
Reviewed by Gary Prevost

In this volume, the author attempts the very ambitious task of analysing the relationship between the Tricontinental process initiated by Cuba in the 1960s with more contemporary political movements like Occupy Wall Street, and doing so through the primary lens of race. The task is a complex one, and the author does not always deliver on her promises, but on balance it is a significant scholarly contribution.

The starting point of the book is the formation of the Tricontinental in January 1966 when delegates from the liberation movements of eighty-two nations in Africa, Asia and the Americas came together in Havana, Cuba to form an alliance against economic and military imperialism. The Tricontinental Conference marked the extension into the Americas of the Afro-Asian movement begun at the 1955 Bandung Conference and continued with the formation of the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) in Cairo in 1957. The Tricontinental meeting in Havana was emblematic of the commitment of Cuban Revolution to foster revolutions throughout the world, a process that is better treated in Dirk Kruijt’s recent book, *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America: An Oral History*. However, Mahler does detail how the Tricontinental, through its films, posters, and magazines published in many languages, became the driving force of political radicalism in the years that followed. Tricontinental did so by giving voice to a wide array of political parties and movements that allowed for a dynamic networking of these movements even in the absence of further gatherings. Mahler gives primary focus to the organisations of the Americas promoted by the Tricontinental, beginning with the writings by Black Power and Puerto Rican Young Lords activists as well as works from contemporary social movements such as the World Social Forum and Black Lives Matter.

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There have been many studies of Cuban internationalism and of the many individual organisations that contributed to the Tricontinental, but the particular focus of the book is the work of the Tricontinental focused on race and racial discrimination, beginning with its focus in the 1960s on the Jim Crow South. By focusing on the particularly harsh features of racism in the southern United States, Tricontinental made the point that the third world was not just a territory in the Global South where oppression flourished but that it existed in the Global North, especially within communities of colour.

As the black and brown movements receded in the 1970s, the author details how the struggle against racial apartheid in South Africa replaced racial issues in the United States as the primary focus of Tricontinental cultural production, all the while maintaining a race-based analysis.

Another important focus of the book takes on a topic of increased scholarship in recent years: Cuba’s own struggle with racial injustice. In this book, the focus is on the Tricontinental focus on racial injustice in the United States and South Africa while not acknowledging its continued existence in Cuba itself. The vehicle for this critique begins in significant measure with US black activists exiled in Cuba who became critical of the Cuban government’s stance that racism had been eliminated soon after 1959 through the social programmes of the revolution and anti-discrimination laws. This critique of the revolution by exiled black activists is clearly accurate, but readers would be well to look elsewhere for an understanding of how Cuba is evolving on this issue and acknowledging the continued racial discrimination on the island with concrete anti-racism programmes. For the best view from the inside on these issues, see Esteban Morales Dominquez’s *Race in Cuba: Essays on Revolution and Racial Inequality* (Monthly Review Press, 2013).

Mahler also argues, somewhat less convincingly, that current social movements such as Black Lives Matter have embraced the philosophies of the Tricontinental movement. The author admits that the alter-globalisation movements have generally adopted a colour-blind approach to racial injustice, a stance whole-heartedly rejected by Tricontinentalism, and that the Black Lives Matter movement has generally avoided a critique of global capitalism and focused on police reform. In a sense, the author admits that she is hoping these contemporary movements adopt the best aspects of Tricontinentalism.