

*No gods, and no prayers.
 Yet it is as if I sometimes heard
 Something inside me like a whispered wish,
 My old and endless longing
 Rises from somewhere in the depths
 And quietly asks for a little room
 In one of the great heavenly gardens
 Where I shall find at last
 What I have always vainly sought;
 A space of my own, an open horizon,
 A little freedom to breathe.*

(Ex *prompto*, Nemiri, *Lirika*, Belgrade 1976)

I KNOW OF few writers who so combined personal morality with their own artistic values; with his creative power Andrić illuminates and sublimates

the crude and suffering world about him. But even in the darkness of a poisoned environment his personality radiates. His is the species of mind and spirit that is discovered only after his death, and lives as long as the nation and language that produced it.

"It seems to me that if people knew what a strain it was for me to live they would more easily forgive all the evil that I did and all the good that I failed to do, and that over and above that they would have some sympathy left with which to mourn me."

That may be so, if Ivo Andrić says so, even though no one knows anything evil of him, and he left behind him much good.

Cuba's "Civilising Mission"

Lessons of the African Adventures—By HUGH THOMAS



CUBA has always differed from other Communist states in the emphasis which she has given to military matters.

It used to be supposed that this was the inevitable consequence of her undeclared war with the USA; but nearly ten years ago René Dumont and K. S. Karol were

already pointing out the importance of the Cuban army in the sugar harvest. A careful look at the names on the central committee of the Communist Party shows that army officers predominate there. Where else than in Cuba would the Minister of Education have risen to that role through the Army, having been at one time Head of the Combat Readiness department of the Armed Forces? In recent years, Castro has come to be referred to in the Cuban press as "Commander-in-chief Fidel Castro" (in place of "Doctor" or "Maximum Leader") and that press constantly depicts military scenes or the arrival or departure of some minister of defence from other countries of the Communist world.

The Cuban armed forces are now larger and more powerful than those of all the East European Russian satellites except for Poland (whose population is four times Cuba's) and far more formidable than those of her Latin American neighbours—even than Mexico, Venezuela and

probably Brazil. This military side to the régime in Cuba partly derives, no doubt, from the fact that Castro and his colleagues were the victors in a civil war (as Tito was in Yugoslavia). The Cuban government also relies on frequently evoked reminders of the struggles of Cuba against Spain in the 19th century and of the years of "struggle" against the dictators Machado and Batista in this century.

Castro, like other Caribbean radicals, has always seemed rather to like guns. His first appearances on the Caribbean scene in the 1940s were all associated with improbable armed expeditions, inside and outside Cuba—at Cayo Confites and in Colombia, in the University of Havana and then outside the Moncada barracks, Castro was always the man who put his faith in guns. "As long as there is a revolutionary with a gun, no cause will ever be lost", he told senior officers in the army in December 1976, after four days of manoeuvres, dutifully adding "We feel increasingly grateful toward the Soviet Union which provided us with these magnificent weapons and taught us how to use them" (*Granma*, 19 December 1976). Revolution, Castro told the Cubans after the failure of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, had not given the people votes; it had given them guns.

Cuba is thus not a Euro-Communist state, it is not a "revolution with pachanga" (as Guevara said of it in 1960), it does not have a *Fidelista* communism. It has military communism, the Communism of the god Mars.

One obvious purpose of this substantial military investment has become clearer since 1975. Thwar-

ted of his expressed dream in 1960 of converting the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of the Latin American continent, Castro has been happy, after the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, to carry the idea of revolutionary struggle to Africa, in which Cuba has always anyway been interested.

Indeed, the first Cuban involvement in Africa which came to public knowledge was as long ago as the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar. Che Guevara was active in the Congo (it has since become known) before he went off to his death in Bolivia in 1967. Revolutionary leaders from Africa were welcome in Havana from the early days of the

Cuban Revolution, and many have had military training in Cuba. It may be that some of these interests were pursued independently of Soviet Russian policy; but on the whole, it would seem very improbable indeed that, with its economy tied closely to that of Russia, Cuba has ever done anything abroad which has not had Moscow's approval. Russia herself has been preoccupied by military power in the last few years. That does not mean, of course, that Castro may not have been

personally interested in an African military adventure; that had he been against such an adventure, he would not have found means of opposing it (as Eastern European leaders would have done if a similar project had been put to them); or even that he may not even have been responsible, or partially responsible, for formulating the idea of sending troops to Africa. For Castro has high political gifts, imagination and daring, which must be a breath of fresh air in orthodox Kremlin circles.

THE CUBAN ADVENTURE IN AFRICA began in earnest with the commitment of several thousand troops to assist the MPLA in Angola in late 1975. Since Cuban troops had previously been noticed on a small scale in places as diverse as Viet Nam and Syria, little attention was (to begin with) paid to the Cubans in Africa. Then it turned out that the troops numbered well over 10,000; and it soon became obvious that they were the essential element in assuring that Russia's candidate in the War of Angolan succession would be the victor in the civil war there. Subsequently, the continued (and in November 1977

reinforced) Cuban military presence (of perhaps 20,000 troops with 4-5,000 civilians) has enabled Neto to remain in power, Cuban support being decisive in suppressing the attempted *coup d'état* of 27 May 1977.

Cuban troops have been observed, either in the form of military missions or combat assignments, in numerous African countries, including Ethiopia and Mozambique, and with the Polisario forces in Sahara. They are also in the Yemen. It may be that Cubans using Russian weapons saved



'We're Here to Keep Imperialism From Returning.'

16018

Ethiopia from defeat by the Somalis in November 1977—hence the unceremonious expulsion of both Russians and Somalis subsequently. In Tanzania there is a Cuban medical mission.

The Cuban investment in Africa is thus an enormous one for a country of nine million people.

THE BURDENS are obviously being felt in Cuba itself: in September and October, the Cuban Minister of Health spoke of defects and delays in the health service, and Castro spoke of shortage in the schools. The 4,100 Cuban civilian techni-

cians whom Castro last July mentioned as serving abroad (mostly in Africa) are said to have risen to 6,000 by December 1977, doctors in particular going to Ethiopia and Angola: some would say that they are needed at home. Still, Cuba will continue her "internationalist duty." How long will these difficulties be able to be fobbed off? And when will the discontent that many are already feeling because of a seemingly endless African commitment, including deaths, merge with irritation at the cost of the commitment? Is the recent crime wave to which Castro drew attention (in a speech on 28 September) a symptom of this?

CASTRO WENT TO central Africa personally for the first time in 1977, though he had often been to Algeria before.

He arrived in Algeria from Cuba on 1 March 1977, and went immediately from there to Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Angola. He stayed longest in Libya, being there fully ten days—1–12 March. He returned home after a second two-day visit to Algeria, *via* East Germany and Russia, being away altogether six weeks. Almost everywhere he spoke, though not always for very long. The speeches did not differ greatly from place to place and were often rubbish. Thus, in Somalia he said:

"It is 5.45 in the evening. In Cuba it is 9.45 a.m., but the same sun shines over us. . . . There is another sun which shines over us, the sun of revolution and socialism—a sun which is rising all over the World. There is a dawn for this sun but there will never be a dusk. . . ."

After that, the President of Somalia presented Castro with the Somalian star, first class, an order which, as things have turned out, he cannot be very pleased with now that Somalia has gone to war with Cuba's main ally in East Africa, Ethiopia. There, Castro watched a musical depicting the iniquities which had occurred during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie and seems not to have spoken. He was particularly well received in Tanzania. In Angola, he spoke several times, making use of a simple old-fashioned language which seems to have gone down well:

"Luanda is to the Angolan Revolution what Paris was to the French Revolution and Leningrad was to the glorious Russian Revolution."

And:

"What did colonialism leave in Africa? Nothing. We have toured Africa, rather a part of Africa, in the past few weeks, and what we have seen disturbs us very much. The colonialists exploited this continent for centuries, and exploited its sons and daughters . . . there are no [*sic*] doctors or hospitals . . . how can anyone expect a neo-colonialist people to do anything to benefit the African peoples? In Cuba and Angola we . . . don't speak of socialism alone, we speak of scientific socialism."

Back in Europe, he said: "Although the *DDR* was not on the itinerary of our trip . . . toward the end I said, 'let's go pay a visit to the *DDR*.'" In East Berlin, Castro made a long public report on his African journey, expressing great satisfaction that so many countries were proceeding directly from Tribalism and Nomadism to Socialism:

"Dear comrades of the *DDR*, on this trip I was also able to see the great confidence the undeveloped nations, the nations of Africa, the countries which lived under colonialism, have in the socialist camp and especially in the Soviet Union. They know that in their struggle . . . they have only one hope and friend . . . the socialist community headed by the Soviet Union."

China, of course, could not be ranked as a possible friend, since, in a recent debate in the UN, her representatives had called the Cubans "mercenaries" in Angola and had spoken of the Soviet Union's "ruthless offensive there."

Finally, in Moscow, Castro had two days of discussions with the Russian leaders, and with other friends of the cause, such as Yasser Arafat, in Moscow at that time, and Luis Corvalan, the secretary-general of the Chilean party, as well as Cuban students studying in Moscow. During these discussions, Brezhnev "expressed his great appreciation for the 'foreign policy activities' of the Republic of Cuba, pointing out . . . that its authority on the international scene had increased." The communiqué spoke of "complete agreement of views" between the Soviet and the Cuban governments on what had been discussed. Castro at a banquet given in his honour complained of the "ludicrous hypocrisy" of the "imperialist leaders" in speaking of "human rights", adding that in Africa he had been able to see for himself (keen-eyed observer that he is) that "bourgeois ideology is totally discredited and totally bankrupt." At all these occasions in Russia, Castro, like his hosts, made verbal concessions about the desirability of *détente*, though how he managed to contemplate such a concession to a system which he regards as "sweating blood through every pore" is hard to see.

SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS seem to follow. First, Castro's own speeches suggest that any difference between Russian and Cuban policy towards Africa simply does not exist. Anyone who continues to argue that there is such a difference is telling us more about himself than the World. The fact that Castro's journey to Africa seemed to interfere with, perhaps even upstage, that of President Podgorny's a day or two later, must be irrelevant. Castro may on occasion have suggested or initiated certain lines of Soviet policy. But it will remain *Soviet* policy.

Castro himself may welcome this great new thrust for his foreign policy, but his dependence

on Russian transport, weapons, equipment and fuel prove that essentially the Cubans are Russia's sepoys in Africa. The Russian government perfectly appreciates that the international reaction might be hostile—even considering the enfeebled state of the West—if *Russian* infantry were sent to Africa. But Cubans are internationally popular and many fewer people will complain. Many people want so very much to believe that the Cubans are paladins of freedom. Is this part of a payment by Cuba for Russia's seventeen years of economic and military assistance? It looks like it.

No doubt too, Cuba plays a definite part in coordinating Russia's relations with states such as the Yemen, Libya, and North Korea, which give active support to terrorism. Terror was *not* part of Castro's own rebellion against Colonel Batista; but, since 1959, many well-known terrorists have been trained in Cuba, from "Carlos" downwards. When in Africa, Castro spent a long time with Gadaffi in Libya, and, as earlier mentioned, he saw Arafat in Moscow.

Thirdly, the success of Cuba in Angola in putting into effect Russian policy must surely suggest to the Soviet Union that, in similar situations in the future, another Cuban expeditionary force may be equally useful. If, for example, there were to be a breakdown in Spain, an eventuality I admittedly regard as improbable, the Cubans would probably turn up there in a very short time as the Revolution's roving expeditionary force. "International public opinion" would be neither greatly shocked nor hostile.

Fourthly, Cuba's revolutionary drive—though active for the first time among those very Caribbean states such as Jamaica with whom in the past, for cultural and linguistic reasons, she had nothing to do—has little more to contribute in Latin America. That continent is being left (by Russia and Cuba) to "stew in its imperialist juice" for the time being. But the revolution which

was launched in 1959 to free a Latin country from US tutelage has now caused Cuba, financed and equipped by a Eurasian power, to become the spearhead of insurrection in Africa. Though Cuba has always had a surrealist quality, few would have supposed such a fantasy possible in the past. The Cubans seem to be quite uninterested in letting the chance of improved relations with the US affect what they say is their "internationalist" duty in new parts of the world.

THUS OBVIOUSLY CUBA is now a long way from being that exemplary revolutionary state which her many friends assumed she was going to be in those heady days of 1960 and 1961. She is unique in the Communist world for her capacity for war, not for her humanism. She is unique in the Americas as a state whose leaders are willing if not anxious to intervene in the affairs of far-off nations of which previously she knew nothing. And the Caribbean verve, drive and youthful enthusiasm which all visitors to Cuba have always noticed and which, despite everything, seems to survive, seems entirely at the orders of her implacable (white, Slav, and septuagenarian) paymasters.

THIS ARTICLE is peculiarly difficult to finish, for every day brings new tales of Cuban adventures in Africa. Could there be 500 Cubans in Ethiopia, some actually fighting, trying to shore up Colonel Mengistu's loathsome régime? Are there really 34,000 Cubans in Angola? Anyone who knows anything of the 20th century must be cautious of accepting such estimates since so often in the past the "thousands" of newspapers have turned out to be "hundreds" in history books. But obviously the Cuban military commitment has recently been increased, even though the last Cuban friends of the Somali régime have been unceremoniously pushed out, along with their Russian colleagues. American intelligence now reports 650 Cubans in Mozam-

—Andy Young on "Colonisation" (revised)—

Washington

ANDREW YOUNG, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, yesterday called Cuba's military presence in African countries "a kind of new colonialism," which he said was contributing to "the destruction and chaos of Africa."

"African leaders are getting very concerned about that and so are we," said Mr. Young, who was criticized earlier this year for saying that in some respects the presence of Cubans in Angola might be a stabilizing factor for that country.

Interviewed yesterday on the CBS radio and television programme "Face the Nation", Mr. Young recalled that he had not criticized Cuba's

original intervention in Angola at a time when South Africa also intervened militarily, nor its technical assistance to the Angolan government.

But he added: "I think what disturbs me is that the continued Cuban military presence is not bringing the degree of progress and development that's needed. And what we see is a continuation of death and destruction almost everywhere there is a Cuban military presence."

"It's kind of new colonialism. They have tended to back up authoritarian régimes whose main contribution is to wipe out the intellectual élite. That is not a contribution for development."

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

bique, 300–500 in Guinea, 300–400 in Equatorial Guinea, 200 in Guinea-Bissau, 125 in Sierra Leone, 300–500 in Tanzania, 30 in Madagascar, 150 in Libya, a few “security advisers” in Benin and some doctors in Algeria. Truly the Cuban government has organised a new system of out-door relief for their new upper class. Castro nevertheless was not asked a single question about the purpose of all this activity during his visit to Jamaica in October, though he did say “regarding

our membership of the Soviet bloc, I think that is a question of semantics.” (!) Meantime, there has been nothing hypocritical to report about Castro’s attitude to his own political prisoners whom he has recently estimated, apparently, to a group of Venezuelan students to number 23,000. Rarely publicised by the world’s philanthropic agencies, these half-forgotten prisoners continue their terrible travail, many of them in unspeakable conditions and without hope of release.*

* ED. NOTE: In a letter to *The Times* (12 Dec.), Hugh Thomas wrote the following:

“In the frequent discussions held about political prisoners there is one group which gets little attention: the political prisoners in Cuba. But even Fidel Castro has admitted there to be many thousand of these.

“December 11, as it happens, marks the eighteenth anniversary of the trial of Major Huber Matos, the best known of these forgotten captives. Matos was a comrade-in-arms of Castro against Batista, and was military governor of the province of Camagüey between January and October, 1959. He was sentenced to 20 years for “uncertain, antipatriotic and anti-revolutionary conduct”. But the prosecutors did not establish that Matos had done anything against the Cuban régime, and the trial was anyway unfair since

both Castro and his brother made overbearing speeches when appearing as witnesses. Matos himself had to make his speech of defence at six in the morning. Since then he has been in prison, along with many others who disliked the communization of the Cuban revolution, in what have been by all accounts terrible conditions.

“Eighteen years! What crime could anyone commit which would deserve such inhumane treatment? Yet not only is there little chance of Major Matos being free before his sentence is up but there is a serious doubt whether he will be freed even when he has fulfilled his 20 years. Cuba is busy trying to liberate Africa. She should be reminded that Liberty should begin at home.”

Where London Went Wrong

By T. R. Fyvel

THE DISTRICT OF Kentish Town on whose fringe I live and which is the subject of Gillian Tindall’s erudite and engaging backward look into London history,¹ is a nondescript North West London area of come-down-in-the-world streets of working-class and lower-middle-class terrace and semi-detached houses. The area is also something of a corridor for commuter traffic speeding by car between the City and outer North West London; and it has lately become a receptacle for young professional-class families returning to the “inner suburb” terrace-houses from which their grandparents had departed—the process of so-called “gentrification.”

This Kentish Town district consists roughly of the areas round St Pancras and Kentish Town and Tufnell Park tube stations, plus the garish, ugly Camden Town shopping and pub area, a focus for Irish and Cypriot immigrants. To the south it is bordered by the great railway stations built in the 19th century (Euston being recently rebuilt) and to the north-west by Hampstead Heath and the leafy lanes of upper-middle class Hampstead and Highgate, which Kentish Town at one time provided with many domestic services. It is today part of a larger area ruled by

Camden Borough Council, said to be dominated by “Hampstead Socialists”, known for their support of the arts and recently for the alleged profligacy of their ambitious public housing programme. In spite of this programme, seen through the car-windows of commuters speeding homewards, Kentish Town must seem a meaningless agglomeration of planless shopping streets and houses and barren-looking Council Estates—a piece of London without personality, a non-area.

It is the virtue of Miss Tindall’s book that by her careful research she reveals the reverse. She shows how a set of unremarkable Kentish Town streets and ageing terraces and untidy shops could, to a generation of Londoners growing up there, nevertheless represent a comforting “home”, a familiar everyday centre to their lives. More than that, looking beyond the contemporary Kentish Town wilderness of brick and concrete, she tries imaginatively to show its origins in “the fields beneath”, with the signs of history still there. Today’s commuter traffic still bowls along the same roads which from early medieval times led north-west out of London: one through the village of Hampstead, the other through the High Gate. Main and side streets still curve in odd ways, although the swamps they avoided have long been drained. The past lives on in names, as in the ancient parish of St Pancras;

¹ *The Fields Beneath: The History of One London Village*. By GILLIAN TINDALL. Temple Smith, £8.50.