

persuaded Che to go to Bolivia, based on his own analysis of the situation and, Villegas wrote, on “the *agreements reached with Estanislao [Monje] to launch the armed struggle*” (my emphasis).

So, despite Dosal’s explicit attempt to absolve Fidel of any blame for Che’s defeat in Bolivia, the real cardinal political error, Fidel’s as much as it was Che’s, was to trust and rely on Monje and his Communist Party – a party, moreover, which was at best a minor force among factory workers in La Paz and Oruro’s tin miners, but not at all among peasants. Why Fidel and Che chose to rely on Monje and his party, given their antagonistic relations with their own “old Communists,” before and during the revolution, is hard to fathom.

Finally, Fidel and Che compounded this original political error by their overestimation of the revolutionary potential of the Bolivian peasants – the importance of which Dosal, in focusing only on the lack of a viable urban support group, ignores. The peasants had been conspicuous by their absence in the making of the 1953 revolution, but became the beneficiaries of the MNR government’s annihilation of the hacienda regime and distribution of land, and – having had their land hunger sated – remained politically dormant. Worse, based on detailed reports by his agents, Che had intended to establish his base in the densely populated Alto Beni, northwest of and close to La Paz, not far from where several Bolivians in his company had been born and raised. But Monje refused to go along and convinced or virtually compelled a reluctant Che to establish his base in the under-populated southeast, near the Ancahuasú river, where none of the Bolivians knew the land or its benighted, scattered and isolated small-holding inhabitants – who, rather than coming to the support of the guerrillas, assisted the army to hunt them down and kill them.

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**PIERO GLEIJESES: *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976***. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Piero Gleijeses’s work is a convincing account of Cuban policy in Africa from 1959 to 1976 and of its escalating conflict with U.S. policy on the continent. His work utilizes the archives of six countries, including unprecedented access to previously unstudied Cuban archives. This is particularly impressive since many documents from that time have yet to be fully declassified. Among the Cuban archives researched by Gleijeses are those of the Communist Party Central Committee, the Armed Forces and the Foreign Ministry. Classified Cuban documents used in the book include: minutes of meetings with Fidel

Castro, Che Guevara's handwritten correspondence from Zaire, military directives from Raul Castro, briefing papers from intelligence chieftain, Manuel Piñero, reports of field commanders, internal Cuban government memoranda, and Soviet-Cuban communications and military accords. In addition, Gleijeses examined newspapers from thirty countries and conducted about hundred-fifty interviews. The result is an important work of research, and while not as revelatory as Gleijeses's book on the Guatemalan Revolution, it is still the most useful monograph on the subject and should become the standard source on the 1975 Angolan Civil War.

In this first account of Cuba's policy in Africa based on documentary evidence, Gleijeses describes and analyzes Castro's dramatic dispatch of 30,000 Cubans to Angola in 1975-76. He traces the roots of this policy from Havana's assistance to the Algerian rebels fighting France in 1961 to the secret war between Havana and Washington in Zaire in 1964-65 and Cuba's decisive contribution to Guinea-Bissau's war of independence from 1966-1974. The book compellingly challenges conventional U.S. beliefs about the influence of the Soviet Union in directing Cuba's actions in Africa, and provides a look from the inside at Cuba's foreign policy during the Cold War. The book goes a long way in resolving questions regarding Cuba's policy motivations and its relationship to the Soviet Union. Gleijeses's major findings are as follows: (1) Castro decided to send troops to Angola on November 4, 1975, in response to the South African invasion of that country, rather than vice versa as the Ford administration persistently claimed; (2) the United States knew about South Africa's covert invasion plans, and collaborated militarily with its troops, contrary to what Secretary of State Kissinger told Congress and wrote in his memoirs; and (3) Cuba made the decision to send troops without informing the Soviet Union and deployed them, contrary to what has been widely alleged, with minimal Soviet assistance for the first two months.

According to the book, the first major action performed by Cuba in Africa was helping Algeria to defeat a Moroccan invasion in 1963. A larger intervention involved assisting rebels in Congo/Zaire against the corrupt Tshombe and Mobutu governments. Although not very skillful, the Simba rebels were able to repel the demoralized and ineffective army. The United States secretly arranged for white mercenaries to bolster the Congolese armed forces. By the time Che Guevara went personally to assist the rebels in 1965, the mercenaries had essentially won the war. Gleijeses's narrative raises questions about Jon Lee Anderson's account of Guevara's mission, arguing that Guevara was not forced to go to Zaire in order to ease tensions with the Soviets, but rather as an integral part of Cuba's foreign policy. Gleijeses also discusses Cuba's arrangements with the Congolese Government (Brazzaville) and the crucial assistance it gave to

the liberation movement of Guinea-Bissau.

However, it is the account of the Angolan crisis that really makes this book compelling reading. When the Portuguese colonial government collapsed in 1974, three rebel groups were struggling for power in Angola: the quasi-Marxist MPLA, and the anti-Marxist FNLA and UNITA. U.S. intelligence noted that the FNLA was “totally corrupt” and “subservient” to the Mobutu regime in Zaire. Although Jonas Savimbi, the head of UNITA, became something of a conservative hero in the 80s for standing up to the MPLA-led government, Gleijeses points out that he had collaborated with the Portuguese before 1974. The book also presents convincing evidence of Savimbi’s complicity with the South African invaders. The Portuguese army considered the MPLA as the “most important movement in Angola.” U.S. officials in Angola agreed that it was “the only Angolan organization that had any national representativeness, that could be considered an Angolan-wide organization.” Therefore, Gleijeses refutes arguments that Soviet and Cuban aid for the MPLA before October 1975 massively swamped aid for the FNLA and UNITA. Moreover, contrary to the claims of UNITA supporters, U.S. intelligence confirmed that the Portuguese had not supported the MPLA in the transition to independence. Gleijeses also shows that the MPLA was winning before either South Africa or Cuba intervened.

This book is the first to present the Angolan conflict from three sides: Cuba and the MPLA, the United States and the covert CIA operation codenamed IAFEATURE and South Africa, whose secret incursion prompted Castro’s decision to commit Cuban troops. One of the most valuable contributions of the book is its refutation of Kissinger’s account of the United States’ role in Angola, most recently repeated in the third volume of his memoirs. In *Years of Renewal* Kissinger denied that the United States and South Africa had collaborated in the Angolan conflict; Gleijeses’s research strongly suggests that they did. The book quotes Kissinger’s aide Joseph Sisco, conceding that the Ford administration “certainly did not discourage” South Africa’s intervention, and presents evidence that the CIA helped the South Africans ferry arms to key battlefronts.

In conclusion, Piero Gleijeses’s work is a “must” for anyone interested in the dynamics of international relations in the 1960s and 1970s. The book is essential to understanding the relationship between Cuba and the Soviet Union during this period, and establishes the parameters of Cuba’s foreign policy as congruent with, but largely autonomous from, the Soviet Union. In addition, Gleijeses raises significant questions about the nature of U.S. policy in Africa, and illustrates the troubling consequences when intelligence information is ignored or skewed to fit the political agenda of decision-makers.