

Homeland of Humanity

Internationalism within the Cuban Revolution

by
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Cuba's internationalism has been treated as epiphenomenal to the overall trajectory of the Cuban Revolution rather than as a central component. The emphasis has been on the external rather than the internal dimensions: internationalist missions, whether military or medical, are often treated as divorced from the domestic sphere. Internationalist programs have always been dialectically linked to socialist development in Cuba, however, performing a critical function in consolidating socialist consciousness, especially during the Rectification Campaign of the 1980s, and the capacity to preserve the revolution during the economic crisis of the 1990s. The role of internationalism cannot be ignored or underestimated. It is a reservoir of socialist values and revolutionary fervor that was drawn on during the Special Period and an important factor in explaining the resilience of the revolution.

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At Havana's José Martí International Airport, the words "Patria Es Humanidad" (Homeland Is Humanity) are prominently displayed. The words are those of José Martí, and they symbolize Cuba's ongoing commitment to internationalism. From its inception, the revolutionary government has extended its civilian and military assistance to numerous countries, the most dramatic example being the struggle waged in Angola against South Africa's racist regime. Cuba's longest and largest internationalist mission, it lasted from 1975 to 1991 and involved 330,000 participants and 2,000 deaths. The Angolan mission has assumed legendary status on the island, holding a privileged position in the pantheon of Cuba's internationalism. The sheer numbers involved in the contemporary health and educational brigades sent to Africa, Asia, and Latin America highlight the continuing significance of internationalism for the Cuban Revolution.

While there is a growing literature and body of documentaries on the various internationalist missions of the Cuban Revolution (e.g., Gleijeses, 2001; *¡Salud!*, 2006), there has been little discussion of their connection to the consolidation of the revolutionary project of independence and the construction of socialism. Most of the discussion of Cuba's internationalism focuses on its impact in the international arena and its role in meeting the nation's foreign policy objectives. Internationalist missions, whether military or medical, are often treated as divorced from the domestic sphere. In short, internationalism

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has been treated as epiphenomenal to the revolution rather than as a central component. This essay challenges this stance, arguing that internationalist programs have always been dialectically linked to socialist development in Cuba, performing a critical function in consolidating socialist consciousness, especially during the Rectification Campaign of the 1980s and the successful response to the economic crisis of the 1990s. Cuba's internationalism is more than a prominent foreign policy feature of the revolution; it is a defining element.

The centrality of internationalism to Cuban domestic concerns is illustrated by the election of General Leopoldo Cintra Frías and General Álvaro López Miera to the Council of State. In his reflections of February 29, 2008, Fidel Castro laid out the reasons for including Cintra Frías and López Miera on the list of candidates that was presented to the National Assembly. Alluding to the world situation and the necessity to prioritize defense, he argued that the inclusion of Cintra Frías and López Miera was "indicated by the moves on the chess board" (Castro, 2008a). What is of note is that his explanation for the selection of these two generals emphasized their service in the internationalist missions in Angola. While they were clearly chosen for their military expertise, this proficiency had been concretely demonstrated by their "victorious internationalist feats."

Elsewhere I and others have argued for the centrality of the weight of history to the survival of the Cuban Revolution during the unprecedented crisis of the 1990s (see, e.g., Pérez, 2005; Saney, 2004). These arguments have located the revolution as an outgrowth of Cuba's long struggle to achieve independence and establish an autochthonous nation-building project. Thus, the ability of the revolution to survive the crisis of the 1990s was rooted in its historical legitimacy as the vehicle for the realization of these historical aspirations. At the same time, I have also suggested that another source of the revolution's resilience was Cuba's system of governance, which provides the means (through mass participation) by which these historical aspirations are expressed in a political consensus to defend or at least not abandon the revolutionary project. In addition to the weight of history and the system of governance, however, internationalism was a reservoir of socialist values and revolutionary fervor that was drawn on during the Special Period and helps to explain how the revolution survived.

SOCIALISM AND THE NEW SOCIETY

While internationalism became official government policy and practice under the revolution, it represented not the creation of a new tradition but the amplification and elevation to new levels of a dominant theme. Cubans often say that the first internationalist of the Columbian age was Hatuey, a fifteenth-century Taíno cacique from the island of Hispaniola who resisted the depredations of the Spaniards and, having escaped to Cuba, led the resistance to colonization. José Luis Carnazares Cárdenas mentions him and Máximo Gómez, the military commander of the 1895–1898 War for Independence, in pointing out that "internationalism has deep roots in Cuban history. Cuba has benefited, for example, from the internationalist acts of Hatuey and Máximo Gómez" (interview, Havana, May 6, 2006). José Martí, Cuba's national hero, viewed Cuba's fight for its independence as part of a continentwide struggle.

He “was not simply fighting to overthrow the Spanish and win political independence for Cuba but was also fighting as an international revolutionary to secure the liberation of his continent, and indeed of the world” (Kirk, 1983: 15). This internationalist perspective was reflected by the hundreds of Cubans who volunteered to fight against fascism during the Spanish Civil War. Jorge Risquet, a key official in Cuba’s internationalist missions, argues that “in proportion to its population at the time, Cuba was the country that sent the most volunteers to Spain” (1990: 13).

The Cuban Revolution made the internationalist tradition an explicit sphere of state activity. José Cantón Navarro notes that while the Cuban people’s internationalist consciousness was a product of the long struggle for independence, it “attained its highest expression in the work and ideals of the Cuban Revolution” (2000: 246). The revolutionary government considered the pursuit of internationalism the fulfillment of ethical responsibilities derived from ideals deeply rooted in the Cuban historical experience (see, e.g., Castro, 2003a: 49). However, the revolution’s specific concerns, centered on the construction of a socialist society and defense from a powerful external enemy, conferred a new character on Cuba’s internationalism. Coupled with the ethical dimension, internationalism was viewed as an imperative for both the survival of the revolution and the creation of socialism.

Castro was quite clear that internationalism served as a means of revolutionary self-defense. In response to Washington’s multilateral policy of aggression, Havana “globalized the revolutionary struggle against the United States” (2003a: 49–50). Che Guevara underlined this imperative in his February 24, 1965, address to the Second Afro-Asian Economic Solidarity Seminar in Algiers, describing it as “an inescapable necessity” (Tablada, 2007: 153–154). This necessity was embodied in the effort to extend the revolutionary movement to the rest of Latin America reflected in the First and Second Declarations of Havana, adopted on September 2, 1960, and February 24, 1962, respectively. Both rejected U.S. imperialism (especially the Monroe Doctrine) and explicitly linked Cuba’s destiny to the fate of the continent (*Declarations of Havana*, 2007: 27). The Second Declaration argued that the unity of Latin America and the necessity for revolution were immanent in the region’s common history (39). Thus, the Cuban Revolution and Latin America’s redemption were inseparable and Washington’s hostility to the Cuban Revolution had to do not only with Cuba but with forestalling regional revolution: “By eliminating the Cuban Revolution, they hope to eliminate the revolutionary spirit of the people” (46). An inevitable and ineluctable uprising of the peoples of Latin America, a regional historical catharsis presaged by the Cuban Revolution, was envisaged.

Beyond the extension of revolution and anti-imperialism, Havana considered internationalism a crucial tool in the radical transformation of the society and the construction of socialism. The praxis of internationalism was very much entwined with the creation of the socialist consciousness and ethos that would underpin the new social order. In this context, the voluntary work spearheaded by Guevara is often considered the principal means by which the revolutionary leadership sought to neutralize and negate capitalist values. Physically and conceptually, however, this work was not confined to activities in Cuba but also included missions carried out in other countries. Proletarian internationalism was viewed as integral to the development of socialist consciousness and values. As Guevara put it at the Algiers Conference, “Socialism cannot exist unless there is a change

in people's consciousness, creating a new fraternal attitude toward humanity" (Tablada, 2007: 150). In a June 7, 1972, speech, Fidel Castro emphasized that internationalism was essential to countering "individual selfishness" (Tablada, 2007: 149), and on April 7, 1977, he addressed the necessity to combat the egoism and egotistical values that were antithetical to an authentic socialism. The development of an internationalist culture was seen as vital: "When these feelings begin to reach man's heart and conscience, then we are more than mean, egotistical individuals; we will have gone beyond individual, family, and even national egoism" (Castro, 1981a: 45).

ANGOLA

Internationalist ideals were an important part of the ideological and ideational struggle to construct socialism. Ascertaining their impact inside Cuba, specifically on consciousness, is a challenging task. Speeches and statements by the leadership of the Cuban Revolution and interviews with individuals at various levels of Cuban society, including participants in internationalist missions and members of their families, provide insight into the way values and worldview have been and continue to be affected by internationalist policies and programs. This is illustrated by their considerable impact on the participants (*internacionalistas*), especially those who participated in Cuba's 1975–1991 defense of Angola from South African aggression.

Commitment to internationalism and solidarity with others is a theme that invariably dominates discussion with participants. Participation in the military mission was voluntary. Eduardo Sarría González, who served three tours in Angola, said, "If you decided not to go it was not a problem" (interview, Havana, May 9, 2006), and Carlos Fundora (1991: 74–76), who served in Angola from 1985 to 1987, stressed that "up to the last minute, you had the right to say you weren't going." Many expressed pride in fulfilling the internationalist principles of the Cuban Revolution. Sarría said, "The principle of helping another people is very important. Angola was invaded by two countries, South Africa and Zaire. They could not face those invasions. So we went." Javier Domínguez Martínez, who was in Angola from 1975 to 1977, called the Angola mission "a fulfillment of our internationalist duty" (interview, Havana, May 12, 2006). Luis Moreno Hidalgo (interview, Havana, April 28, 2006), who served in a tank brigade in Angola from 1987 to 1989, said, "I was a volunteer and understood that we were defending Angola from racist aggression." Another explained his participation in similar terms: "Angola had freed itself from colonialism and was attacked by South Africa, so Angola asked Cuba to help against South Africa" (Bravo, 1990).

There were also cases of individuals who, though turned down for military service in Angola, attempted to get there anyway. For example, Esther Lilia Díaz Rodríguez had repeatedly been rejected on the basis that "it is much harder there for a woman" (García Márquez, 1989: 50). In the end, as she was preparing to stow away aboard a troop ship, she was granted official permission to go. Her experience reflected the sexist conventional wisdom that, while women could serve as nurses, journalists, or technicians, outright military roles, especially combat, were unsuitable for them or inconsistent

with their abilities. This, of course, directly contradicted the history of women combatants during the 1956 to 1959 revolutionary war and the antisexist campaigns waged by the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women). Eventually the leadership intervened, and several women's anti-aircraft battalions served in southern Angola, playing an important role in securing air superiority over South Africa.

Race was also engaged, with the revolutionary leadership explicitly locating the Angolan mission within Cuba's history of slavery. The military intervention was justified as both defending an independent country from foreign invasion and repaying a historical debt owed by Cuba to Africa. This was reflected in the mission's name, *Operation Carlota*, referring to the African slave woman who led a revolt against slavery in Cuba on November 5, 1843. Fidel Castro frequently invoked Cuba's historical links to Africa. On the fifteenth anniversary of the Cuban victory at Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs), he declared that Cubans "are a Latin-African people" (Castro, 1981a: 110 and 115; see also Castro, 1981a: 129; 1981b: 55). Jorge Risquet (1990: 13) was also unambiguous in explaining Cuba's military intervention in terms of Cuba's obligations to Africa, and this linkage resonated especially with black Cubans, who were able to make a symbolic connection with their African roots. As Terrence Cannon (1981: 182) notes, for many blacks fighting in Angola was akin to defending Cuba except that the fight was "this time in Africa. And they were aware that Africa was, in some sense, their homeland." Reverend Abbuno Gonazale underscored this connection: "My grandfather came from Angola. So it is my duty to go and help Angola. I owe it to my ancestors" (Bravo, 1990). General Rafael Moracen echoed this sentiment: "When we arrived in Angola, I heard an Angolan say that our grandparents, whose children were taken away from Africa to be slaves, would be happy to see their grandchildren return to Africa to help free it. I will always remember those words" (Bravo, 1990).

Cuban society as a whole was influenced and shaped by those who served overseas. The hundred of thousands of Cubans who have participated in medical and military missions have returned not only with their individual stories and a sense of the significance of Cuba's global contributions but with a heightened appreciation of revolutionary and socialist values. As Fidel Castro pointed out, the hundreds of construction workers who had served in Vietnam had made an important contribution to Cuban development by constituting "enthusiastic and magnificent nuclei in our construction industry. When they returned from Vietnam they were sent to work on our country's most important, top-priority projects" (Castro, 1981a: 135). During the Rectification Campaign of the 1980s, voluntary work was given renewed emphasis as a means to combat the resurgence of capitalist values and the flagging of the socialist ethos. Returning *internacionalistas* played a vital role in this work and were often its driving force. Jairo Rodríguez, vice president of the *Federación de Estudiantes de Universidad* (University Students' Federation), pointed out that in his experience *internacionalistas* were often the leaders in the various volunteer work brigades (interview, Vancouver, June 14, 2008).

Central to this social phenomenon was Angola. The majority of the Cuban families that I have interacted with have had at least one relative who served in Angola and who has shared his or her memories and stories. These persons almost invariably occupy positions of honor, and photographs taken during

their internationalist missions are displayed. They are not only accorded respect but often serve as exemplars. Carnazares (interview, Havana, May 6, 2006) notes:

Internationalist missions transformed not only the participants in the missions but their families, who were also changed by the experiences shared with them. The majority of families in Cuba have had at least one family member serve in an internationalist mission. I remember as a small boy many of my relatives and family friends serving in internationalist missions. They were respected and admired. They were seen as examples to follow and emulate.

Cuban society was and is suffused with the recollections of the internacionalistas, and these recollections became part of the Cuban meta-narrative. The purchase of the war in Angola on Cuban popular consciousness is indicated by the popularity of books on the subject, which tend to sell out very quickly and are often very difficult to find. The considerable output is indicated by this far from complete sample: *Secretos de generale* (Baez, 1996); *Al encuentro de los desconocidos* (del Valle, 2005); *Angola: Relatos desde las alturas* (González, 2003); *La guerra de Angola* (Editora Política, 1989); *La paz de Cuito Cuanavale: Documentos de un proceso* (Editora Política, 1989); *Angola: Un abril como girón* (Ortiz, 1979); *Angola: Fin del mito de los mercenarios* (Valdes, 1976); *Angola: Saeta del norte* (Fernández and Garciga, 2005); *Operación Carlota: Pasajes de una epopeya* (Díaz, 2006); *Cangamba* (Blandino, 2006); and *Victoria al Sur de Angola* (Campos, 2006).

There have also been several very popular documentaries. *La repuesta a la escalada de Sud-Africa* (FAR, 1989), which dealt with the final battles in Angola in 1988, was rebroadcast several times by popular demand. In 2007 a 22-episode television series on the internationalist mission in Angola, *La epopeya de Angola*, gripped the attention of Cubans. In addition to the books and documentaries, there have been numerous commemorations. The main organizer of many of these events has been the Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución (Association of the Combatants of the Revolution), founded in 1993 and made up of those who fought in the revolutionary war, against the Escambray insurgency in the 1960s, and in foreign campaigns. One of its primary objectives is to preserve the historical memory of Cuba's various internationalist military missions.

In November 2005 Fidel Castro addressed a major event marking the thirtieth anniversary of Cuba's military intervention in Angola (Castro, 2005). On March 24, 2008, Raúl Castro presided over a ceremony that celebrated the internationalist mission in Angola (as embodied in the victory at Cuito Cuanavale) as a defining moment in the trajectory of the Cuban Revolution (Núñez Betancourt, 2008). Every year in Havana on May 4, the Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de África, Asia y América (Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America) organizes an event commemorating the 1978 massacre of hundreds of Namibian refugees by South African troops in the Angolan town of Kassinga. This event is attended by representatives from Angola, Namibia, South Africa, and Cuba and receives wide coverage in the Cuban media. A central theme of this annual event is the Cuban contribution to the defeat of the apartheid regime.

It was, perhaps, during the crisis of the 1990s that internationalism had its most decisive impact inside Cuba. As the Cuban Revolution was caught in the

maelstrom that ensued from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, its very legitimacy and relevance were called into question. The ideological pressures on the island were intense. Internationalism was one of the factors that contributed to the resilience of the revolution, particularly Cuba's role in the defeat of the apartheid regime. During a series of battles in Angola in 1987–1988, Cuba's Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionario (Revolutionary Armed Forces—FAR) decisively defeated the South African armed forces at the town of Cuito Cuanavale, altering the balance of power in the region and forcing Pretoria to negotiate with the antiapartheid forces. This eventually led to the dissolution of apartheid (see Saney, 2006).

Cubans took considerable pride in their country's victory. This pride was not only expressed by soldiers, who often spoke about "returning to Cuba with victory in our hands." Samuel Fure Davis, who was in Havana at the time, said, "There was lots of excitement about the battle. Word of victory was received with elation. I remember vividly the celebrations of the victory" (interview, May 4, 2007). Cubans took pride not only in their victory but in the altruism that characterized the Angolan mission. Nancy Gomez stated, "Some do not understand our presence in a country out of solidarity. We are not there to kill but to defend another people, to fight for others and to die for others" (Bravo, 1990). Poignantly, one mother said that she was able to cope with the pain of her son's death only because he "did something for others, and especially for Africa" (Bravo, 1990).

Nelson Mandela's July 25 to 27, 1991, visit was a great source of pride. That Mandela chose Cuba as the first country outside of Africa to visit after his release from prison was seen as further validation and affirmation of the revolution. In conferring the José Martí Medal, Cuba's highest honor, on him, the Council of State (1991: 72) noted that his visit came at a "decisive hour when the Cuba people have resolved to defend at all costs the revolution, socialism and the homeland." Mandela unequivocally acknowledged Cuba's vital role in the southern African liberation struggles, declaring, "The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice unparalleled for its principled and selfless character" (1991: 18). He also expressed his support and admiration for the Cuban Revolution: "We admire the sacrifices of the Cuban people in maintaining their independence and sovereignty in the face of a vicious imperialist-orchestrated campaign to destroy the impressive gains made in the Cuban Revolution."

The significance of the victory can also be appreciated by contemplating what the repercussions inside Cuba would have been if, instead, the FAR had been defeated. This question illuminates the impact on Cuban society of Cuba's role in the struggle against apartheid. Fidel Castro characterized the commitment to Angola in 1987 to 1988 as decisive because "the revolution was also at stake, and a different outcome would have meant a major defeat for the revolution" (Editora José Martí, 1989: 394). During Mandela's visit to Cuba, Castro (1991: 34–35) again emphasized the dangers that Cuba had faced: "The revolution put everything at stake, it put its own existence at stake, it risked a huge battle against one of the strongest powers." Carlos Fernández de Cossio, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, concurred: "A defeat at Cuito Cuanavale would have had a devastating psychological and moral impact on

the Cuban people" (interview, May 2, 2007). Cuba would have had to grapple not only with defeat but with the realization that the loss of life and allocation of considerable resources over a 15-year period had been in vain.

But the Cuban armed forces returned victorious. The status of the Cuba armed forces in the popular consciousness was enhanced. Their high standing among the people was important during the Special Period as the military assumed an expanded role throughout the economy and society. It was one of the principal organizations mobilized to preserve ideological and political unity. The values of self-sacrifice and social solidarity that were the leadership's watchwords in the early 1990s were the values that the FAR embodied: values crystallized in the internacionalistas, who had operationalized them in Angola and now reinforced them in Cuba.

No political or ideological crisis developed. The contribution of the island's internationalist record (especially in Angola) to avoiding just such a crisis should not be underestimated. As the revolution was being portrayed as a relic with no meaningful role in the world, Cuba's crucial contribution to the South African transformation was a potent counter. It fortified belief in the revolution's relevance and legitimacy in a world that was radically different from the one in which it was born and had developed. Perhaps the most poignant deployment of internationalism in defense of the Cuban Revolution was Fidel Castro's 2003 May Day speech. The context for the speech was the intense criticism of Cuba for the arrest of 75 opposition figures and the execution of three armed hijackers in March and April 2003, when several prominent intellectuals and personalities publicly broke with and condemned the revolution. In response, Castro delivered a speech that encompassed the island's extensive internationalist missions, particularly its assistance to national liberation movements (2003b). The war in Angola was given special attention. The speech amounted to a comprehensive presentation of the revolution's curriculum vitae; it was a riposte to those who condemned and dismissed it. Thus, what the Cuban Revolution had done—and continued to do—on a world scale was presented as unequivocally establishing its legitimacy and validity. This perspective was reflected in numerous articles published in *Granma* during the lead-up to and commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the battles around Cuito Cuanavale.

GAIN OR LOSS?

There is a counterperspective on the impact of internationalism within Cuba. This approach adopts a cost/benefit framework and tallies the resources expended that would otherwise have been deployed for internal investment and development. It views the internationalist missions as counterproductive and an obstacle to development. Perhaps the sharpest and most detailed criticism emanates from James Petras and Robin Eastman-Abaya, who highlight Cuba's "misplaced priorities," arguing that internationalist missions have produced very few tangible "monetary, state, or commercial benefits" (2007: 7, 12).

The response to this argument is threefold. First, to establish "monetary, state, or commercial benefits" as the chief criteria of success would be to make narrow bourgeois self-interest the guiding principle of the foreign policy of the Cuban Revolution. This would run counter to the socialist and revolutionary values that have characterized the revolution, values that have assumed

material force within the society, influencing how Cubans act and see themselves in the world. In my interviews with participants in current medical and educational missions, many have expressed their new appreciation of the revolution's achievements and importance. Internationalism has reinforced the view that Cuba as a poor "Third World" country cannot and should not look to capitalism as the means by which to escape underdevelopment and achieve social justice. The benefit realized is the consolidation and amplification of a revolutionary ethos, because the domestic and international spheres are dialectically intertwined. On July 26, 1976, Castro argued that Cuba benefits from internationalist missions "because it gains a professional who becomes more conscientious, more revolutionary" (1981a: 135). In his August 11, 2008, reflections, he singled out Cuba's internationalist missions as a major arena where "our steel-like principles were forged" (Castro, 2008c).

Second, there have been and are concrete benefits for the Cuban Revolution that outweigh the costs. On the economic front, the island receives more than half of its oil and other economic assistance from Venezuela in exchange for the extensive Cuban medical and educational missions. There have also been definite diplomatic and political gains from Cuba's internationalism, even from its assistance to countries with which it has no ideological affinities. This is reflected in the African, Asian, and Latin American support that Cuba receives at international forums. This support is manifested in the massive support that is given to Cuba's annual United Nations General Assembly resolution condemning the United States' extensive economic measures against the Cuban Revolution (United Nations, 2007) and its election to important positions in international organizations such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (Reuters, 2008) and the Non-Aligned Movement. The material aid sent to Cuba in the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike by countries as far away as East Timor is also an indication of the reservoir of international support and goodwill that Cuba has accumulated.

Support for Cuba extends beyond formal diplomacy and politics. There are hundreds of Cuba solidarity and friendship groups around the world promoting education and advocacy on issues concerning Cuba, especially on the U.S. economic embargo, facilitating cultural exchanges, and providing assistance to various projects. At the height of the Special Period, donation drives were organized for Cuba, collecting, among other things, clothes, medicines, medical equipment, buses, tools, and bicycles. This support for Cuba from below was expressed in concentrated form in the two huge solidarity conferences that were held in Havana in 1994 and 2000. A common sentiment of Cuba solidarity activists is the notion that, as expressed by the prominent Canadian activist and Cuba specialist Keith Ellis (2004), because "Cuba has given so much to the world, it now deserves to receive something back."

Third, Cuba's continued pursuit of internationalism is an imperative. Cuba does not exist in a vacuum. The Cuban Revolution has always linked its fate to that of Latin America. The long-term survival, viability, and development of the Cuban Revolution are dependent on the region's trajectory. An anti-imperialist, progressive, and united Latin America redounds to Cuba's benefit in terms of the economic ties and political alliances that can be forged. A Latin America that remains dependent, fragmented, and under the sway of imperialism offers very little in economic or political terms. The Cuban

Revolution has had the greatest space (political and economic) when anti-imperialism was in the ascendancy regionally. With the current emergence of a new wave of anti-imperialism (varying in degree and effectiveness) across Latin America, the space available to Cuba has once more expanded. This experience underscores not only the central thesis of the Havana Declarations that the fates of Cuba and the region are entwined but the efficacy of the pursuit of internationalist policies, policies that perforce promote anti-imperialism.

Havana has decided to assist countries that have demonstrated a predominantly progressive and anti-imperialist character. This strategic orientation echoes the Declarations of Havana, which continue to exert considerable force in Cuba's current engagement with Latin America. The contemporary formulation is not as militant, but the underlying tenets—anti-imperialism and the necessity for Latin American unity—persist. One can surmise that a strategic decision was made to do everything possible (within the strictures of national sovereignty and international norms) to advance the struggles in Latin America, especially in Venezuela and Bolivia. If this meant diverting some domestic resources, then it would be a worthwhile sacrifice given the opportunity to widen the regional space for the progressive and anti-imperialist movement while narrowing it for imperialism. In his reflection of April 24, 2008, Fidel Castro explicitly alluded to this strategic trade-off. In discussing Cuba's assistance to Bolivia, he reproached those who opposed Cuba's internationalist mission: "There are insensitive people, knowing very little about what goes on around them, who quickly and mindlessly say that 'we should not help Bolivia.' They will never understand that, both in politics and in the revolution, the alternative to a mistaken or misguided strategy is defeat" (Castro, 2008b).

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the Cuban Revolution's most significant contemporary internationalist contribution has been its survival. Although it may appear circular or tautological to assert the revolution's survival as an example of internationalism, it is indisputable that the revolution's very survival was called into question by an event beyond its control (the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union) and that because of its record of internationalism it was able to draw on a huge reserve (especially from Africa) of support in the world that upheld the right of and necessity for the Cuban Revolution to continue to exist. Coupled with this is the significance of the continued existence of the Cuban Revolution as a counterexample to neoliberalism. In 1991, in the wake of the collapse of the Eastern bloc, Fidel Castro stated, "Now internationalism means defending and preserving the Cuban Revolution. . . . To defend this trench, this bastion of socialism, is the greatest service we can offer to humanity" (1991: 68). On November 25, 1994, he concluded his closing speech to the World Conference in Solidarity with Cuba by declaring, "We understand what it would mean for all the progressive forces, for all the revolutionary forces, for all the lovers of peace and justice in the world, if the United States succeeded in crushing the Cuban Revolution. And because of this we consider defending the revolution along with you to be our most sacred duty, even at the cost of death" (1994: 35).

Just as the existence of the Russian Revolution triggered revolutionary activity across Europe and the world, the Cuban Revolution's survival and existence have been an objective force against imperialism. Moreover, the Cuban Revolution has been doing more than "just surviving"; it has also been a very active agent in carrying on the ideological and political struggle against imperialism. Cuba launched a series of initiatives in the middle 1990s challenging the present world economic and political order. The Cuban government, various mass organizations, and professional associations convened numerous international symposia to discuss, debate, and oppose the consequences of neoliberal globalization. Moreover, the thousands of Cuban internacionalistas now working in, for example, Venezuela and Bolivia, especially, in the areas of health care and education have not only made a crucial contribution to Venezuelan and Bolivian social development but also critically augmented the revolutionary consciousness and culture (the human factor) that have been the essential basis for the political advances that are being made in those South American nations. Cuba has been the most active force for building unity of awareness, unity of consciousness, and now what seems to be the beginning of unity in action. The Cuban Revolution has been both the symbolic and the concrete anchor for the development of this new wave of Latin American struggles.

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