

Cuba's solidarity with Africa and the Soviet Union

written by Stephen Millies
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Fidel Castro with Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos. Dos Santos, who died July 8, 2022, was a leader of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). He studied engineering in the Soviet Union and fought for the MPLA during the

Angolan War of Independence.

“When Africa called, Cuba answered” is a well-known and true description of how Cuba aided the African liberation struggle. The slogan was popularized by Elombe Brath, the late Pan African educator and organizer who was a founder of the December 12th Movement.

Over 2,000 Cuban soldiers died fighting alongside their African comrades in defeating the fascist army of apartheid South Africa.

At the decisive battle of Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola, soldiers from the People’s Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola threw back the apartheid invaders in 1988. Joining Angolans were soldiers from the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the armed wing of the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO); uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed section of the African National Congress (ANC), and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba.

Also present were military advisers from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Soviet Union. It was Soviet-built MiG-25 jet fighters that gave the African forces air superiority.

Less than two years later Nelson Mandela walked out of prison on Feb. 11, 1990. Mandela declared that “the Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the peoples of Africa.

“The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character,” said Mandela. “Cubans came to our region as doctors, teachers, soldiers, agricultural experts, but never as colonizers. They have shared the same trenches with us in the struggle against colonialism, underdevelopment, and apartheid.”

Che and Fidel in Africa

One million Algerians died winning independence from France in 1962. Forty thousand Algerians were tortured to death by war criminals like Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the French fascist movement now called the National Rally.

In 1963, Cubans helped Algeria fight off an attack by the U.S.- backed Moroccan monarchy. Che Guevara and other Cuban internationalists fought alongside the followers of the murdered Patrice Lumumba in Congo in 1965.

Fidel Castro helped freedom fighters in Zimbabwe unite and form the Patriotic Front that overthrew the white minority regime. Just as the U.S. economically blockades Cuba, Wall Street sanctions the people of Zimbabwe for taking back their land from white settlers.

Amílcar Cabral, the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), met with Fidel Castro in Cuba. Cabral was assassinated in a plot masterminded by the Portuguese secret police, which was a close ally of the CIA.

Cuban military instructors assisted PAIGC liberation fighters while Cuban doctors treated their wounds.

Meanwhile the Pentagon was sending napalm bombs to its fellow NATO member, the fascist regime then in power in Portugal. Today the U.S. and NATO are supplying fascists in Ukraine with billions of dollars of bombs.

Portuguese communists aided their African comrades and helped overthrow the fascist regime in Lisbon on April 25, 1974. The hundreds of thousands of Africans who died fighting for independence also brought some freedom to poor and working people in Portugal.

Saving the world twice

When the Cuban revolution triumphed on Jan. 1, 1959, the Bolshevik Revolution was 41 years old. Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders hoped their revolution would inspire people around the world to break their chains.

The Bolshevik Revolution itself was an international event since more than 150 nationalities and peoples took part. Oppressed peoples who had been humiliated by the Russian czar and Russian capitalists now stood up.

After Lenin died on Jan. 21, 1924, the Honorable [Marcus Garvey said](#), “We as Negroes mourn for Lenin because Russia promised great hope not only for Negroes but to the weaker people of the world.”

A year after the Bolshevik victory, the German Kaiser was overthrown in November 1918. German workers and sailors formed soviets, councils of poor and working people.

But this revolution was drowned in blood. Revolutionary leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were killed on Jan. 15, 1919.

A dozen armies invaded the new Soviet Republic. U.S. soldiers occupied Vladivostok on the Pacific and Arkhangelsk near the Arctic.

Millions of people died in a civil war supported by the imperialist capitalist powers. It was followed by a terrible famine with more victims.

In 1919, the Hungarian Soviet Republic lasted 133 days before it was overthrown by foreign troops. The Soviet people were all alone.

Instead of a fellow socialist republic in Germany — the homeland of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels — the Nazis came to power over the bones of the working class.

Twenty-seven million Soviet people died defeating Hitler. Close to 80% of the Nazi regime's military casualties were on the eastern front.

President John F. Kennedy described the destruction wrought by Nazis as comparable to everything east of the Mississippi River in the United States being destroyed.

After World War II, Soviet workers and peasants not only had to rebuild their country. They also had to devote a large part of their economy to match the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Whistleblower [Daniel Ellsberg](#), who revealed the Pentagon Papers, wrote that the military-industrial complex had plans to launch a nuclear first strike on the socialist countries. An estimated 600 million people would be killed.

It was only because the Soviet Union was able to match the Pentagon's arsenal that this genocide was averted. The Bolshevik Revolution saved the world twice: first from the Nazis and then from Wall Street.

Dangerous illusions

Lenin described a strike as a small revolution. In a long strike of a few months, some strikers weaken. Capitalists do everything to demoralize workers.

All of the socialist countries have been on strike against world capitalism for decades.

Last year the official U.S. [spy budget](#) was \$84 billion. The U.S. State Department — which is just another spy shop — [is getting](#) another \$83 billion.

All this money is spent to fight socialist countries, workers' movements and any country that wants to be independent of world capitalism. At the same time, the

capitalist media lies 24/7, like their current denials about the fascist gangs in Ukraine.

After being isolated for over 25 years, the peoples of the Soviet Union welcomed the Chinese Revolution. The world's most populous country had chosen communism!

Yet the post-war world capitalist economic boom nurtured political illusions, which were spread by U.S. propaganda outlets like Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

At least [60 million people died](#) in World War II. For capitalism, however, the destruction of much of Western Europe and Japan got rid of a vast inventory of unsold goods that had caused the Great Depression. Capitalist "prosperity" sprung from the ruins.

Capitalist illusions were particularly dangerous in the new socialist countries of Eastern Europe. For example, around a quarter of Hungarians had relatives in the United States.

In the 1920s the Communist Party published a Hungarian language daily newspaper in Cleveland. The great CIO union organizing drives improved the living conditions of millions of U.S. workers, including those from Eastern European backgrounds.

So some Hungarians compared their living standards in a region rebuilding from war with their cousins in the United States. Many people thought that everybody in the U.S. had a car. In fact, in the 1950s less than 50% of households in the U.S. had a car, with only about 10% of households having two cars.

Radio Free Europe wasn't telling Hungarians about the living conditions of Black people or the millions of poor white people. The propaganda outlet was saying socialism was inferior.

There were also unnecessary concessions towards political reaction in the Soviet

Union. It didn't help world peace to allow Vice President Richard Nixon to come to Moscow with a "typical" U.S. kitchen.

The truth was that millions of working-class families in the United States couldn't afford those "typical" appliances Nixon was advertising. What Soviet people needed to be told was that millions of people in the U.S. were hungry.

It was the Black liberation movement that won food stamps, now called SNAP benefits. The Black Panther Party pioneered school breakfast programs.

More than 20 years before Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was allowed to be published in 1962.

Solzhenitsyn was so right-wing that he later praised Soviet Gen. Andrey Vlasov—who defected to the Nazis — in his book "The Gulag Archipelago."

Welcome Fidel!

While Nixon was in Moscow, the Cuban Revolution was already six months old. Cuban workers and peasants were taking back their country.

This included \$2 billion of U.S.-owned plantations, railroads, mines and other properties. That was one-sixth of Wall Street's loot in Latin America.

As [Fidel Castro said](#) after the attempted U.S.-mercenary invasion at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs), "This is what they cannot forgive: the fact that we are here right under their very noses. And that we have carried out a socialist revolution right under the nose of the United States!"

In October 1962, the U.S. threatened nuclear war over the defensive missiles placed in Cuba by the Soviet Union. A few months later, Fidel Castro was invited to visit the

USSR.

The historical leader of the Cuban Revolution spent 40 days in the Soviet Union, from April 26 to June 3, 1963. Everywhere the Soviet people of every national background welcomed him, particularly the youth.

That the Cuban people made a socialist revolution right under Wall Street's nose lifted the spirits of Soviet communists — while it set back the cynics and the pro-capitalist elements.

The Soviet Union and the other socialist countries gave much aid to Cuba. After 80% of Cuban doctors were enticed to leave their country, Czechoslovakia helped train a new generation of medical workers.

This aid wasn't all one way. Cuban exports also helped the socialist bloc. Even more important was Cuba's revolutionary policies, like its aid to Africa.

The overthrow of Soviet power and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe was an immense tragedy. But what if these counter revolutions had occurred not in 1989-1991 but ten years earlier?

It would have been even worse. Besides all the other accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution, it helped set back capitalist restorationist elements in the Soviet Union during the early 1960s.

