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Piero Gleijeses. Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976. Envisioning Cuba Series. Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. xix + 552 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2647-8.

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Exporting Revolution: Cuba and Africa

The world was surprised when 30,000 Cuban soldiers arrived in Angola during 1975 and 1976 to support the struggle of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against the military intervention of South Africa. This event seemed particularly surprising at a time when the United States and Cuba were moving towards normalizing their relationship. In *Conflicting Missions* Piero Gleijeses examines Cuba's actions and motivations by looking at the long and largely unknown history of Cuban involvement with Africa. The book presents a well-documented history of Cuban activities in the continent between 1959 and 1976. It covers some well-publicized episodes of this history such as the operation in Angola, and the more obscures interventions in Algeria, Zaire, Congo, and Guinea Bissau.

The book presents two areas of interest to historians of Africa. First, it examines the evolution of Cuban policy towards Africa and, in doing this, it also uncovers valuable information related to the African interests of certain world powers, mainly the United States. A second set of questions that arise from this study relate to the state in which Cuban forces found African liberation movements and what were the consequences of Cuban intervention.

One important asset of the book is the fact that the author had access to a limited number of Cuban sources that have been unavailable to researchers. The willingness of the Cuban authorities to break the long silence that surrounds the history of Cuban-African relations also encouraged some of the individuals involved to talk about their experiences. By combining the limited documentation available in Cuba, a good number of oral interviews, and documentary evidence in the United States, the author was able to put together a compelling narrative that describes and explains Cuba's intervention in Africa.

Cuba's involvement in Africa has often been explained as a consequence of the manipulation of the Soviet Union. However, Gleijeses convincingly argues that

Cuban operations were not guided or dictated by the interests of the Soviet Union. Cuba's actions were motivated by the ideal of spreading the Cuban revolution to other corners of the Third World, and by the very pragmatic need to raise its stature among the non-aligned nations. Ironically, this would have allowed this small island to achieve greater independence from both the United States and the Soviet Union. In the author's words, "idealism and pragmatism were the engines behind Cuba's activism in the Third World" (p. 376). The examination of the complex interactions between Cuba, the United States, and the Soviet Union partially illuminates the ways in which these powers looked at Africa in the context of the Cold War, and raises interesting questions regarding when, where and why Africa became a valuable interest for these world powers.

Historians of Africa will also find valuable information about various military movements with which the Cubans became involved. Gleijeses's examination of Cuba's actions looks into the ways in which Cuban policy-makers chose the areas where they would send assistance. This decision was usually made by taking into account the level of revolutionary commitment of particular movements, the degree of military organization already in place, and the extent of involvement of the United States in a particular area. Significantly, the success or failure of Cuban missions was usually dependent on the existing conditions in the field. For example, when looking at the Cuban operations in Zaire and the Congo, the author describes how Cuban leaders were disappointed with the lack of military discipline and ideological commitment among Africans. What they found on the ground was not what they had expected and these missions had to be aborted. These failures taught the Cubans valuable lessons that were later applied to more successful operations in Guinea Bissau and Angola. The conditions in which the Cubans acted in these areas were very different since both Partido Africano da Independencia da Guinea and Cabo Verde(PAIGC) and MPLA were well organized and disciplined groups.

In trying to determine the conditions that contributed to the success or failure of Cuban missions in Africa, Gleijeses presents a wealth of information about the nature and internal organization of African military movements. This will be of great value to historians interested in these movements.

Gleijeses's assessment of African military movements and how they were affected by Cuba's intervention clearly relies on Cuban and American sources, and from his reading of secondary literature in African history. He presents us with a powerful and engaging narrative and a well-argued history, thus he has made a valuable contribution to our existing knowledge. However, the history of African-Cuban relations from an African perspective remains to be written. Political and pragmatic reasons have prevented researchers within the continent from looking more carefully at the story that Gleijeses has unveiled. It is clear that "Africans are not rushing to tell Cuba's history" (p. 395). This book is a significant step towards filling this gap.

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