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Castro, Fidel, Raul Castro, Nelson Mandela. *Cuba & Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*. Atlanta, GA: Pathfinder Press, 2013.

Internationalism is a basic tenet of socialism, particularly Marxist socialism. Yet the history of the socialist movement would indicate otherwise; socialist leaders and socialist followers have often demonstrated that they can be as nationalistic as anyone else.

The intervention of Cuba in the liberation of colonies in Africa is one case where internationalism has prevailed over nationalism, and nowhere is this more evident than in the case of the Cuban presence in Angola. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans-- 425,000 according to the data on the back cover of this publication, but 375,000 according to General Sio Wong, a Cuban volunteer of Chinese extraction (p. 91) participated in one or more tours during the war of liberation from South Africa and its allies. Moreover, the freedom struggle in Angola had expanding consequences: including the independence of Namibia

(formerly known as South-West Africa), the end of a Fascist regime in Portugal itself (revolution of April 1974), and eventually the demise of some aspects of apartheid in South Africa itself.

While Angola is an oil-producing land (in the region of Cabinda) and has access to other mineral resources, Castro's Cuba intervened for no material benefits other than to demonstrate its dedication to internationalist principles. Nor did the intervention limit itself to Angola proper, or to the 1970s. Granted, according to the agreement ending the conflict, signed in New York, while South Africa agreed to withdraw its armed forces from Angola and refrain from further assaults, the Cuban troops were withdrawn as well. On the other hand, there was Cuban personnel, military or medical, in other lands of Africa. When I was on an educational tour of Namibia in the summer of 1995, I met dozens of physicians and nurses who were practicing their profession in various parts of the country, strictly as volunteers. The medical assistance provided by Cuba is significant in view of the facts that

1) the Portuguese medical personnel withdrew from their African colonies for the most part; according to the late Nobel prize laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez (GGM), Angola had only 90 doctors under the Portuguese colonial regime, in a country of 19 million (only six million according to GGM—p. 131) over a vast land of one and a quarter million kilometers square, without an infrastructure of viable roads.

2) Similarly, South African doctors were lacking in Namibia.

3) Moreover, by the 1980s and 1990s, Cuban health care had not only recovered from the mass exodus of physicians in the aftermath of the Cuban revolution, but was able to establish free and universal medical care of high quality in Cuba itself.

The contents of this glossy album are organized under the following headings: Defending Angola's Independence; Sovereignty; an unparalleled contribution to African freedom; the Cuban Revolution was strengthened; the Cuban Five in Angola; and Operation Carlota. The latter designation, we are told by one of the editors, derives from the name of a slave woman who led a rebellion near Matanza, in eastern Cuba, in 1843, and was captured, drawn and quartered "by the Spanish colonial troops" (p. 137). Indeed, the place-name Matanza means massacre in English. "Drawn and quartered" appears to be a form of punishment quite common in the Caribbean. The French colonial authorities followed the same procedure in St. Domingue (Haiti), at least in the case of Mackandal, a century earlier.

Obviously, it would be awkward for the reviewer to discuss each contribution by each of the distinguished contributors, so I will take advantage of the reviewer's license to pick and choose a few text that were particularly meaningful to me. Since Fidel Castro is famous as a speaker, partly because of the duration of his speeches, I feel prompted to enumerate his contributions to

this collection, beginning with his address delivered a speech to the first contingent of volunteers leaving for Angola in 1975: “Consolidating a powerful bulwark against apartheid South Africa.” It is followed by a speech Castro delivered in December 1975, entitled “African blood flows freely through our veins”, acknowledging the fact that a majority of Cubans are part of the African diaspora, regardless of their complexion. He also denounces the many attempts at assassination mounted against the Cuban leaders—meaning mainly against himself. There are excerpts from three more speeches by Fidel. “We defend peaceful coexistence and relations with other countries, “If they are unwilling to have relations with us, that is their business. Fortunately, we don’t need for anything!” There is yet another speech given in 1976, referring to the Cuban victory at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Giron). He points out, among other things, that after four months of fighting in Angola, fewer Cubans were killed than at Playa Giron. (p. 37) Another speech delivered in 1988 resulting in another Angolan-Cuban victory—the key battle of Cuito Cuanavale 1988, halting South African invasion . In a speech titled “All we take with us from Africa are the remains of our combatants who died fighting for freedom” points out the fact that the operation was both internationalist and altruistic.

The chapter titled “The Cuban Five in Angola—in their own words” was compiled from the writings of Cuban veterans who were arrested and have been incarcerated here in the United States since 1998. Their cause célèbre, their mission to influence or disrupt terrorist activities in Florida, is not part of the story. They are included in this publication because all five had fought in Angola before their mission to the United States. As far as I know, four of the five are still held in confinement.

At first the combined forces of Angolans and the Cuban volunteers were able to push the white troops from the apartheid regime in South Africa out of the country, but eventually the forces of UNITA in Angola, backed by the United States and the South African military, penetrated deep into Angolan territory. This foreign intervention in turn led to a greater effort on the part of Cubans and the forces under Agostinho Neto in Angola, and to the key battle of Cuito Cuanavale, somewhere in the southeastern corner of Angola—a clash that had symbolic significance. This time the South African invaders withdrew, to concentrate on holding on to Southwest Africa, but not for long; they were likewise forced to withdraw from Namibia shortly thereafter.

Finally I was eager to read the chapter by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (GGM). Of course, I am aware that GGM is a progressive literary figure. This chapter is no fiction; it is the account of a journalist and that was indeed one of his occupations. It is, as one would expect, a lively piece of prose. It is also, given the details, a convincingly objective and accurate account. For, as GGM explains, Cuba had experienced a series of setbacks; the mission in Angola, with the daring transport of troops and heavy equipment across the Atlantic,

circumventing the blockade gave the Cubans heart.

Thus this album is helpful in refreshing our memory of “current events” and, more importantly, in revealing events of current history that are unfamiliar to people younger than this reviewer (most of humankind). Furthermore, it offers relevant details, some of which were not part of the news found in the dailies, even in the more progressive accounts. It is to be hoped that this album will be read by the literate public in anglophone and hispanophone lands, but also that it will become available in Portuguese for the sake of the lusophone public. Even if it is misunderstood as “propaganda” it may serve to counter the prevailing discourse in the United States.

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