

## International Symposium

# AFRICAN STUDENTS IN THE USSR AND OTHER FORMER EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES, 1960-1990: FROM NATIONAL HISTORIES TO AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris

November 20-21, 2014

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The research program ELITAF *African elites trained in the USSR and in other former Eastern Bloc countries. Histories, biographies and experiences*<sup>1</sup> aims at understanding biographical trajectories and individual experiences, as well as larger cultural and political phenomena, in terms of contemporary nation-building processes and diplomatic and academic relations. The partnership between the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) and the Russian Foundation for the Humanities (RGNF) has enabled ELITAF to develop research collaboration over the last three years with the Institute for African Studies (IAS) of the Academy of Sciences of Russia on *African students in the USSR - 1960-1990: Mobility, experiences and professional prospects*.<sup>2</sup> Within this framework, the decision was made to organize an International Symposium in Paris at the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme on November 20 and 21, 2014.

The Symposium's theme is **"African students in the USSR and other former Eastern Bloc countries -- 1960–1990: From national histories to an international context.**

The main purpose of this two-day symposium will be to put together primarily historiographical research findings on the academic and scientific relationships between newly independent sub-Saharan and Maghreb countries, and the Soviet Union and nations within its sphere of influence. There are still very few interconnected histories of political and academic relations between the USSR and African countries. A more in-depth knowledge of the geopolitical context and its changes is required in order to grasp sometimes highly significant variations in student migratory flows from the same country and the differences between Africa's sub-Saharan and Maghreb countries, as well as contrasts between the life stories of former students educated in the USSR but coming from different countries.

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<sup>1</sup>. ELITAF is a program of the **Interdisciplinary Africa-World Network (RIAM)**, a network derived from Réseau International Acteurs émergents, founded in 2000 in the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris.

<sup>2</sup>. This program, which was created in 2013, is a joint-partnership between RIAE/RIAM, Institut de recherches interdisciplinaires sur les enjeux sociaux (Iris) [Institute of Interdisciplinary Research on Social Issues] of École des hautes études en sciences sociales and the Institute for African Studies (IAS) of the Academy of Sciences of Russia.

This two-day symposium has multiple objectives:

### **I – Soviet Politics and Geopolitical Context**

On the one hand, we need to reexamine the evolution of Soviet politics and USSR strategies for cooperation, especially with sub-Saharan and Maghreb countries, development aid in the broader geopolitical context (Yalta Conference, Warsaw Pact, fall of the communist regimes, etc.) in which migrations, academic and cultural exchange programs, and the circulation of students and elites took place. Our work will focus on the 1960-1990 period, but it will also include the prior period and subsequent years.

### **II – African Politics**

On the other hand, we have to link the mobilities of students and elites to the evolution of national politics pursued by sub-Saharan and Maghreb countries, especially as far as their sectoral (academic, economic, agricultural and industrial) policies are concerned. Moreover, these States were not the only ones to seek to train their students in socialist countries. Some local political movements, especially political organizations anticipating their countries' "true independence" (African Independence Party [Parti africain de l'Indépendance - PAI]), as well as the national liberation movements: MPLA (Angola), PAIGC (Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde), SWAPO (Namibia), ANC (South Africa), etc., have also benefitted from training their cadres in the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries.

### **III – Colonial Legacies**

In addition, African countries' policies and the training strategies of their future elites were defined to fulfil their former colonial powers' ambitions. The goal is therefore to compare this dual historic contextualization of mobilities of the students and elites of the African countries studied to the historical changes that took place in the relations that such countries had with former colonizing countries (particularly France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Portugal) after winning their independence. It should be kept in mind that training in the USSR differed greatly from what Western countries could provide. For example, studies offered by the USSR to newly independent countries were sufficiently varied to increase their appeal, and it was also possible to plan the elites' training.

### **IV – Knowledge and representations of the "Other"**

Finally, all of this research will be analyzed in the light of the history of the knowledge and scientific fields involved (especially ethnographic and geographic) and cultural representations of Africa (literary, cinematographic, artistic, etc.) developed in partner-country societies (former colonial powers, the USSR, or former Eastern Bloc countries). This symposium will hopefully address the development of the African studies field in the USSR and that of scientific research on the African "Other" in the students' various host countries. What impact did this knowledge have on State policies on Africa? What relations did it maintain with cultural representations (artistic, literary, cinematographic, etc.)? Which were the distinctive features of the ways in which knowledge circulated between the field of academic research and popular opinion on Africa and Africans?

Thus, by dividing the symposium topic into four sub-topics, our intent is obviously not to deny interdependence but to suggest possible ways to render the complexity of those situations and their dynamics. The history of a student association such as the

Federation of Black Africa Students in France [*Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France - FEANF*], for example, attests the impossibility of isolating national situations from their international context. Papers examining the crucial periods during which national histories and international changes occurred will be particularly welcome.

All national histories will not be equally covered. Although we will not fail to consider countries (Belgium, Republic of the Congo, etc.) that we would like to include within the scope of this research, special attention will be given to countries (or groups of countries) constituting the historical context of our ongoing research within the framework of the three-year Franco-Russian Program (France, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Morocco, Republic of the Congo, Russia) or, more broadly under the ELITAF Program (Algeria, Germany, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Reunion, Romania, Senegal, Tunisia).

### **Coordination Committee**

Marta Craveri, Michèle Leclerc-Olive, Monique de Saint Martin, and Patrice Yengo.

### **Scientific Committee:**

Hakim Adi, University of Chichester

Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)/Institut des Mondes Africains, Raspail site

Françoise Blum, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS)/Centre d'histoire sociale du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle

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Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Université Paris Diderot

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Ekaterina Demintseva, Academy of Sciences of Russia, Institute for African Studies, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

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Larissa Zakharova, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)/Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen

**Submission schedule and useful information:**

All paper proposals (approximately 500 words in French, Russian, or English) must be submitted to [elitafparis@gmail.com](mailto:elitafparis@gmail.com) no later than **April 30, 2014**.

Participants will be notified whether or not their proposals have been approved no later than on May 31, 2014.

The working language of the meeting is French. All approved papers must be submitted by October 30, 2014.

Authors of approved papers are urged to find their own source of funds to cover their hotel and travel expenses.

<http://riae.hypotheses.org/>