

[Anti-apartheid fighter recalls Fidel Castro's legacy](#)



South Africa's veteran anti-apartheid fighter Ronnie Kasrils on Wednesday highlighted the legacy of Fidel Castro for Southern Africa, on the occasion of the 94th anniversary of the leader of the Cuban revolution's birth (August 13).

Speaking to Prensa Latina, Kasrils - former head of military intelligence in the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), former minister of government (1994-2008) and author of several books on the struggle for liberation - said that 'Fidel will live on in Africa, as everywhere else, as an everlasting icon of liberation in all its forms.'

'Since the 1960s the nom de guerre 'Castro' was popular among freedom fighters in Southern Africa,' he recalls. Today, the children of many of those guerrillas bear the name Fidel or Fidelis.

That generation was inspired by Fidel Castro's epic leadership of the Cuban Revolution in overthrowing tyranny, confronting imperialism, changing Cuban society, and the historical lessons of international solidarity, he explains.

Since 1975, Cuban internationalist forces under Commander Fidel's leadership had contributed to save Angola's independence from racist invaders and the CIA-backed counterrevolutionary bandits, Kasrils recalls.

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Becoming aware of these historic events from his prison cell - by secret means -, Nelson Mandela wrote in glowing terms that 'it was the first time that a country had come from another continent not to take something away, but to help Africans to achieve their freedom,' Kasrils highlights.

Assisting Angola over the following years the reactionary apartheid forces finally met their fate at the battle for Cuito Cuanavale (1988), which forced them to retreat.

At that time, I had been privileged to have been present in Havana as a member of a delegation from the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1988, when Fidel briefed us in front of a huge topographical chart of Southern Angola about how that epic battle had been won, Kasrils reveals.

The result was Angola being free of foreign forces, which allowed the subsequent independence of Namibia from Pretoria's occupation in 1990, followed by freedom for South Africa in 1994, explains the veteran fighter.

In Fidel's words, after forcing the South African racist military to retreat from Angola in 1988: 'The history of Africa will be written as before and after Cuito Cuanavale.'

Since then, many generations of Africans have studied in Cuba, they continue to follow the legendary footsteps of Fidel, 'one of the foremost revolutionaries of modern times,' says Kasrils.

His life and his legacy are intrinsically linked to Africa's destiny and the eternal gratitude of its peoples, he summarizes.

In 1994, at Nelson Mandela's presidential inauguration, Fidel received the greatest approval for a foreign guest by the cheering masses, who chanted: 'Fidel! Fidel!' And 'Cuba! Cuba!' Kasrils recalls as an eyewitness.

It is the privilege of Southern Africa's people to have shared trenches, trained and studied in Cuba, received inexhaustible aid not only on the battlefields, but also that of the brave Cuban health workers in the fight against Covid-19, he adds.

As it does in other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, Cuba continues to send health professionals to Africa. More than 50,000 Cuban doctors currently work around the world, including in 32 African countries.

When we launched our armed struggle in the 1960s, there was a song we composed to Calypso rhythm: 'Take the country the Castro way!' Kasrils recalls.

Then we also realized about the examples Cuba provided in people's living conditions, health care and education, housing and social well-being, overcoming colonial backwardness and inequalities, and the provision of security for the people.

Now, in the midst of the global struggle against imperialist domination, exploitation and racism; military aggression, and the injustices of capitalism, those words 'Take the country the (Fidel) Castro way!' are still alive in our hearts, he concludes.

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