

Cuba: its foreign policy is development

Journalists and think-tankers have gone to great lengths to explain what motivates Cuba's foreign policy. While "Soviet proxy" has practically become a household word for Cuba, explanations have also ranted from Fidel's ego being too small for one island (The London *Guardian*) to a charge of "military communism—the communism of the War God Mars" (The *Christian Science Monitor*).

The centerpiece of Cuba's foreign policy, however, is sovereign development—its own and that of the entire developing sector—and it is that commitment which has won them the growing respect of the entire Third World, capitalist and socialist alike. Cuba has taken a leading role within the Non-Aligned Movement fighting for the creation of a new world economic order and will host a crucial meeting of the Non-Aligned in September of this year.

When requested by another Third World country whose sovereignty is threatened, as was the case in Angola, Cuba has been willing to back their policy commitment to development with arms. This is what the Cubans mean by "internationalism"—a national moral commitment to aid other developing sector

nations to overcome the backwardness imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The figures speak for themselves. Cuba has sent 45-50,000 military advisors and technicians to Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. In every case, their collaboration with national governments has established economies able to fend off the International Monetary Fund. For example, Angola where in 1976 there were approximately 20,000 civilian and military personnel from Cuba involved in education, public health, construction and industry. In Vietnam, Cuban personnel are involved in road construction and in developing new technologies for poultry production and agriculture.

Such an approach in no way means that Cuba is "irrevocably" committed to confrontation with advanced sector capitalist nations as some have charged. Quite the contrary, Cuba favors detente and peaceful coexistence, and has publicly proposed direct collaboration with the capitalist West in the industrialization of the Third World, a proposal best expressed in the interview by Cuban Vice President Rodriguez quoted in the introduction to this survey.

In a speech given July 28, 1978, Fidel Castro summed up the conception underlying Cuba's internationalism:

"The Cuban Revolution would not even exist without internationalism. During all ages, in all countries and at all times, revolutionaries fought and devoted their best energies to the noble principle of human progress. In being internationalist we are paying our debt to mankind....

"We are resolutely advancing toward becoming a country with a high culture. Our path in this field has no limits. We live from what our technology, our natural resources and our sweat are capable of creating, but we will not be selfish like the snail locked in its own shell, and we will offer the world everything that is within reach of revolutionary and international generosity ... After all, what is Cuba without the rest of the world?"

Castro in Angola: work the main thing now

Fidel Castro first toured Africa in March of 1977, visiting Mozambique, Angola, Libya, Somalia, Algeria, Yemen and others. In Angola, then barely emerging from the brutal battle against the South African invasion, Fidel repeatedly stressed that the major job facing the country is "work": reconstructing the country after decades of colonialist looting. Excerpts follow from his address before a mass rally in the Golfe slum area of the Angolan capital of Luanda on March 24, 1977.

"...If one wants to get an idea of what colonialism and capitalism ... with their exploitation of man by man

are like, all he has to do is tour Luanda: fabulous homes, beautiful buildings surrounded by slums. ... There was no running water in the slum, no electricity, streets, transportation, schools or doctors. ... There was a lack of everything necessary and an abundance of everything negative: parasitism, tuberculosis, malnutrition, disease of all kinds, illiteracy, ignorance, unemployment, discrimination, humiliation, suffering, poverty and misery....

Now these problems must be solved and Comrade Neto and the MPLA are trying to do so. What do they find? There are no engineers, architects—the colonialists were the only ones who had mastered them....

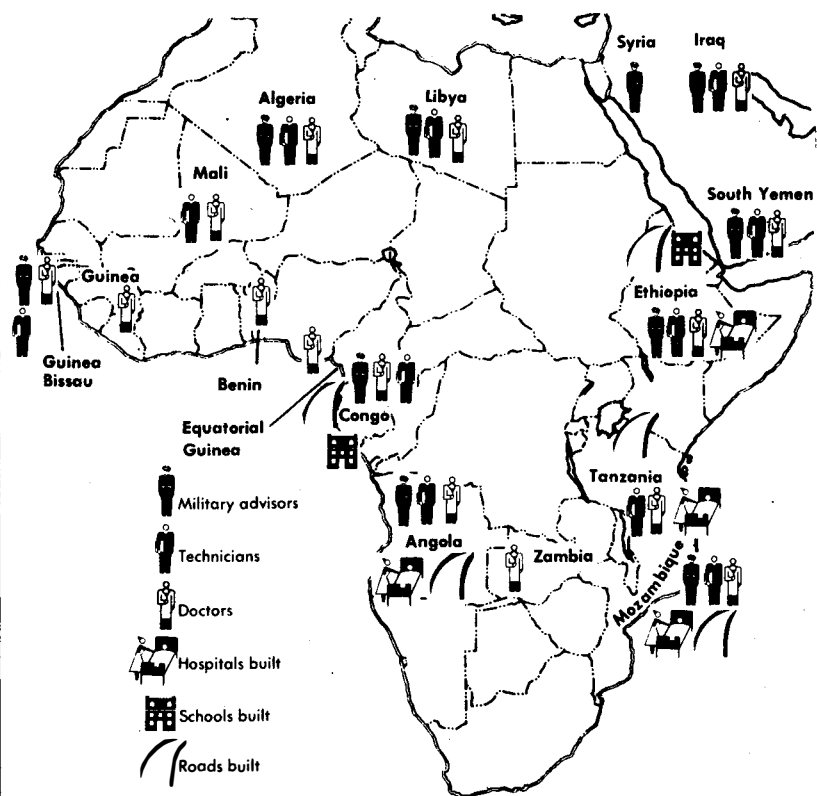
We understand all those problems. This is why we called on our construction workers in Cuba to help develop construction in Angola. That is why there are hundreds of Cuban construction workers in this country. We assumed the responsibility of rebuilding a number of bridges. ... We must build them and at the same time teach the Angolans all about bridge construction. ... We will build the bridges, and we will defend the construction of those bridges by being both workers and soldiers. We who are simple technicians who know how to build can also fight.

From a speech before a rally in Caxito, Angola, the same day

"...Work is very important for the Revolution. ... Work, the development of the country, is the main thing now. Independence does not mean immediate access to well-being and riches. Independence means the opportunity to start working for oneself....

There is a shortage of technicians and cadres. It will take many years to train those technicians and cadre because more than 15 years pass from the time a child enters school to his graduation from university. And now you must face these problems in order to have more schools, hospitals, roads, homes, clothes, shoes, books, food and culture. We, your friends, must help you as much as we can.

Cuba's new exports: knowledge



There has been no lack of reportage in British and American newspapers of the fact that Cuba has sent military troops and advisors to African countries. It has not generally been reported that Cuba has also sent technicians, teachers, construction workers, medical personnel, and supplies to these African nations, where they have made major contributions. In fact, the primary function of even Cuban military personnel in Africa, among other Third World regions, has been economic, not military. The much-maligned "presence of Cuban troops" is somewhat comparable to the presence of the Army Corps of Engineers in the United States.

Ours isn't a rich country. It is a small country, without great natural resources. But, in 18 years of revolution, we have made some progress. We now have doctors, engineers, architects, skilled workers. ... We have doctors, and many of them are willing to come work for the health of Angolans. We have told Comrade Neto that we won't set any limits on our cooperation; we will offer all the cooperation that may be needed....

This is what socialism, Marxism-Leninism, and proletarian international mean!"