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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--Gleijeses 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.