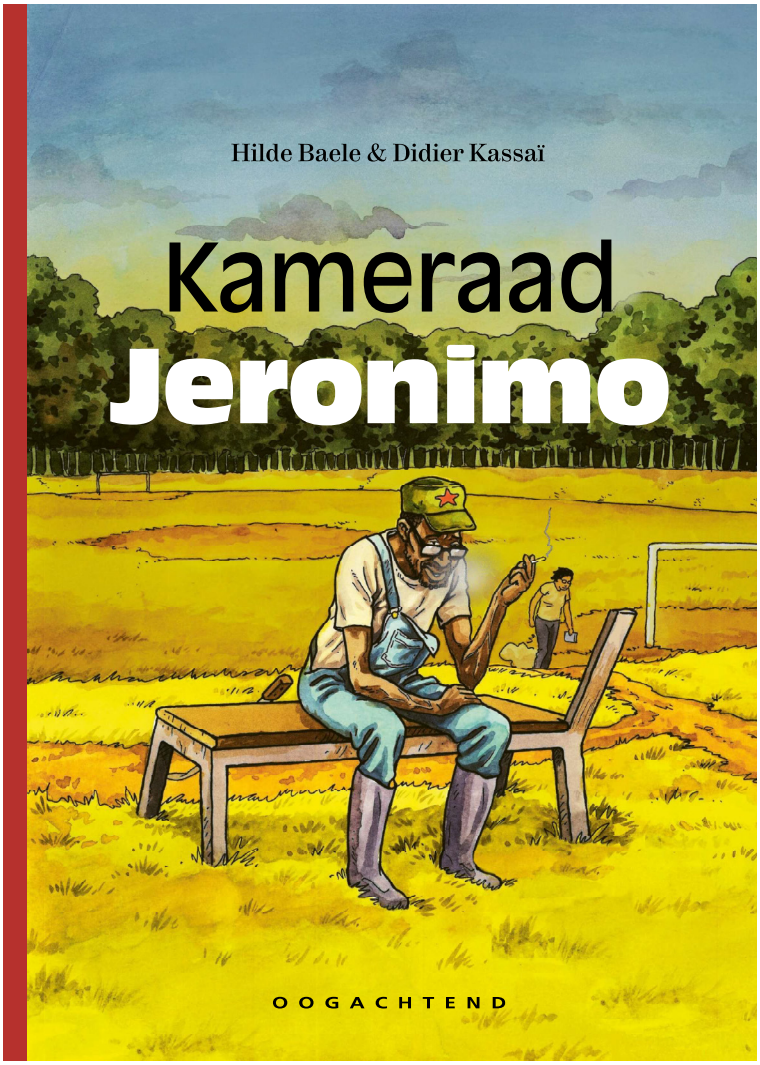


Visit www.flandersliterature.be for information about translation grants.

Comrade Jeronimo

Jeroen Janssen, Hilde Baele, Didier Kassaï

While Jérôme Sebasoni - aka comrade Jeronimo - recounts his life-story, the little bench in 'Le Cercle Sportif de Kigali' shakes and rattles and the sky trembles while he raves. The result is a raw and authentic testimony from this Rwandese gardener who acted as a guide and comrade under Che Guevara's troops in Congo in 1965. But his story cuts deeper: it is a cry for freedom, born out of the rebel revolutions of the African Great Lakes.

Jeroen Janssen *has done every odd-job you could think of, from postman to teacher, driver to gardener. He has always had a great passion for drawing, but did not start making comics until the 1990s. When he was working at an art school in Rwanda, he started turning true stories into comic strips. This approach of a type of graphic journalism has become his trademark. He received the Bronzen Adhemar oeuvre award in 2018.*

Hilde Baele *is originally from Ghent but has been living and working in different African countries since 1988. She is committed to and passionate about the advancement of women's and children's rights, the right to information and self-determination and she brings the full force of her imagination to this crusade. Humour is an important element in the books and didactic materials that she creates.*

Central- African comic artist ***Didier Kassaï*** *started publishing his drawings and caricatures online in the early 2000's, he also made watercolour paintings and worked for NGO campagnes like Doctors Without Borders. He's most known for his autobiographical comic series Tempête sur Bangui about the Central-African civil war.*

www.oogachtend.be
elaine@elami-agency.com

Original title : Kameraad Jeronimo (Oogachtend, 2025. Softcover, 17x24. 48pp .)

3
Rwanda, 2008.
On a bench in Cercle Sportif Kigali.

5
Go on!

Ready?

Vamos!

6
My name is Jérôme.
Jérôme Sebasoni.
Zeg maar Mzee Jérôme.
I am Sebasoni's son, son of Sezikeyi, son of Nturo and Bucona.

Born from the Rwaka and King Yuhi family.

23
COMRADE JERONIMO
Guide to Che Guevara (alias Tatu)

24
Jeronimo!

I saw whites arrive, and blacks too...

Sodding Belgians? Capitalists? What's that enemy doing here?

Yuuck! I want nothing to do with it.

*where are you going?

These are no darned Belgians...

...But comrades! Re-vo-lu-tio-naries!

25
‘Moya’ was black, he was a commander. His real name was Victor Dreke. A skinny chap.

‘Mbili’ was a white bloke with a beard like a missionary and a pot belly.

‘Tatu’ was also white, he had a penetrating gaze. His real name was Che Guevara.

Noted…

In the end, I accepted Moya’s cigar. And smoked it. Delicious tumbaku.

26
So, they were Cuban. And they were on a secret mission. There were no red stars on their berets.

Ah, okay.

So
The next day my commander and I went with these Cubans.
Whites and blacks together, like they were mates.

I had a hard time with it, following those whites.

Jérôme, you follow the white one, Tatu. If anything happens to him, you’re dead. You’ll be his guide.

That’s an order!

27
I did what I had to do. We were fighting for the same dream: freedom. So, I too got a Cuban uniform.

The Cubans respected the youth.

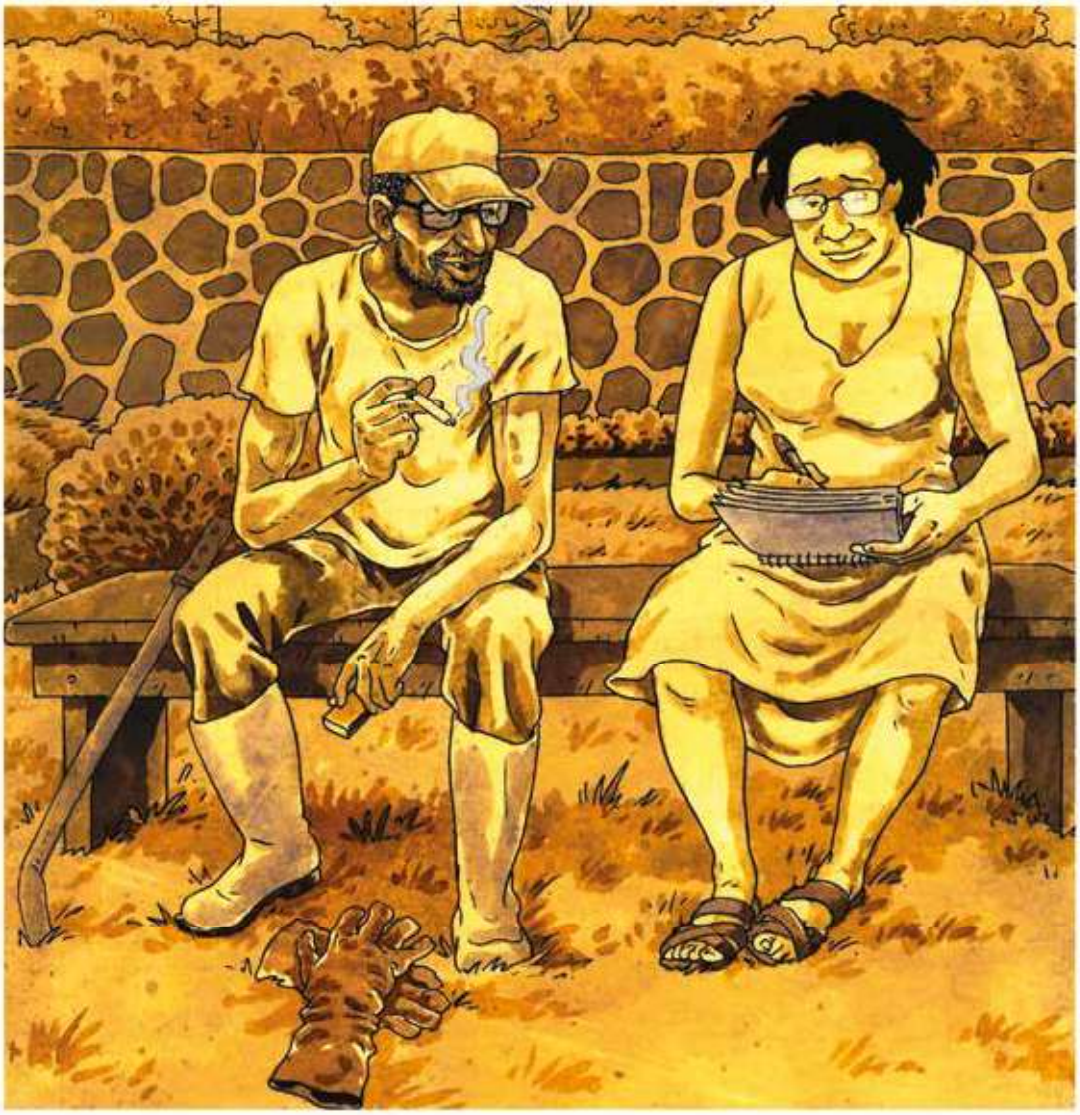
The vibe was good. We lived together. We shared our food. These strangers respected everyone in the maquis.

And Che? What was he like?

He was very wise. His eyes shone brightly, incredible! He was a true comrade.

Jeronimo

RWANDA ANNO 2008.
OP EEN BANKJE
IN DE CERCLE SPORTIF KIGALI.



VERTEL OP !
KLAAR ?
VAMOS !

MIJN NAAM IS JÉRÔME.
JÉRÔME SEBASONI.
ZEG MAAR MZEE JÉRÔME.

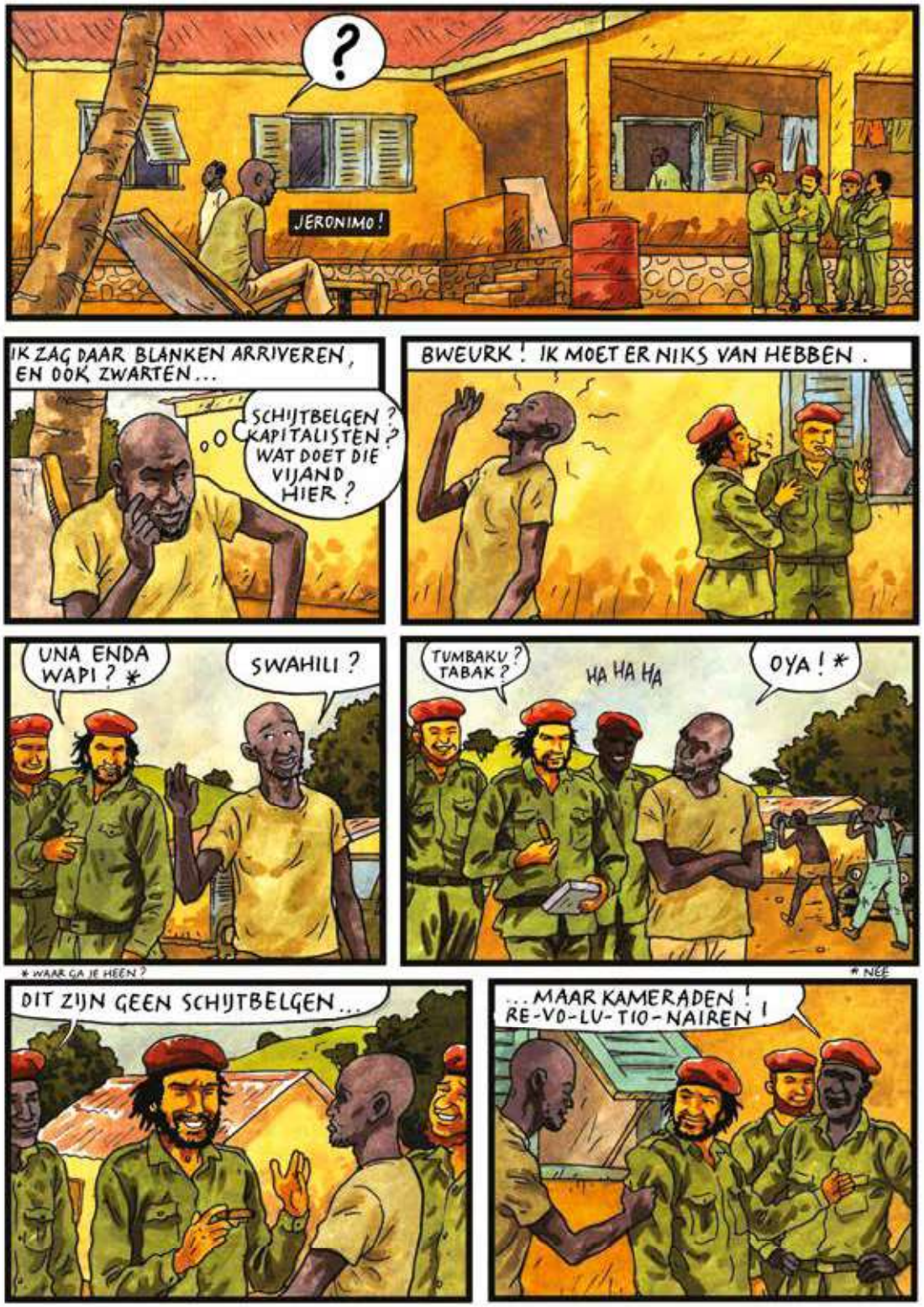
IK BEN DE ZOON VAN
SEBASONI, ZOON VAN SEZIKEYI,
ZOON VAN NTURO EN BUCONA.

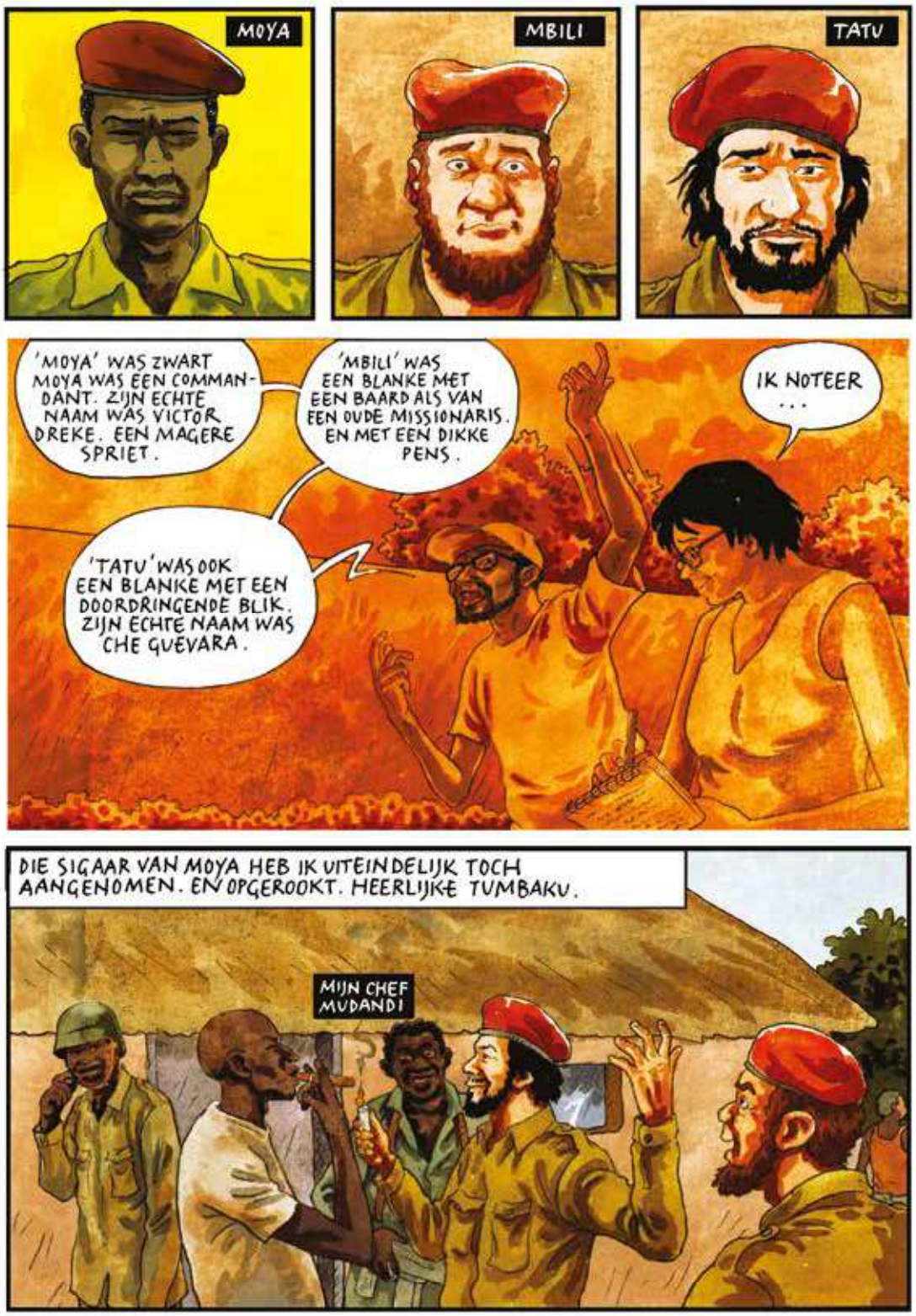
GEBOREN UIT HET GESLACHT
RWAKA EN KONING YUHI.

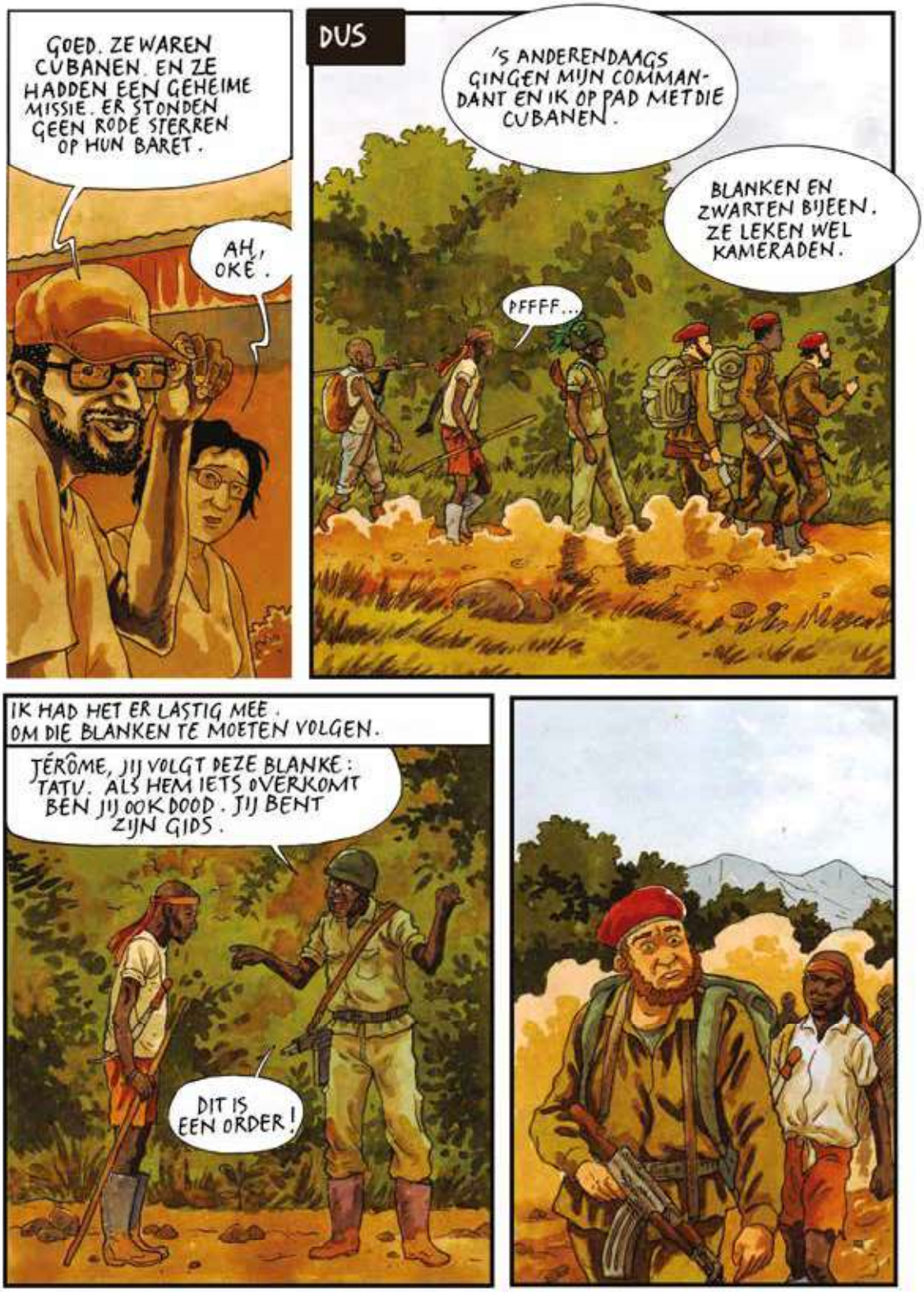
KAMERAAD JERONIMO

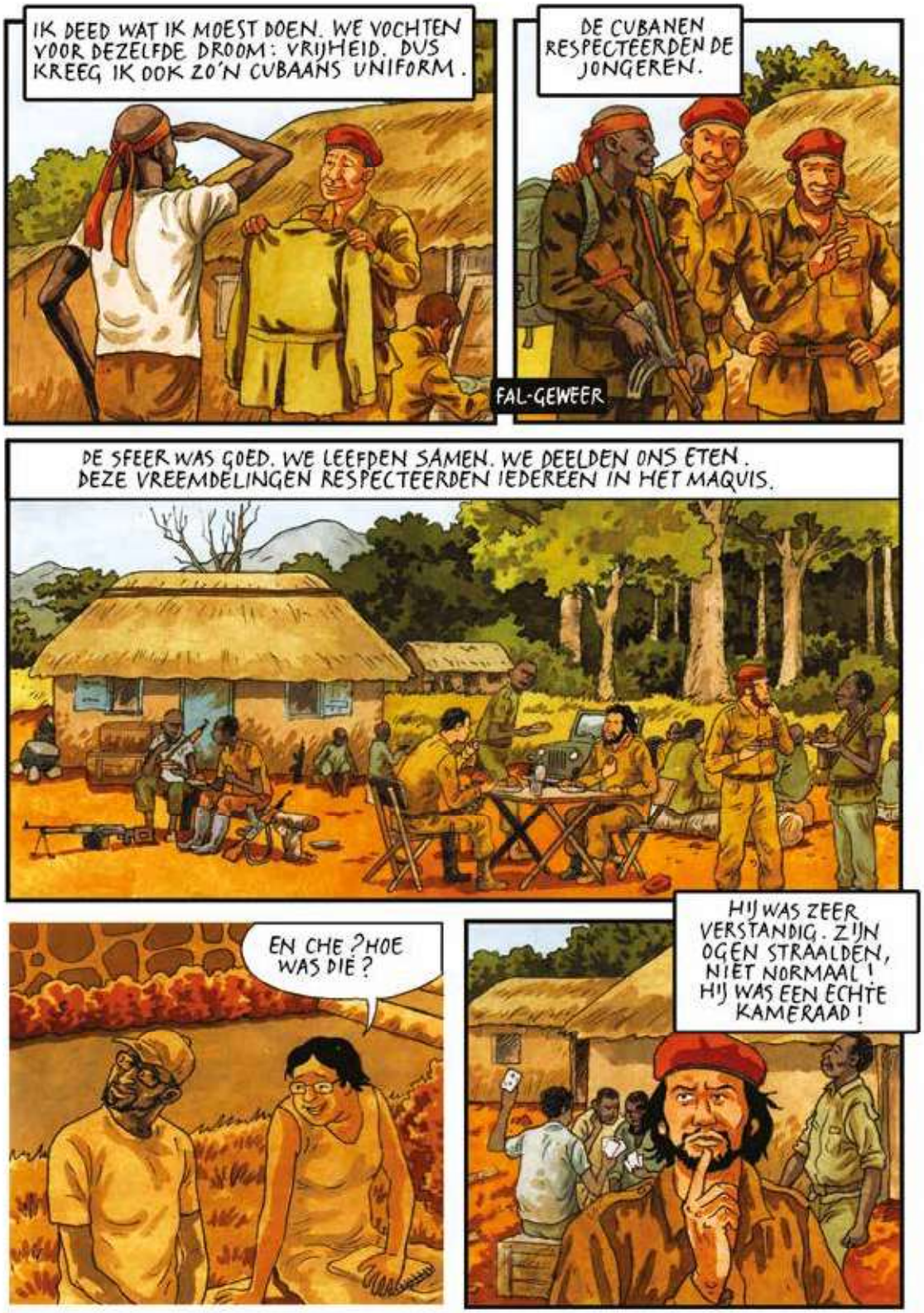
GIDS VAN CHE GUEVARA
(ALIAS TATU)

EN HET IS
DAAR...


?
JERONIMO!
IK ZAG DAAR BLANKEN ARRIVEREN, EN OOK ZWARTEN...
SCHIJTBELGEN? KAPITALISTEN? WAT DOET DIE VIJAND HIER?
BWEURK! IK MOET ER NIKS VAN HEBBEN.
UNA ENDA WAPI? *
SWAHILI?
TUMBAKU? TABAK?
HA HA HA
OYA! *
* WAAR GA JE HEEN?
* NEE
DIT ZIJN GEEN SCHIJTBELGEN...
...MAAR KAMERADEN! RE-VO-LU-TIO-NAIREN!


MOYA
MBILI
TATU
'MOYA' WAS ZWART MOYA WAS EEN COMMANDANT. ZIJN ECHTE NAAM WAS VICTOR DREKE. EEN MAGERE SPRIET.
'MBILI' WAS EEN BLANKE MET EEN BAARD ALS VAN EEN OUDE MISSIONARIS. EN MET EEN DIKKE PENS.
IK NOTEER ...
'TATU' WAS OOK EEN BLANKE MET EEN DOORDRINGENDE BLIK. ZIJN ECHTE NAAM WAS CHE GUEVARA.
DIE SIGAAR VAN MOYA HEB IK UITEINDELIJK TOCH AANGENOMEN. EN OPGEROOKT. HEERLIJKE TUMBAKU.
MIJN CHEF MUDANDI


GOED. ZE WAREN CUBANEN. EN ZE HADDEN EEN GEHEIME MISSIE. ER STONDEN GEEN RODE STERREN OP HUN BARET.
AH, OKE.
DUS
'S ANDERENDAAGS GINGEN MIJN COMMANDANT EN IK OP PAD MET DIE CUBANEN.
BLANKEN EN ZWARTEN BIJEEN. ZE LEKEN WEL KAMERADEN.
PFFFF...
IK HAD HET ER LASTIG MEE. OM DIE BLANKEN TE MOETEN VOLGEN.
JÉRÔME, JIJ VOLGT DEZE BLANKE: TATU. ALS HEM IETS OVERKOMT BEN JIJ OOK DOOD. JIJ BENT ZIJN GIDS.
DIT IS EEN ORDER!


IK DEED WAT IK MOEST DOEN. WE VOCHTEN VOOR DEZELFDE DROOM: VRIJHEID. DUS KREEG IK OOK ZO'N CUBAANS UNIFORM.
DE CUBANEN RESPECTEERDEN DE JONGEREN.
FAL-GEWEER
DE SFEER WAS GOED. WE LEEFDEN SAMEN. WE DEELDEN ONS ETEN. DEZE VREEMDELINGEN RESPECTEERDEN IEDEREEN IN HET MAQUIS.
EN CHE? HOE WAS DIE?
HIJ WAS ZEER VERSTANDIG. ZIJN OGEN STRAALDEN, NIET NORMAAL! HIJ WAS EEN ECHTE KAMERAAD!