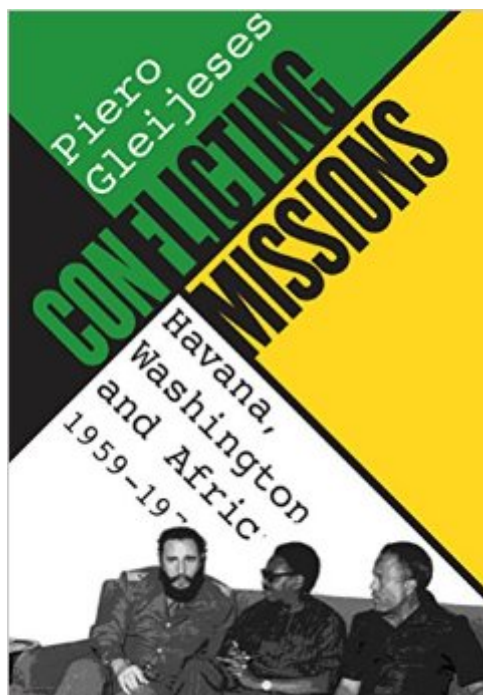


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Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, And Africa, 1959-1976



Synopsis

This is a compelling and dramatic account of Cuban policy in Africa from 1959 to 1976 and of its escalating clash with U.S. policy toward the continent. Piero Gleijeses's fast-paced narrative takes the reader from Cuba's first steps to assist Algerian rebels fighting France in 1961, to the secret war between Havana and Washington in Zaire in 1964-65--where 100 Cubans led by Che Guevara clashed with 1,000 mercenaries controlled by the CIA--and, finally, to the dramatic dispatch of 30,000 Cubans to Angola in 1975-76, which stopped the South African advance on Luanda and doomed Henry Kissinger's major covert operation there. Based on unprecedented archival research and firsthand interviews in virtually all of the countries involved--Glejises was even able to gain extensive access to closed Cuban archives--this comprehensive and balanced work sheds new light on U.S. foreign policy and CIA covert operations. It revolutionizes our view of Cuba's international role, challenges conventional U.S. beliefs about the influence of the Soviet Union in directing Cuba's actions in Africa, and provides, for the first time ever, a look from the inside at Cuba's foreign policy during the Cold War."Fascinating . . . and often downright entertaining. . . Gleijeses recounts the Cuban story with considerable flair, taking good advantage of rich material.--Washington Post Book World"Glejises's research . . . bluntly contradicts the Congressional testimony of the era and the memoirs of Henry A. Kissinger. . . . After reviewing Dr. Gleijeses's work, several former senior United States diplomats who were involved in making policy toward Angola broadly endorsed its conclusions.--New York Times"With the publication of *Conflicting Missions*, Piero Gleijeses establishes his reputation as the most impressive historian of the Cold War in the Third World. Drawing on previously unavailable Cuban and African as well as American sources, he tells a story that's full of fresh and surprising information. And best of all, he does this with a remarkable sensitivity to the perspectives of the protagonists. This book will become an instant classic.--John Lewis Gaddis, author of *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*Based on unprecedented research in Cuban, American, and European archives, this is the compelling story of Cuban policy in Africa from 1959 to 1976 and of its escalating clash with U.S. policy toward the continent. Piero Gleijeses sheds new light on U.S. foreign policy and CIA covert operations, revolutionizes our view of Cuba's international role, and provides the first look from the inside at Cuba's foreign policy during the Cold War.-->

Book Information

Series: Envisioning Cuba

Paperback: 576 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; New edition edition (February 24, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807854646

ISBN-13: 978-0807854648

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.3 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (27 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #539,217 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in [Books > History >](#)

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Customer Reviews

Before going into greater detail about this fascinating history of Cuban-African relations, let's start off by noting the dimensions of Gleijeses' research. His work uses the archives of six pages, including unprecedented access to the Cuban ones, and he studied more than forty sets of papers in the American ones. (This is especially impressive since many papers from that time have yet to be fully declassified.) He looked at the newspapers from thirty countries and he conducted well over a hundred interviews. The result is an impressive work of research, and while not as thorough or as revelatory as Gleijeses's book on the Guatemalan Revolution, is still the most useful work on the subject and is now the book one will look at to understand the 1975 Angolan crisis. Gleijeses' thesis is rather simple. Castro's Cuba was sincerely motivated to encourage revolution in Africa, and from the early sixties onward sought to encourage it by sending advisors, soldiers, desperately needed doctors and other assistance. In doing so Cuba acted out of its own concerns and not as a puppet of the Soviet Union. The first major action was when Cuba helped Algeria ward off Moroccan aggression in 1963. A larger intervention was to assist rebels in Congo/Zaire against the corrupt Tshombe and Mobutu governments. Although not very skillful themselves the Simba rebels were able to repel the hopelessly demoralized army. As it happened the United States secretly arranged for white mercenaries to back up the Congolese. By the time that Che Guevara went over personally to assist the rebels in 1965, the mercenaries' brutal actions had essentially won the war.

Conflicting Missions takes a detailed and academic (and make no mistake this is an academic book) look at Cuba's decision-making process and actions in intervening in Africa. It begins with its assistance to newly liberated Algeria and moves on from there to a look at the Simba Uprising in the

Congo, Cuba's aid to the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau and finally their armed intervention in Angola in 1975-76. As others have noted, the author draws on a number of Cuban and American documents as well as newspaper articles and second-hand sources. He provides a typical level of citations and quotations in the book to back up his points, and there can be little mistake about how much effort he put into researching this book. For the most part it is engagingly written and interesting to read, particularly where it discusses Cuba's dispatch of doctors to revolutionary movements, and their influx of scholarship money, weapons, and other items at no cost to the rebels is indeed a testament to Cuba's revolutionary fervor - particularly in light of its small size and economic weakness. The issues that I have are two-fold, however. Firstly, Gleijeses tends to get a bit bogged down in the minutiae of proving some of his points as to who said what or what really happened on relatively minor points. These asides can go on for pages and tend to make the reader forget the point he was trying to make in the first place. Secondly, he spends a lot of time discussing the US and Cuba's butting of heads in other parts of the world leaving some chapters a bit light on actual discussion about events in Africa. A notable exception to this is the Guinea-Bissau and Angola chapters. My second issue, though, is his analysis.

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