

Africa and Latin America - Revolutionary Ties

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Historically, the United States and its allies only retreat from their aggressive policies and the imposition of their dominance when they suffer a strategic defeat. They never repair their essence, all they do is modify their policies looking for how to recover the lost ground. For them, the 1950s were a decade of bitter setbacks. China defeated them in Korea in 1953, Vietnam expelled the French in 1954, Egypt took control of the Suez Canal in 1956, the Cuban Revolution took power in 1959 and shortly afterwards in 1962, the National Liberation Front did so in Algeria. The West responded, among other ways, with its campaign in the Congo and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, support for the massacre of more than a million communists to seal the coup in Indonesia in 1965, the overthrow of the Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966, the genocidal US war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and determined Western support for the Zionist occupation in Palestine and for the racist regime in South Africa.

The drive at that time towards decolonization and the ruthless Western reaction to it occurred in the context of the Cold War. In parallel with their aggressive policies, the United States and its allies were deepening their control of international finance and global trade. They perfected the neocolonial interventions of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the manipulation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as tools of financial and commercial control around the world. In a systematic way, Western governments developed the mechanisms of indebtedness and development cooperation as a means of increasing the economic dependence of the countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa.

To this neocolonial model of economic development promoted by the imperial powers, majority world leaders began proposing, as an alternative, models of trade and South-South cooperation without conditions and based on solidarity. In 1955, the first Africa-Asia conference was organized in Bandung, Indonesia, which reaffirmed from the perspective of the majority world the founding principles of the United Nations, self-determination, non-aggression and respect for international law. Afterwards, the Non-Aligned Movement gave

greater impetus to a vision of international relations based on respect among equals, the recognition of the legitimate interests of countries, the promotion of solidarity based cooperation, trade for mutual benefit and the peaceful resolution of differences.

In the last twenty years, this vision has been developed very successfully, for example, by the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and by the BRICS group. It explicitly opposes the practice of the United States and its allies to impose their imperatives in international relations through economic and military domination. In Latin America, Comandante Fidel Castro and Comandante Hugo Chávez Frias promoted the same vision of international relations based on solidarity through the Bolivarian Alliance of Our America (ALBA). Later, enough consensus was reached in support of this vision to form the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. To the extent that the ability of these countries to defend their interests increases, all these independent schemes of cooperation threaten Western power in international relations.

In the history of the development of the libertarian anti-imperialist vision, it is worth highlighting the role of revolutionary solidarity between Latin America and Africa, of which the example of Cuban solidarity has been decisive. The campaign of the Cuban contingent with Che Guevara and Jorge Risquet in the Congo in 1965 was the precursor of Operation Carlota in defense of Angola in the 1970s that finally managed to defeat the forces of the racist regime of South Africa and its Western patrons. Even before the Cuban collaboration in the Congo, Cuba had supported the newly liberated Algeria against an aggression in 1963 by the Kingdom of Morocco backed by France. In 1965, Che met at one time or another with key revolutionary African leaders such as Modibo Keita from Mali, Amilcar Cabral from what is now Guinea Bissau, with Agostinho Neto from Angola and Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana. Che insisted on the importance of solidarity based and complementary international cooperation to achieve emancipation from the domination of the world economy by the imperialist powers.

Gabriel García Marquez wrote "That fleeting and anonymous sojourn of Che Guevara through Africa sowed a seed that no one can uproot." Some twenty years later, in 1987, shortly before his own assassination, Thomas Sankara said, "Che Guevara was struck by imperialist bullets under the Bolivian sun but we declare that for us Che Guevara is not dead... In almost all of Africa he made known his beret with its star... Africa, from north to south, remembers Che Guevara."

A year after Thomas Sankara's words, the Cuban and Angolan forces defeated the armed forces of the racist regime of South Africa in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Of that battle Nelson Mandela commented in Cuba in 1991 "That impressive defeat of the racist army gave Angola the possibility of enjoying peace and consolidating its sovereignty. It gave the people of Namibia their independence, demoralized the white racist regime in Pretoria and inspired the anti-apartheid struggle within South Africa..."

In Nicaragua, the Sandinista Popular Revolution has always maintained fraternal relations with Africa's revolutions, especially with the Libyan Jamahiriya, with Algeria, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. In his words of tribute to our Chancellor of Dignity, Father Miguel d'Escoto, in 2017, President Comandante Daniel recalled how they traveled together to celebrate Zimbabwe's independence in April 1980, "We were there with Miguel living that unforgettable experience, and we have constantly recalled that experience, whereby a People in Africa, just like the People of Nicaragua who had fought against imperialist policy,

there against colonialist, imperialist policy, also achieved their Liberation.”

On Algeria, Vice President Compañera Rosario has commented on how the national liberation struggle of the Algerian people against French colonialism has been “important and significant, not only for Algeria but for all Peoples who love Peace and Freedom. Algeria continues to be an Example, a Reference Point, an Inspiration for the Peoples who struggle in the World, out of Respect for our Sovereignty, for Justice, and Peace.” In relation to the Libyan Jamahiriya of Brother Muammar al-Gaddafi, Commander Daniel recalled in this year’s celebration of July 19th, “We cannot forget Gaddafi. As soon as he saw the aggression that Nicaragua was suffering, he joined in and gave us unconditional solidarity.”

For the 44/19 Anniversary this year, the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso was present. He commented “Nicaragua is a great country, and the determination of its People is a Hope and an example for others, they have a great Spirit... That is why I am here, and I am here to be the living witness of the Unity between the People of Nicaragua and Burkina Faso.” That afternoon too, Compañera Rosario recalled the words of Thomas Sankara during a visit he made to Nicaragua in the 1980s, “Burkina will stand together with Nicaragua! Because the Revolution is invincible and the People will rule!”

These solidarity ties between revolutionary African countries and the revolutionary countries in Latin America were further consolidated with the new foreign policy implemented by the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. President Hugo Chávez Frías promoted the development of new relations between Venezuela and the Southern African Development Community, with the Economic Community of West African States and with the African Union. He also gave greater impetus to the initiative of Brazil during the first government of President Lula da Silva along with his African counterparts of the Africa-South America Summits.

A few weeks before his transit to immortality in 2013, our Eternal Comandante wrote in a letter to the Africa-South America Summit that year: “South America and Africa are the same people. We only manage to understand the depth of the social and political reality of our continent in the depths of the immense African territory where, I am sure, humanity was born. From there come the codes and the elements that make up the cultural, musical and religious syncretism of our America, creating not only racial unity among our peoples but also spiritual unity.

... Latin America and the Caribbean share with Africa a past of oppression and slavery. Today more than ever, we are the inheritors of our liberators and of their conquests. We can say, we must say with strength and conviction, that we are also united by a present of struggle essential for the freedom and definitive independence of our nations.

I will not tire of repeating it, we are the same people, we have the obligation to come together, beyond formal speeches, in the same desire for unity and thus united, to give life to the equation that will need to be applied to the construction of the conditions that will allow us to get our peoples out of the labyrinth into which colonialism and, later, the neoliberal capitalism of the twentieth century threw them.”

These words of our Eternal Comandante remind us that from one century to the next, the threads of the revolutionary history of Latin America and Africa are inseparably intertwined. It seems that the current historical moments will be decisive for the defense of the principles of the new world enunciated more than sixty years ago by visionary African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Gamal Abdel Nasser. Now a new generation of

revolutionary leaders in Africa are determined to confront the influence and power of the empire in their countries. At the Russia-Africa Summit at the end of July this year, President Ibrahim Traoré of Burkina Faso commented:

“We have met today because we need to talk about the future of our countries. What will happen tomorrow in this new free world we are fighting for, a world without interference in our internal affairs?... We have the opportunity to build a new kind of relationships. I hope that these relations will serve us better and allow us to create a better future for our peoples... The problem is that the leaders of African countries do not contribute anything to the people who are fighting imperialism, calling us armed groups or criminals. We do not agree with this approach. We, the heads of African states, must stop behaving like puppets ready to act every time the imperialists pull the strings.”

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Featured image: Che Guevara con el Presidente Kwame Nkrumah en 1965 (Source: TCS)

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