments in line with the decisions of our Council and the initiatives and responses that the changing international realities have called for from our organisation.

May I first of all mention here our appreciation to all those who have assisted us in organising this first Council meeting in the United States, implementing an idea which has existed within our International for some time.

Looking back over our preoccupations and efforts during recent months, I would like to mention some of the areas in which we have been active since Cairo.

Our active involvement in central and eastern Europe and close contacts with social democratic forces there, through consultations, missions, delegations and observation of elections, which I reported on at previous meetings, have continued. I should mention for instance the mission which we organised to Bulgaria in June on the occasion of the elections there and the very recent mission to the Baltic republics, in accordance with the decision of the SI Council in Cairo.

In Bulgaria, the Social Democratic Party, within the main opposition Union of Democratic Forces, obtained good results and a sizeable representation in parliament. While the 18-month transition period of constitutional change is in progress, the balance of political forces continues to evolve and in a by-election last week the Social Democrats made further parliamentary gains.

With regard to the mission to the Baltic republics, a group of eight SI representatives, including myself, travelled to Vilnius, Riga and Tallin from 8 to 10 October. We met leaders of the parties represented in the parliaments of all three republics and held extensive talks with representatives and leaders of the re-established social democratic parties. In Lithuania the members of the mission met President Vitautas Landsbergis, in Latvia Anatolijs Gorbunovs, president of the Supreme Council, and in Estonia, Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar, among others.

The recommendations of the SI mission on the applications for revitalisation of full membership of the SI from the social democratic parties in the Baltic republics will be reported to this meeting by the chair of SIFAC.

A mission of the SI Disarmament Advisory Council visited Moscow on 30-31 August for talks on current arms control and disarmament negotiations, and on European and other security issues. This followed a similar mission to Washington in May. The SI delegation met with experts from the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, the Academy of Science

and the Communist Party Central Committee. Extensive talks were also held with Valentin Falin, secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee and head of its international department. Our discussions ranged over the START negotiations, the Vienna talks, bilateral negotiations, chemical weapons, test ban treaties, reconversion of the armaments industry and the CSCE process. There was particular emphasis on future institutionalisation of CSCE and on the need for negotiation on naval disarmament.

While we were in Moscow, members of the delegation also met officials of the Russian social democratic organisation.

A Socialist International Conference on Disarmament was held in Tampere, Finland, on 5 and 6 September, at the invitation of the Social Democratic Party of Finland. This was the third conference on disarmament held in recent years, since the establishment in 1978 of the SI Disarmament Advisory Council, chaired since then by Kalevi Sorsa.

The Tampere conference convened in the present context of renewed hope for global disarmament and international cooperation, but also at a time of crisis precipitated by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Contributions to the conference from SI leaders and a number of guests reflected our commitment to the building of a new security system, based on principles of common security and shared responsibility. Calling for speedy progress in current arms negotiations, the conference underlined the need to direct the 'peace dividend' resulting from the ending of the Cold War towards real cooperation between East and West, North and South. The conference also strongly supported the recent action taken by the United Nations Security Council following the invasion of Kuwait.

Since that invasion, the SI Committee on the Middle East has been following developments, firstly through contacts established in the region by its chair Hans-Jürgen Wischnewski and later by the convening of a special meeting of the Committee in Stockholm on 24 September. A large number of SI member parties, including those from the region, attended the Stockholm meeting, which was notable for the consensus among all those present in firmly condemning Iraq, supporting the UN Security Council resolutions, demanding the release of all hostages, and calling for humanitarian aid for refugees. In particular, the meeting underlined the collective response of the international community in defence of fundamental principles of international law.

In Cairo, we strongly condemned the assassination of Héctor Ouelí, under-secretary general of the National Revolutionary Movement of El Salvador and secretary of the SI Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean. We demanded that the Guatemalan and Salvadorean governments assume their responsibility to carry out a serious

investigation into the crime and secure the punishment of those responsible.

After a considerable time, no responsibility had been established, much less charges made. On behalf of the Socialist International, I invited Professor Tom Farer to evaluate the official Guatemalan government report on the assassinations. Professor Farer is director of the Program of Law and International Relations at the American University in Washington DC and former president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organisation of American States. He carried out this task in association with Professor Robert Goldman. We are most grateful to them for their investigation on our behalf. Their report has been widely circulated and you have it amongst your papers at this meeting.

Turning to developments in the African continent, I must report that the SI Southern Africa Committee, SISAC, held a meeting in The Hague on 18 June, hosted by the Dutch Labour Party and chaired by Wim Kok, leader of the party and deputy prime minister. The committee reviewed the current situation in southern Africa, and particularly in South Africa. A statement was issued, setting forth the SI view that, despite positive developments within South Africa, there was as yet no clear evidence of irreversible change in the direction of ending apartheid, and that pressure on the South African government must continue.

The committee also discussed and agreed on a programme of activities for the coming period, including close monitoring of developments in South Africa, continuing close cooperation and contacts with the ANC and other democratic organisations in the country, assistance in the re-establishment of those returning from exile and aid for the development of democratic structures in South Africa.

The SI Study Group on Africa has been intensifying its activities in the recent period. A meeting of the group was held on 12 July in Lisbon, hosted by the Portuguese Socialist Party and chaired by Jorge Sampaio who, together with our Senegalese comrades, heads the group. A number of representatives of parties in Africa were also present in Lisbon for an informal exchange of views and information.

The study group analysed current processes of democratisation and political changes taking place in several countries of the African continent. It was agreed that the group will continue the close cooperation developed by the SI over the last decade with different political parties and forces in Africa, and expand further this cooperation in the light of political changes taking place.

The group agreed on a programme of action to be carried out over the next two years, and this programme was further discussed at a meeting of the Study Group here on Sunday. It has been agreed that a number of fact-

finding missions will be sent to Africa in the coming months; there is also a proposal to hold a conference on the continent in 1991, on the theme 'The Africa of the Future'. This conference will seek the participation of political forces striving for peace, democracy and development in many African countries.

The first SI mission will be to meet the secretary general, Salim Salim, and other officials of the Organisation of African Unity, in order to formalise contacts and also to hold discussions on substantive areas of concern, for example on economic and ecological questions. Future missions will be to the Maghreb, to francophone African countries and to Angola, Mozambique and other Front Line States.

I have had the opportunity during recent months to be present at the congresses of a number of our member parties, for instance those in Finland, Sweden and Greece. I should perhaps mention the special congress in Berlin where the Social Democratic Parties of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were united, just a few days before the unification of Germany. Following the admission of the Social Democratic Party of the GDR to full membership of the International at our last Council meeting in Cairo, it is my very unusual task today to announce with pleasure that the Socialist International now has one member party less!

In the immediate future, a number of activities are planned in the Latin American region. An SI mission will visit Guatemala during the campaign for the forthcoming elections and another will observe the election campaign and the much delayed poll in Haiti. There will also be a mission to observe the voting in Guyana, where, as delegates know, elections have stirred great controversy in the past.

The Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean will meet in Aruba early next year and a conference is being jointly planned with COPPPAL, the Permanent Conference of Latin American Political Parties. At the meeting of the Committee preceding the Council here in New York other future activities were also projected, which will doubtless aid the cause of democratic socialism in the region.

Two important additional subjects which have been increasingly mentioned as fields of activity for the International are the transformation of the former command economies in central and eastern Europe and the global environment. On the first of these subjects an initiative is being considered for launching with those working in the SI on economic topics. On the second, our Committee on the Environment plans a meeting in Stockholm early next year, where our common strategies on this issue will be further developed.

We have been invited by the Australian Labor Party to hold a Socialist International Party Leaders' meeting in Australia, on the 100th anniversary of the party in March 1991.

This conference, whose dates have already been fixed for March 8-10, will take stock of political realities in east and south Asia and the Pacific and will provide an opportunity for first-hand contacts with social democrats in that part of the world. On the occasion of this Council meeting I have had preparatory discussions with the parties of that region.

May I end by saying that the growing number of our meetings and activities is not the only measure of the vitality and impact of our organisation. These days, we ourselves are certainly disseminating our political message with much vigour. At the same time we note the eagerness for democratic socialism evidenced by the approaches made to the International by political forces in many parts of the world. With the authoritarian left moving into its twilight and the unbridled forces of the market shown to be no paradigm for human development, our message is as important as - perhaps even more important than - it has ever been.
