

black Cuba was opposed to colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid.

The attention of African leaders focused less on the historical background of Cuban U.S. relations and their present conflict than on Castro's pointed insistence on establishing a parallel between Africa and Cuba. In fact, the Cuban premier had devoted about one hour of his U.N. address to stress that point. Self-confidently, Castro singled out for flattery those African leaders who met with his approval. He praised their continent as "that Africa which we are beginning to know today, not the Africa pictured on the map or in novels and Hollywood films, not the Africa of semi-naked tribesmen armed with spears, ready to run away at the first clash with the white hero, that white hero who became more heroic the more African natives he killed" (*ibid.*, 133).

The neo-abolitionist imagery that had endeared Castro to black Cuba surfaced once again as he spoke to his U.N. audience of the New Africa. Adopting a laudatory tone,¹⁴ while African leaders listened intently, Castro now proclaimed:

[T]he Africa we see represented here by leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Sékou Touré, the Africa of Nasser's Arab world [is] the true Africa, the oppressed continent, the exploited continent, the continent which was the birthplace of millions of slaves, this Africa whose past is so full of anguish. To this Africa we have a duty: we must save it from the danger of destruction (*italics added*).¹⁵

Cuba supported the proposal made by Ghana "that Africa should be cleared of military bases and thus of nuclear weapon bases, in other words the proposal to free Africa from the perils of atomic war" (*ibid.*). Castro asked: "Why should we not also go forward toward freeing certain parts of the world from the danger of nuclear war?" (*ibid.*). That much the world owed Africa, he said:

Let the other countries make some recompense! Let the West make up a little for what it has made Africa suffer, by preserving it from the danger of atomic war and declaring it a free zone as far as this peril is concerned. Let no atomic bases be established there! Even if we can do nothing else, let this continent at least remain a sanctuary where human life may be preserved! (*ibid.*)

Castro's insistence that Africa be "saved" from destruction betrayed the sense of mission that would thereafter characterize Havana's growing involvement in African affairs. And one cannot avoid drawing parallels between his protective concern for the black continent and his paternalistic approach to Cuba's domestic Africa.

He seemed imbued with the same "sense of duty of a member of the elite who believed that he knew that he must determine the aims and lead the masses to a happier future."¹⁶ Despite his lavish praise of those African leaders who met with his approval (Lumumba, Nkrumah, Touré), it is questionable whether Castro considered them to be his equals.

The Cuban leader's first major policy statement of the "Castro Doctrine" on Africa can be summarized in three main points. Cuba and Africa are linked by historical bonds (the slave trade) and by common contemporary realities (underdevelopment and decolonization). Cuba supports those forces on the black continent whose anti-imperialism qualifies them as the most representative voices of the "New Africa." Finally, Cuba has a duty to perform towards Africa to protect her from the manifold dangers of imperialism.

Castro's was an impressive showing at the U.N. He proved his ability to galvanize black America, to put Washington on the defensive, and to influence the very Third World leaders Moscow was so assiduously courting. These factors bore great tactical importance to Soviet policy makers. Castro's triumph in America's "little Africa," his newly formed connections with continental Africa, signaled the sort of latitude Cuba could enjoy on the black continent.

The penetration of Africa and the Arab Middle East were the Kremlin's top strategic priorities in the Third World. Castro's clear ascendancy over the chief Afro-Asian leaders—particularly those of Africa—must have given Moscow much pause. On the other hand, for all his talk of "colorblindness," the white leader of revolutionary Cuba already had his eyes riveted on a goal to which he would assign a growing priority and increased resources: the extension of Cuba's political influence to black Africa. To this end, Fidel Castro would thereafter strain his rhetorical ingenuity to the breaking point to define and project an Afrophilic foreign policy profile.