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Introduction by Andy DeRoche

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Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College

My first encounter with Piero Gleijeses occurred at the 2000 SHAFR conference in Toronto, when he served as commentator for a session in which I presented a paper on relations between the United States and Zimbabwe. Gleijeses, by whom I was somewhat intimidated because his publications were at that time already so impressive (most notably a 1994 *Diplomatic History* article on American policy toward the Congo)¹, was extremely gracious to me, a community college instructor who had only recently completed a Ph.D. at the University of Colorado. Before the session began, he told me that he had read my dissertation (making him one of at most five people who had), and this validation did a lot for me at that early point in my career. When we reached the time for comments and questions, he immediately asked me to explain the difference in the approaches to Africa between President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and President Jimmy Carter, and UN Ambassador Andrew Young. Fortunately, I did not have any children in 2000 and was well-rested and on my game, and I proceeded to rattle off an answer that seemed to satisfy Gleijeses. I felt like I had passed my Ph.D. oral exams all over again, and often think of that exchange when participating in conferences even up to this day.

Three years later, the *Diplomatic History* editors gave me the great privilege of reviewing Gleijeses's 2002 book, *Conflicting Missions*.² My assessment of his remarkable tome at the time was that it was a "masterpiece" which combined "mind-boggling research" with an "engaging style," and demonstrated clearly the value of international archival research. I contended in 2003 that Gleijeses had "raised the bar" for scholars of U.S. foreign relations by crafting *Conflicting Missions*, and I still believe that today.³ All six reviewers in this roundtable were similarly impressed, and all of them mentioned the importance of *Conflicting Missions* in their reviews of Gleijeses's 2013 sequel, *Visions of Freedom*. While they are all still amazed by Gleijeses's ability as a writer and his efforts as a researcher in producing his follow-up book, they agree on little else.

Chris Saunders praises *Visions of Freedom* as a "monumental" work based on "massive" research, lauds Gleijeses for his "persistence," and finds his overall argument to be "convincing." On the other hand, he argues that the interpretation in *Visions* is overly slanted towards Cuba. Saunders notes perceptively that although scores of interviews are cited, there is no interview with the most important protagonist of all, Fidel Castro. Similarly, he commends Gleijeses for his globe-trotting research but wished that the

¹ Piero Gleijeses, "Flee! The White Giants are Coming!": The United States, the Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964-65," *Diplomatic History* (Spring 1994): 207-237. This was my first year as a SHAFR member and this article made a major impression on my career, providing a goal in my research and writing on US/Africa relations.

² Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

³ Andy DeRoche, "From Cuba with Love," *Diplomatic History* 27:3 (June 2003), 419-422.

archives in Angola had been open. The largest criticism offered by Saunders is that in his view, Gleijeses does not demonstrate as solid of a grasp of South African politics and diplomacy as he did for Cuba and the United States, in particular regarding Pretoria's aims in Namibia and Angola. Primarily because of his disagreement with Gleijeses about South Africa's role, Saunders concludes that *Visions* is "not the definitive account" of southern African international affairs in the 1980s.

Anna-Mart van Wyk offered a somewhat similar critique. While applauding Gleijeses for his extremely insightful and useful analyses of Cuban, US, and Angolan policies in the southern African region from 1976 to 1991, praising his command of the Afrikaans language, and thanking him for facilitating the declassification of reams of important documents in South Africa, van Wyk critiques *Visions* for what she sees as an overly simplistic explanation of South African history. She suggests, quite convincingly, that some interviews with white South Africans who were drafted to fight in Angola (such as her brothers) would have added an important element to the story. She ends by congratulating him on creating another important book, which she characterizes as a "page-turner," but does not seem to find it as convincing as *Conflicting Missions* overall. That, in fact, is the general verdict of the six reviewers.

Of all the essays in this roundtable, the one by Elizabeth Schmidt stands out as something of an exception in that it is a completely glowing review of *Visions*, which she describes as "another extraordinary volume." According to Schmidt, Gleijeses's southern Africa sequel is "painstakingly researched, cogently argued, and beautifully written." She adds that *Visions* offers "unique insights and perspectives" and that it "will be an invaluable resource for scholars, students, and libraries for years to come." Schmidt is in a good position to judge Gleijeses's work since she has recently completed a compelling, concise, and useful synthesis on outside powers and Africa, which required that she rely on earlier works by other scholars such as Gleijeses.⁴

The second-most-laudatory review is that of Alex Thompson, who offers high praise for Gleijeses's research. Thompson includes some minor criticism of the analysis in *Visions* regarding Mozambique and of apartheid itself, and also suggests that the subtitle is somewhat misleading. Overall, though, Thompson echoes the high praise of Schmidt and concludes that *Visions* should be appreciated for "introducing nuance" into the story of 1980s southern Africa. He closes by congratulating Gleijeses for creating "a truly international diplomatic history of the region."

The two longest reviews featured here include the most thorough critiques of *Visions*. Sue Onslow begins in a positive vein, stating that Gleijeses has produced an "ambitious" book reflecting "enormous energy," which includes insightful analysis on the Carter years. She also notes that as *Visions* shifts its focus to the 1980s, the argument remains convincing when dealing with the United States and Cuba. Onslow also agrees strongly with Gleijeses

⁴ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

about the importance of the battle of Cuito Caunavale in 1987-88. In her view, this sequel “succeeded admirably” in carrying on the story presented in *Conflicting Missions*.

However, Onslow then provides a lengthy assessment of the area where she felt Gleijeses came up short, and that is his treatment of Pretoria’s politics and diplomacy. In her view, he presents the decision-making by the apartheid regime as “monolithic,” which she believes it most certainly was not. “Glejeses’s analysis of the South African dimension,” she contends, “is significantly limited.” She argues that by relying so much on written sources for his analysis of the South African sides of the story, Gleijeses misses a lot. Onslow offers a powerful warning for all scholars, stating that “documents can lie just as much as people.” This is something we should all take seriously as we try to sort through sources and get as close to the truth as we can.

After her detailed analysis of what she sees as the weaknesses in *Visions*, Onslow returns to a positive note in her conclusion and characterizes this latest contribution by Gleijeses as making a “significant contribution” to the field. She finds his overall thesis regarding the role of Cuba in southern Africa to be “convincing,” and she agrees with him that it was a “remarkable” success for the small island nation.

The reviewer who found most fault of the six, Jamie Miller, opens his essay by acknowledging the incredible influence that Gleijeses has had on younger scholars like himself (as I also indicated earlier in this intro). Miller recounts opening *Visions* with eager anticipation, and quickly being delighted to discover the “familiar Gleijeses strengths,” such as the “mastery of detail” based on “prodigious research.” He praises the work for making several “potent arguments,” especially regarding the United States’ and Cuba’s policies toward Angola. Miller thanks Gleijeses for once again providing other scholars a “real service” by writing such a thorough book on events in the southern Africa region.

Like Onslow and Saunders (and to a lesser extent van Wyk and Thompson), however, Miller is not at all convinced by Gleijeses’s treatment of South African politics and diplomacy. Miller also argues that Gleijeses presented South Africa as a monolith, and that in comparison to his sections on Washington and Havana, the sections on Pretoria are “substantially less developed.” Among the specific examples Miller included are the fact that Gleijeses conducted far fewer interviews of South Africans, that his assessment of “Pik” Botha is one-sided and unnecessarily harsh, and that his analysis of Namibian politics ironically portrays the important South West Africa National Party as simply a “proxy of Pretoria,” doing exactly what other scholars before Gleijeses have done in calling Havana a proxy of Moscow.

Miller ends his essay with some guarded praise, again thanking Gleijeses for the incredible level of detail on a story about which most people (even diplomatic historians) know little. “Those seeking to understand the game-changing role of Havana in Southern Africa,” Miller writes, “will be forever in Gleijeses’s debt.”

A tome as epic as *Visions of Freedom* deserves as lengthy a roundtable as this, and it also should be read carefully by anyone interested in the international affairs history of

southern Africa during the late Cold War. I myself have already benefited greatly from it as I struggle to complete my book manuscript on relations between the United States and Zambia. I am also thankful for these six thought-provoking reviews. Let the debates begin.

Participants:

Piero Gleijeses is a Professor of American foreign policy at Johns Hopkins University (SAIS). His publications include *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2013; *La Esperanza Desgarrada. La rebelión dominicana de 1965 y la invasión norteamericana*, Editora Búho, 2012; *The Cuban Drumbeat. Castro's Worldview. Cuban Foreign Policy in a Hostile World*, Seagull, 2009; *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2002; *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, Princeton University Press, 1991.

Andy DeRoche teaches the History of U.S. Foreign Relations at Front Range Community College, and is a Lecturer in International Affairs with a focus on Africa at the University of Colorado. His major publications include a biography of Andrew Young, and he is about to start revising and editing his manuscript on Zambia/USA relations that is under contract with Kent State University Press.

Jamie Miller received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Quinnipiac University and a recent Fox International Fellow at Yale University. He is currently working on a book manuscript entitled *The Alchemist and the Hammer: The Struggle to Preserve Apartheid, 1974-1980*. He won the Saki Ruth Dockrill Memorial Prize for best paper at the University of California, Santa Barbara-London School of Economics-George Washington University International Graduate Conference on the Cold War (2011), the African Studies Association Best Graduate Paper Prize (2013), and has articles in Cold War History (2012) and the Journal of Cold War Studies (2013).

Sue Onslow is a leading oral history practitioner, and has published extensively on Southern Africa in the Cold War era. Between 1994 and 2010 she lectured and taught at the London School of Economics, and also at King's College, London. In 2008-2010 she was lead interviewer on the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project, 'Why Did You Fight? Narratives of the Rhodesian War c.1970-1980', based at the University of the West of England. She is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, working on the major AHRC oral history project on the History of the Commonwealth since 1965. Her publications include, 'We must gain Time.' South Africa, Rhodesia and the Kissinger Initiative *South African Historical Journal*, 56, 2006; Editor and contributor, *Cold War In Southern Africa: White Power, Black Nationalism* (Routledge 2009); Chris Saunders and Sue Onslow, chapter: *Southern Africa in the Cold War 1976-1990* in A Westad and M Leffler (eds) *Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); "'Noises Off': South Africa and the Lancaster House settlement 1979-1980", *JSAS Special Issue: Liberation Struggles, Exile and International Solidarity, Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 2 (2009); "The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Media space and the End of the Cold War in Southern Africa" in Artemy Kalinovsky and

Sergey Radchenko, *The End of the Cold War in The Third World* (Routledge, 2010); Co-editor (with Anna-Mart Van Wyk): *Southern Africa in the Cold War post 1974* (Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2013).

Chris Saunders (D.Phil, Oxford) is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Cape Town, where he taught in the Department of Historical Studies for many years. He has written widely on the political history of Southern Africa and is the author, with Sue Onslow, of the chapter on 'The Cold War and southern Africa, 1976-1900' in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, volume 3 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Elizabeth Schmidt is Professor of History at Loyola University Maryland. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her books include: *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Ohio University Press, 2007); *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958* (Heinemann, 2005); *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Heinemann; James Currey; Baobab, 1992); and *Decoding Corporate Camouflage: U.S. Business Support for Apartheid* (Institute for Policy Studies, 1980). Her newest book, *From State Collapse to the War on Terror: Foreign Intervention in Africa After the Cold War*, will be published by Ohio University Press.

Alex Thomson is a Principal Lecturer of Politics at Coventry University. He has written two books on the international history of southern Africa (*U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948-1994: Conflict of Interests* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008); and *Incomplete Engagement: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards the Republic of South Africa, 1981-1988* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996). He is also the author of several journal papers on this subject published in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, *Politikon*, and *The Journal of Modern African Studies*.

Anna-Mart van Wyk is Head of the School of Social Science at Monash South Africa, and Associate Professor of History and International Studies at Monash University. She specialises in the history of South Africa's nuclear program, teaches a course on arms control and disarmament, and supervises a number of graduate students in related fields. Since earning her DPhil in 2005 she has published numerous articles in *Historia*, *Cold War History*, *South African Historical Journal* and *History Compass*. She contributed a chapter to *Cold War in Southern Africa: White power, black liberation* (Routledge, 2009) and is the co-editor of a Critical Oral History Conference Series Volume on *Southern Africa in the Cold War, post-1974* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2013). She enjoys recognition as a rated researcher by the National Research Foundation of South Africa and is the recipient of the Monash South Africa Distinguished Researcher Award (2010). She is a partner of the Carnegie-funded Nuclear Proliferation International History Project; an Associate of the LSE Ideas Africa International Affairs Program; and a former Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Review by Jamie Miller, Quinnipiac University

I have a confession to make. Piero Gleijeses's *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959-1976* was one of the books that made me want to be a historian of Southern Africa.¹ Even after long days during my first stints in the archives in Pretoria, I would find myself over and over again drawing my tired eyes back to Gleijeses' eye-opening analysis. The nuanced depiction of Cuba's ideological mission, the recasting of understandings of communist bloc alliances, the investment in various anti-imperialist movements across Africa, the detailed portrait of Washington's long struggle to reconcile Cold War imperatives with the diversifying nature of the international scene in the 1960s and 1970s: *Conflicting Missions* seemed to challenge everything I thought I knew about the Cold War in Africa, all while opening up countless horizons. It connected Africa – so often seen by historians (as by policymakers) as the 'other' – with the more familiar, through engaging transnational themes, events, and ideas. So it was with real anticipation and excitement that I opened the sequel, *Visions of Freedom*.

As I read, all the familiar Gleijeses strengths came back to me. There is the mastery of detail, as he takes the reader from Washington to Havana, to Luanda, and beyond, charting the course of the intricate negotiations over the future of South-West Africa/Namibia (1974-1990). There is the simply prodigious research, conducted in multiple languages; Gleijeses always seems to have an apt quote to parachute into his paragraphs. And there is the sheer relentlessness. At 526 pages, plus notes, there is an abundance of material that other scholars will find useful.

Visions of Freedom depicts a complex and multi-faceted story of geopolitical, ideological, and diplomatic confrontation, centered on (by most measures) a relatively obscure part of the globe: the Angolan-Namibian borderland. The book interweaves a number of different narrative threads, from Cuba's revolutionary mission against neo-imperialism in Southern Africa, to Moscow's conflicted relationship with its independently minded ally, to the Ronald Reagan Administration's insistence on 'constructive engagement' with Pretoria as the lodestar for its regional policy and, by extension, America's relationship to apartheid generally.

Visions of Freedom makes a number of potent arguments. First, it illustrates that the American role in Namibia's independence has indeed been overdrawn. Triumphalism in Washington both obscured the important role the United States played in supporting Pretoria (and not only in Namibia) and accorded too much credit for the outcome of the negotiations to American diplomacy. Second, constructive engagement with South Africa produced very little (if any?) reform of the apartheid system and therefore failed in its aims. Finally, Cuba's military involvement in Southern Africa had a far-reaching effect on the political outcomes there in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The besieged island state maintained a costly military presence in Angola for almost fifteen years, frustrating

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, N.C.; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

American policymakers in Washington, and ultimately securing a resounding victory for its allies, Angola and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Interspersed with Gleijeses's emphasis on these major themes are a host of perceptive vignettes that provide real texture and depth. One focusing on the lack of commemoration within the South African Defence Forces for its fallen black soldiers stuck in my mind long after the first reading (209-210). The author's savage portrait of Jonas Savimbi (65-69, 298-304) remains in and of itself an important reminder of the types of characters Washington supported in black Africa in the name of anti-communism. Angolan politicians and issues are given extensive and overdue treatment. It is not just Gleijeses's fleshing out of the familiar that strikes the reader, but also his uncommon ability to convey the importance of figures, ideas, and events that sit right in the background of the reader's initial historical perspective. Ultimately, he has succeeded in shining a great deal of light on one of the twentieth century's most intractable and unknown diplomatic disputes. In doing so, he has done the cause of international and Southern African history a real service.

I will leave it to other reviewers on the round table to discuss the specifics of Gleijeses's depiction of the American and Cuban policy-making scenes and instead focus on my area of speciality: the South African angle. *Conflicting Missions* was explicitly constructed as a dual-focus narrative: Cuba versus the United States in Africa, with South Africa playing a cameo role. *Visions of Freedom*, by contrast, is presented as a genuine tripod; Pretoria features in the title here. Yet it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the understanding of the policies, philosophies, preconceptions, and politics of the South Africans is substantially less developed than that of the Cubans and Americans. There is no doubt that the research base on which Gleijeses constructs his analysis of Pretoria's actions here is impressive. Research in a number of archives, including in Afrikaans, as well as memoir literature, paints a vivid portrait of South African defiance and delaying tactics at the negotiating table.² The author convincingly shows that right up until the late 1980s, the P. W. Botha Government never seriously considered allowing the full implementation of the letter and spirit of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, adopted over Botha's objections by the Cabinet of his predecessor John Vorster in April 1978.

However, while Gleijeses is at his best using documents to reconstruct the shifting negotiating positions of the various parties, including Pretoria, there is limited development of the why beyond that. There is a great deal of elucidation of proximate causes - the thinking behind this diplomatic manoeuvre, or that military action. However, *Visions of Freedom* is light on any development of the underlying conceptual, political, or ideological factors that led different actors within South Africa to act and think as they did. There is little discussion of the literatures on the National Party's understanding(s) of the maintenance of minority power, or on Afrikaner nationalism, or on the rationalisations for

² The imbalance in interviews is perhaps illustrative of the focus of the book: Gleijeses lists 19 interviews with Angolans, 52 with Cubans, 27 with Namibians, 31 with Americans, and only 11 with South Africans.

apartheid, all of which underwent major changes in the period covered.³ There is little analysis of how politicians, the military, and the white electorate variously understood threats – and what specifically they saw those threats as threatening (white prosperity, Afrikaner supremacy, Pretoria’s control over the boundaries of ‘acceptable’ African nationalism, and so on). Instead, readers are presented with a decidedly monolithic white South Africa, when in fact differences of opinion between various parts of the state, the military, parastatals, churches, language and ethnic groups, labour unions, and the business community were both legion and evolved over time. Both the doctrine of ‘total onslaught’, by which Botha and the military saw African nationalism as nothing more than a tool of global communism, and the security template of total strategy, the antidote to this that they developed, feature only once – in a footnote(560-561). Given that so much of the story depends on South Africa’s implacability in the diplomatic negotiations, some elucidation of the various ways in which leaders projected their fears onto the Namibian situation was, I would have thought, absolutely essential.

To take just one example: the depiction of the South-West Africa National Party (SWA NP). Whites in SWA NP were key stake-holders in whatever outcome materialised from the negotiations over Namibia’s future. Like white settlers in Kenya or Algeria, they were central to defining the discourses of decolonisation and the shape of feasible futures. However, Gleijeses accords them scant attention. Within the SWA NP, the prominent A. H. du Plessis somehow features just once in Gleijeses’s text, and is (oddly) referred to by his rarely used full first name, Abraham. (94) The other key holdout, Eben van Zyl, features not at all. Dirk Mudge, another central figure, features on only three pages. Even then, his various roles as a thorn in Botha’s side, a bridge-builder to various black organisations, an agent of Pretoria’s aims, and an articulator of an early Namibian nationalism are subsumed within a conceptualisation of a broad pan-white, racist axis between Pretoria and Windhoek: “Mudge and his ‘moderates’ were Pretoria’s chosen instrument” (94). The reality was more complex and subtle. Ironically, given the book’s heavy (and overdue) emphasis on Cuba’s independence from Moscow, Gleijeses treats the SWA NP whites as little more than the proxy of Pretoria.

Overall, the understanding of the South African political scene is somewhat one-dimensional and overlooks divisions throughout the (white) political sphere. The South African newspaper *Die Burger* is repeatedly quoted as being representative of the regime as a whole, without any explanatory note of its long association with P. W. Botha personally in contrast to the close ties of other papers, like *Die Transvaler* or *Volksblad*, with Botha’s conservative rivals. (Botha sat on the board of Nasionale Pers, *Die Burger*’s publisher, and his mentor and the first Prime Minister of the apartheid era, D. F. Malan, was the original editor way back in 1915.) Journalist Willem Steenkamp’s writing is referred to as “the standard account of the operation from the perspective of the apartheid regime” (61). This is not entirely inaccurate; Steenkamp’s source base was inevitably South African. But it

³ The bibliography lists no reference to either Heribert Adam or Hermann Giliomee, which must be a first for a scholarly book on the apartheid regime during this period. There is also no mention of Robert M. Price, Stanley Greenberg, or Chris Alden.

makes Steenkamp sound like a writer co-opted by the regime, or worse, and anything but the Defense Correspondent from one of the most effective and consistent opponents of the regime, the *Cape Times*. Donald Sole was not a “senior aide” of Foreign Minister Pik Botha’s, but fifteen years older than South Africa’s Foreign Minister. (155) Indeed, Sole was part of the old guard at the Department of Foreign Affairs against which Botha and his group of tyros consciously defined themselves.⁴ The hard-core right-wing Conservative Party (KP), which split from the National Party in 1982 in exceptionally bitter circumstances and became the official opposition in 1987, is mentioned only three times. What was the KP’s understanding of events in Namibia? Was it ever able to successfully use the government’s engagement with the international community to lay claim to be the true representatives of Afrikaner nationalism, thus robbing the NP of its ideological anchor? How did pressure from the right-wing make it harder for the government to compromise or negotiate? I suspect that these issues were central to shaping the events that the book covers, but in *Visions of Freedom* there is very little consideration of white politics as being important to the story at all.

This failure to dig deeper into the complexities of how and why white leaders of this era understood the world and their place in it points to a broader ideological issue with this book. No-one expects any historian (or person) to have sympathy of any kind for the apartheid order. However, as scholars we have a duty to prevent our emotional, intellectual, and ideological abhorrence of apartheid from obstructing our professional rigour in explaining *why* the regime acted as it did. Instead, as lily white as the portrayal of Cuba (and often of SWAPO and the MPLA too) is, Pretoria is painted in unrelentingly dark hues. South Africa’s military force displayed “aggression” (161) and manifested an “aggressive policy” (186). Its “artillery unleashed a merciless bombardment” (468). As for its ally UNITA, “Savimbi was a terrorist” (512). Savimbi was also, Gleijeses asserts, not a legitimate anti-colonialist because he collaborated with Portugal to outmanoeuvre the MPLA back in the early 1970s – which surely draws an overly Manichean line between collaborators/loyalists and anti-colonialists that belies the complexity of decolonisation (512-3).⁵ Pik Botha comes in for particularly unedifying treatment. Gleijeses writes: “I listened to Pik Botha talk about the 1980s for six hours one Saturday in December 2007 at his house near Pretoria. Most of what he said was in sharp contrast with the evidence, including that from the South African archives” (288). “Pik Botha was a dynamic minister of foreign affairs, a womanizer, and a very hard drinker” (is this relevant or important?) (288) “Pik Botha’s rude rejection of the synthesis paper...” (312). And so on.

By contrast, Havana was selfless, Angola was a victim, and “SWAPO guerrillas fought with great courage” (209). (Did South African troops, often conscripts, fight with any less courage just because of the loathsome nature of their ideological cause?) In a 2012

⁴ See Theresa Papenfus, *Pik Botha and His Times* (Pretoria: Litera, 2010).

⁵ For an excellent recent work on what it meant to be a loyalist, see Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya : Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

interview about this book, Gleijeses suggested that Cuba's victory was important to the demise of apartheid itself (an assertion he pulls back from in the book itself, 520), while in return for its altruism Cuba got "nothing, absolutely nothing."⁶ Surely, at the very least, Havana's African mission provided ideological reinforcement, with foreign successes perhaps hiding that the revolution was stalling badly at home? Gleijeses is uniquely placed to tackle this key question head on, but he refrains from turning his critical eye in that direction. After all, are statements by Nelson Mandela *for Cuban consumption* really indicative that Havana's military efforts in 1988 were crucial in forcing the crumbling of a South African regime already in major ideological, economic, and domestic trouble?⁷ (As Ryan Irwin has convincingly pointed out, this was precisely Mandela's skill: his ability to embody a pluralist and inclusive vision of the anti-apartheid movement, rather than imposing his own ideological litmus test on would-be allies.⁸) Instead of embracing the richness of this story, one of contested historical memory, of political actors mobilising versions of the past for their own ends, Gleijeses instead enters that contest himself. He tells us, for instance, that Cubans are the only foreigners listed on the Wall of Names at Freedom Park – without mentioning the virulent controversy in South Africa over the monument's role in entrenching a given narrative of history. (521)⁹

Ultimately, *Visions of Freedom* is a narrative of heroic Cuban action in Southern Africa, juxtaposed with the "pathetic" diplomacy and illegitimate interests of the counter-revolutionary parties. (60) Obviously, this was not quite how Pretoria saw things. They instead saw SWAPO as part of a broader communist assault on its sovereignty (a view only reinforced by Cuban involvement in the fighting). Explaining why this was and how it affected the contest over Namibia's future is central to Gleijeses's project, as he defines it. However, his antipathy for what the regime represented stands in the way. This is shame, as it undermines what is otherwise an extraordinary achievement. *Visions of Freedom* helps to substantially illuminate a complex and under-researched chapter in post-war history on a number of levels. The level of detail it mobilises is simply unmatched in the field. Those seeking to understand the game-changing role of Havana in Southern Africa, its rejection of American dominance, and its revolutionary mission in Africa will be forever in Gleijeses's debt. Historians of South Africa, on the other hand, will be left with as many questions as

⁶ <http://www.afropop.org/wp/6517/piero-glejeses-the-hip-deep-essential-interview>

⁷ Cuban victory "destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor... [and] inspired the fighting masses of South Africa... Cuito Cuanavale was the turning point for the liberation of our continent – and of my people – from the scourge of apartheid" (519). See also "We come here with a sense of the great debt that is owed the people of Cuba. What other country can point to a record of greater selflessness than Cuba has displayed in its relations to Africa?" (526). The first was published in *Granma*; the second (evidently) uttered in Cuba itself.

⁸ See <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/139392/ryan-irwin/mandelas-unfinished-business>

⁹ Gary Baines, "The Freedom Park Fracas and the Divisive Legacy of South Africa's "Border War"/Liberation Struggle," in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapiro and Christopher Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013).

answers.

Review by Sue Onslow, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London

It is something of an understatement to say that Piero Gleijeses's book *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959-1976*, published in 2002,¹ dramatically altered our understanding of the dynamics of the Cold War in Southern Africa. It achieved a sea-change in our appreciation of the importance of previously seeming subsidiary actors in the battle of systems and ideas in the region. Gleijeses's analysis of the ideological and power-political decision making in Havana, which drew on his remarkable access to hitherto closed Cuban archives, and his stress on Cuba's internationalist impulses supporting radical nationalism in eastern Congo (then Zaire), Guinea Bissau, and Angola, with important solidarity links for the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC), set the contribution of Havana squarely centre-stage in the history of the struggle against white-led Portuguese imperialism and South African intervention. Gleijeses destroyed completely the derogatory contemporary label of Cuba as 'Moscow's stooge'. I remember clearly how my students at the time stared at me in initial disbelief and then dawning realization as I summarized Gleijeses' book, which featured deservedly on the front page of the *New York Times*.² Gleijeses's groundbreaking analysis encouraged a considerable number of them to study the recent history of Southern Africa, and academic colleagues to reconsider the factors of accelerated change from white-minority rule in southern Africa.

It is important to set *Visions of Freedom* in this historiographical context. Gleijeses has produced another important book: its ambitious project is to chart complex, multiple and interwoven narratives of Washington, Havana and Pretoria – and includes relevant exploration of Moscow's attitude and inputs, and British and Commonwealth interventions. It is based on enormous industry, and wide ranging multi-archival and multi-lingual research, backed up by extensive personal interviews with leading figures in the U.S., Cuba, South Africa, Angola and Namibia, as well as Cuban ideological foot soldiers to supplement gaps in the documents. Gleijeses is absolutely right to emphasize that the South African archives are "brimming with documents" (16). He carefully charts the revolutionary internationalist motivations, tactics, and strategy of the Cuban Politburo, underlining the seminal importance of Fidel Castro's personal input into decision making in the Angolan theatre. He explores the personal and political dynamics between the revolutionary leadership of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) – particularly the role of President Agostinho Neto – and leading Cubans, both civilian and military.

The triangular relationship between the Jimmy Carter Administration and the Havana government is clearly delineated, offering a welcome and sophisticated presentation of the importance of Washington's exploratory probes (on Washington's terms) of improved

¹ 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.

² 31 March 2002.

relations with Havana, the place of bureaucratic frictions between the State Department and the White House, and the pervasive and enduring importance of public opinion in Jimmy Carter's foreign-policy making. I was struck again how well served the U.S. was by its high-calibre diplomats (47) overseas, who tried to inject a degree of 'sanity' into American policy in Angola, and Washington's denunciations of Cuban aggression in Ethiopia. This discrepancy between policy makers' words (and actions) and the more subtle balanced views of U.S. intelligence is repeatedly underlined, with the cogent explanation of "the polls" and the associated cycle of domestic politics influencing both Carter's and Ronald Reagan's policy. (59-60)

The parallel narrative of the conflicting agendas of Cuba and the Angolan MPLA leadership, important lacunae in information sharing, needs to be borne squarely in mind. Gleijeses discusses the long-running Cuban tensions with the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) over the struggle against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and difficulties with the Soviet advisers and Angolan military leaders who wanted to create a regular army that could fight a conventional war against a foreign enemy. I remain puzzled, however, as to why the Soviet commander Konstantin Kurochkin was so resistant to the Cuban argument of guerrilla warfare, to "liquidate the bandits" (72) when, as Professor Vladimir Shubin has pointed out, the range of military warfare techniques certainly included guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency as part of the Soviet training repertoire?³ Gleijeses goes into impressive detail on the remarkable technical and financial assistance Cuba provided to Angola, which was critical for early nation-state building (79-86) in the immediate shambolic aftermath of the precipitous Portuguese withdrawal; I was unaware of the return of approximately 6,000 Western experts by 1984 (109). Cuba also provided important training for other regional liberation movements Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), SWAPO and MK/ANC, but remained hostage to the security situation in Angola. The book includes extraordinary and moving testimonies from individual Cubans.

The 'paradigm shift' of the advent of the Reagan Administration – I welcomed the emphasis on continuities as well as discontinuities in Washington's policy towards Cuba and Angola/Southern Africa – and embedded expectations within 'linkage' are similarly covered in detail. Gleijeses gives welcome attention to the U.S. domestic context of foreign policy, bureaucratic silos and key loci of decision making, regional geo-strategic calculations against revolutionary nationalism in the Caribbean, and the input of key personalities. Indeed, this book makes a convincing case for the sustained importance of human agency as leaders and key diplomats in the history of Southern Africa. Neto conducted a highly personal policy, and his sensitivities and jealousy over Angolan independence with a corresponding resentment of his reliance on Cuba to fill the gaps in the new state's human skills capacity, are made abundantly clear (106). American Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker's energy and sustained efforts, which for much of the

³ Another excellent source of oral history and former Soviet academic comment on this period of the Angolan War is *Southern Africa in the Cold War since 1974* (eds. Sue Onslow and Anna Mart Van Wyk, CWIHP, 2013).

time seemed pretty thankless, is remarkable, particularly when these energies were also needed to argue the State Department's corner against the National Security Council (NSC) (120). Raoul Castro's cautious and important input at critical points is striking, tempering his more excitable and irascible brother.

Despite enduring problems with accessing contemporary Soviet archives – these remain closed, or with problematic access even to former Soviet personnel turned current academics - Gleijeses weighs carefully the subtleties of Soviet/Cuban concordant overarching goals in the 'anti-imperialist struggle' in southern Africa, prestige sensitivities, frictions, and implicit resentments, particularly following the invasion of Afghanistan. He gives a truly fascinating study in the dynamics of Cuban/Soviet outlooks and discussions. (e.g., 216-223) In doing so, he again corrects any enduring 'big brother/little brother' image, to present a more complicated picture of relations and reliance between the two socialist powers and their leaders. Similarly, the acute disagreement on strategy and tactics between the Soviet theatre commander and military advisers, and Cuba's own interpretation of the needs of the struggle in Angola is well set out. Gleijeses points out Castro's keen awareness at an early stage, in 1979, of the importance of control of the air (110), which was to prove so important in Cuba's military advance in Southern Angola in 1988. But Soviet and Cuban shared frustration at the corruption and incompetence of the Angolan administration is amply demonstrated. Gleijeses charts the fluctuating Soviet input during the regimes of Soviet General Secretaries Yury Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko -- 1984 was a time of "the weakening of the Soviet position ... in Southern Africa," (237) just at a point when South Africa believed it had achieved a remarkable position of strength, following the Nkomati Accord,⁴ and which led directly to South African Prime Minister PW Botha's European tour.

The role of Jonas Savimbi – the charismatic warlord and brutal darling of an influential neo-conservative American political clique and leader of UNITA – is also situated squarely on this chessboard. Gleijeses presents a damning indictment of the American lack of knowledge of Savimbi, their chosen weapon in Southern Angola (306-12), and the usefulness of President Sese Seko Mobutu of Zaire as the conduit for American aid to UNITA. (Gleijeses repeats Crocker's comment that the American mainstream media had essentially ignored Savimbi's human rights violations until the end of 1984. He goes on to examine seven leading American newspapers which opposed aid; it would be interesting to know what the Afro-American press, which followed developments in Southern Africa closely, made of Savimbi). Rather than being a simple pawn of the South Africans (Dave Steward, the former Department of Foreign Affairs official responsible for liaising with the South African Defense Force (SADF) in southern Angola, underlined to me that South Africa

⁴ Under the Nkomati Accord, signed on 16 March 1984, South Africa and Mozambique agreed not to harbour hostile forces or allow their countries to be used as launching pads for attacks on one another. Mozambique agreed to expel the African National Congress (ANC) from their country while South Africa agreed to cease its support of RENAMO, an anti-government guerrilla organisation in Mozambique.

had no illusions about Savimbi's brutality,⁵) or an American 'white knight' against a pro-Soviet Angolan regime, Savimbi astutely manipulated both the international press and circumstance, which compensated in no small part for UNITA's limited regional power-base and military failings. At the risk of stretching a chess analogy too far, Gleijeses's analysis suggests that UNITA and its charismatic leader had the image and apparent manoeuvrability of a 'castle', but its political and geographic constituency was in reality both limited in movement, and enormously destructive to its own side.

Gleijeses carefully sets the stumbles towards, and impediments to negotiated settlement against the increasingly destructive war in Angola. It was indeed a complex diplomatic dance, against the increasingly sizeable clash of forces in southern Angola. The symbiosis of the fate of Angola and Namibia, set against a Cuban different version of this linkage, are dealt with at length. He takes on squarely the relative importance of 'the battle of Cuito Cuanavale' in 1987-1988 – both in psychological importance to the defenders, and geo-strategic calculations in the prosecution of the war. The background significance to the faltering, and then accelerated process of negotiations of the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new Soviet party head, superpower détente, and the corresponding looming isolation of Cuba and the vulnerability of its revolution in the Reagan Administration's geo-strategic backyard, is underlined clearly. I had always been struck by the vital importance of a military victory in the Angolan theatre for the prestige – and hence survival – of the Castro government *vis a vis* the United States. Based on the original documents, Gleijeses reveals the origins and outcome of this calculated gamble – but also what a risky enterprise it was. Indeed, it was a fusion of "self-preservation and revolutionary idealism" (25).

In my view, then, Gleijeses has succeeded admirably in picking up the threads of his first seminal book on the U.S., Cuba – and by extension the USSR – and southern Africa. In this light, it is a highly detailed and thoughtful exploration at the public policy level, supplemented by keen efforts made to examine the private individual motivation and input of Cuba's volunteers, from private contemporary letters and personal interviews. There is a wealth of information here, sustained arguments of Cuba's engagement and analysis of commitment, detailed exploration of personalities and policy making on the American side, and a clear understanding of geo-politics, regional influences, and the complex matrix of connections. He presents a nuanced picture of Soviet involvement, varying leadership input, and significant differences with Havana at critical points, in military as well as economic relations.

But. And it is an enormous 'but.' Gleijeses's analysis of the South African dimension is significantly limited. This is crucially important as the declared intention of the book is to present the view, motivations, and calculations of Pretoria in the complex diplomatic and military dance of this fifteen year period. Gleijeses has, evidently, conducted a number of interviews with former South African senior military personnel, and two leading diplomats, as well as mining the extensive South African archives. Yet one of the implicit challenges to any historian is to approach both documents and interviewees with as neutral a

⁵ Dave Steward interview with Sue Onslow, April 2013.

political/ideological agenda as possible – to explore, to present, and explain, with the minimal contemporary bias as possible. I stress that this should never be to justify past misplaced and repressive policies and violence. Unfortunately, Gleijeses presents South African decision making as a relative monolith in outlook and intent, although he points to its structural shortcomings (288). South African officials were not “agreed on the need to preserve apartheid” (11). He fails to outline the tensions within Afrikaner political society, across the National Party and between political generations, far from wider white South African society; and moreover, the book presents a teleological view of white-led politics in South West Africa/Namibia. As an oral history historian, who consistently uses triangulation and reference to contemporary documents, I am very well aware that people’s memories are fragile, constantly under manufacture and review, and fallible. But I was struck by the author’s comment: “Most of what (Pik Botha) said was in sharp contrast to the South African archives” (288). I would like “most” to be quantified and analyzed. In that Botha retained a very large number of documents from his ministerial office, and these remain currently inaccessible, I was curious which archives Gleijeses used to cross reference material from the interview. Furthermore, I was told by a South African Department of Foreign Affairs archivist from the pre-1994 period, that in 1992-4, a vast number of files were simply destroyed. Certainly, memories can be very unreliable, but documents can lie just as much as people. To quote Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s former Press Secretary, Sir Bernard Ingham: “Just because something is in a file doesn’t make it important.”⁶ The dawn raid on the three Commonwealth capitals on 19 May 1986, without informing the Foreign Minister who was about to receive a high-level Commonwealth delegation, was an excellent example of the dysfunctional nature of the South African state by the late 1980s.⁷ As Gleijeses spent six hours interviewing former Foreign Minister ‘Pik’ Botha, he would have been treated to Botha’s account of the Cairo meeting, and the manner in which the South Africans believed they had achieved a critical break through. There is no mention of this.

So what did the book miss? The mindset of South African decision makers -- Professor James Joll’s ‘unspoken assumptions’,⁸ the ‘ideological furniture’ which was so shared that it did not need articulation. The book presents an explanation of immediate South African decision making: how that government responded to a particular event, the immediate factors producing a military advance, etc. What is singularly lacking is a sophisticated appreciation of the ideological mindset of the South African political and military elite, its variations, and the interaction of this relatively narrow group with wider South African society. There is no presentation of the geo-political impulses, and personal dynamics and convictions that produced ‘Total National Onslaught’ and the corresponding ‘Total National Strategy’; an awareness of the severe limitations of information sharing, embedded within

⁶ Sir Bernhard Ingham to Sue Onslow, July 2011.

⁷ Vic Zazeraj and Dave Steward interviews with S Onslow, April 2013.

⁸ James Joll, “1914: the Unspoken Assumptions.” An Inaugural lecture delivered 25 April 1968. The London School of Economics, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968.

the propaganda war in Southern Africa, and particularly within South Africa itself during this time; the variations of dissent and its manifestations. The story is much larger than the ANC. The narrative implicitly suggests (for example, 290-291) a contestation between the National Party and the ANC, ignoring other important black political organizations (UDF, Black Consciousness).

There are other errors, questionable statements, and claims for which no source are cited; the statement “Washington urged Pretoria to intervene” in Angola in 1975 is suspect.⁹ The Portuguese had been more than “neighborly to the South Africans” in southern Angola before April 1974 (31) - South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal had entered an unwritten strategic alliance, Exercise ALCORA, by this point.¹⁰ Rhodesia’s white population peaked at 255,000, not 275,000 as cited in the text (33), and ‘Anglos’ was not a contemporary term. I do not agree with Gleijeses’s summary of Henry Kissinger’s initiative in Southern Africa in 1976 (36), nor his inconclusive presentation of the place of Rhodesia in South African thinking in 1976 (36), although Namibia was of course of much greater importance.

There is precious little recognition of the corresponding faltering – miscalculated, yes – attempts by the South African government at internal reform whilst ‘holding the line’ in Angola/northern Namibia. In short, Gleijeses does not articulate the ‘vision of freedom’ that the more varied Afrikaner community had for themselves, quite apart from the complexities and development of white and non-SWAPO Namibian politics. His dominant victory narrative of Cuban military triumph in Southern Angola and potential threat of ground troops across the Angolan/South West African/Namibian border, shows no awareness of the parallel and complicated secret negotiations licensed by President Botha, and conducted by Niel Barnard, Head of the South African National Intelligence Service (1980-92), with the ANC exiles. It does not place atomic capability in South African decision making in this critical period. Therefore, the presentation of the ‘Pretoria’ side of the story in this book is incomplete.

Similarly, while Gleijeses would certainly not describe Cuba as the Soviets’ ‘junior partner’, he does so when discussing the UK/ U.S. relationship over Southern Africa, which is a questionable representation of the dynamic between the Carter Administration and the British Labour Government, the brief Carter/Thatcher interlude, and the Reagan/Thatcher period (140-145). Interestingly, he does not refer to the Havana Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting in September 1979, which was of enormous importance in persuading ZAPU and ZANU to attend all party talks in London, which eventually led to the Lancaster House settlement. (Incidentally, it is incorrect to refer to the ‘foreign minister of England’; the correct term is the British Foreign Secretary. And the Thatcher government was

⁹ For a thoughtful exploration based on extensive use of archival evidence, see Jamie Miller, “Yes, Minister. Reassessing South Africa’s Intervention in the Angolan Civil War, 1975–1976,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15:3 (Summer 2013): 4–33. Reviewed for H-Diplo by Professor Chris Saunders, 20 December 2013, <http://www.h-diplo.org/reviews/PDF/AR440.pdf>

¹⁰ See Robert McNamara and Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses, “The Origins of Exercise ALCORA, 1960–71,” *International History Review*, 2013. pp. 1-22.

instrumental in persuading the Reagan administration to tolerate Mozambique. (281, 284) Mozambican President Samora Machel, and his designated emissary, Fernando Honwara, had been significant players in the 'outer diplomacy' of the Lancaster House negotiations, and Mozambique was a recipient of considerable amount of aid from a grateful Conservative government. ¹¹ In 1984, Reagan was writing in his diary that Machel was a nationalist, although he ruefully remarked it would be difficult to persuade Capitol Hill that he was not a raving Marxist. ¹²

Notwithstanding its limitations *vis-à-vis* the South Africa angle, (and to a lesser extent, the British scene and input – but then this is not the principal focus of the book) this is a significant contribution to the developing historiography on the Cold War in Southern Africa. The book presents a convincing thesis of the Cubans pushing the Soviets to help Angola, reinforcing the Cuban forces there at a critical point in 1988 against Gorbachev's express wishes, Cuban air superiority and the two-pronged heavy armoured ground push to the Angolan/Namibian border, which swung the military balance against South Africa in Angola. However, the military capability of the South African state did not crack.¹³ In Botha's view, it was the end of the Angolan war and withdrawal of Cuban forces which gave the South African state the policy space to release the leading ANC political prisoner, Nelson Mandela in February 1990.¹⁴ Cuba played a remarkable part in the region's history, which saw the independence of Namibia, an important shift in the Angolan civil war between MPLA and UNITA; and the initiation of negotiations between the F.W. De Klerk government and the ANC. But the period 1990-1994 was an equally important part of the story of South Africa's independence from white minority rule.

¹¹ See documents from Margaret Thatcher Foundation archive.

¹² Douglas Brinkley (ed): *The Reagan Diaries*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2007)

¹³ Christopher Saunders & Sue Onslow, "The Cold War and Southern Africa 1976-1990" in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2009), 222-243.

¹⁴ RF Botha interview with Sue Onslow, December 2012.

In 2007 a remarkable documentary film appeared, directed by the Egyptian Jihan el Tahri, entitled "Cuba: An African Odyssey". The first part traversed ground covered in Piero Gleijeses's first major book on the Cubans in Africa, *Conflicting Missions. Havana, Washington and Africa, 1956-1976*, which appeared in 2002.¹ The second part of the film, which included interviews with many of the key players, concerned the role of Cuba in Angola from 1975 to the return of the last Cuban soldiers from there in 1991. It is this phase of the story of Cuba in Africa that is the subject of this long-awaited sequel to *Conflicting Missions*. This time Gleijeses's sub-title lists Pretoria instead of Africa, and Moscow might have been added, for Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union is one of the threads in this book. As the naming the capitals of Cuba, the United States and South Africa in the sub-title suggests, *Visions of Freedom* is primarily a study of high politics and a work of diplomatic history.² Readers who expect a sustained account of the different 'visions' of freedom of Cuba, the United States and South Africa, let alone those of Angola and the Soviet Union, may be disappointed, for 'visions' are only focused on directly in the last few pages (where, not surprisingly, there is nothing about any vision of freedom in Cuba itself); Gleijeses's main focus is on diplomatic strategies and political, and to some extent, military actions. His focus is on Southern Africa, as the sub-title indicates; there are only a few pages devoted to the Cuban role in the Horn of Africa, where in the late 1970s Cuba played a major role in keeping in power the brutal Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. Gleijeses's main concern is Angola and Namibia, given the links between the presence of the Cubans in Angola and the South African occupation of Namibia, and he only to a limited extent attempts to place the story of the Cubans in Angola in the broader context of a region-wide 'struggle.'

I need not repeat here my endorsement that the American publishers have chosen to put on the dust jacket of this book. *Visions of Freedom* is a monumental work, even longer than *Conflicting Missions*,³ and is based on a massive amount of research. The bibliography lists archives in twelve countries and newspapers from seventeen countries, including seventeen newspapers from the United States alone. Gleijeses interviewed a very wide range of people involved in this story, though not the single most important one, Fidel

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

² Gleijeses includes only a few pages on, say, the technical assistance the Cubans gave the Angolans, and hardly anything on the social history of the Cubans in Angola. Important work has been done by Christine Hatzky, including "'Os boms colonizadores" Cuba's educational mission in Angola, 1976-1991' (*Safundi, The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 9 (1), 2008, 53-68). Her book, *Kubaner in Angola: Süd-Süd-Kooperation und Bildungstransfer 1976-1991* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012), is soon to appear in English from University of Wisconsin Press.

³ There is some repetition: what the British ambassador to Angola, Marrack Goulding, said about Savimbi being a monster (10) is repeated on 276 and 513, while many sentences on 14-15 are repeated on 515-16.

Castro. There are almost a hundred pages of endnotes. One has to admire the single-minded dedication that went into producing this book. Gleijeses tells us that for a decade he spent at least two months each year in Cuba (xi), and his persistence led to the unique access he was given to the Cuban archives. He was allowed to see some 15,000 documents relevant for this book (15).⁴ There is of course a certain irony in the fact that he was given this unique access to Cuban documents, and was also able, with other researchers, to use South African documents,⁵ when many of the relevant documents from his own country on the 1980s remained closed to him under the thirty-year rule. The Cubans were right to trust him with their documents; his book is full of praise for their role. His use of so many Cuban documents means that his study is superior to previous accounts of the Cubans in Angola, even those that drew upon at least some Cuban sources.⁶

Though impressed by the massive archival base on which this study rests, some readers may wonder how the archives he has used have influenced Gleijeses's interpretation, while the enormous research on which this book is based does not, of course, mean that it is necessarily a definitive work. Gleijeses mentions that he was not able to use archives in Angola, which are not open, and it is therefore not surprising that his book tells us little, say, about how the Angolan government worked, or its attitude to, and relationship with, the Cubans. Although a South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) archive exists in Windhoek, Namibia, it too remains closed;⁷ it would be fascinating to learn more about SWAPO interactions with the Cubans in Angola.

Gleijeses is both a remarkably meticulous researcher, with the great gift of being able to tell a narrative story in great detail yet in very lively fashion, and an ideological historian, writing to set the record straight, as he sees it, and to help create a shared memory between Americans and Cubans (cf. esp. 513). In places his writing— especially in the

⁴ Gleijeses writes that he has placed a "large selection" (16) of these documents on the website of the Cold War International History Project, and of 3,400 pages of documents there (<http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/visions-freedom-new-documents-the-closed-cuban-archives>). When this review was written I found 164 documents at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/173/cuba-and-southern-africa>. For a small selection of documents relating to his earlier book see: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB67/>.

⁵ I rescued many of these from an office in the Union Buildings and arranged for them to be put into the archives of the Department of Foreign Affairs (now International Co-Operation and Development). Some years later, I had a selection of these documents digitised for the Aluka project: www.aluka.org.

⁶ Most notably, Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991* (London: Frank Cass, 2005) and Edgar J. Dosman, "'Breaking Pretoria's Teeth': Cuba's Role in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale" in Gary Baines and Peter Vale, eds. *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008). Gleijeses does not cite Dosman's chapter or, say, Isaac Saney, 'African Stalingrad: the Cuban Revolution, Internationalism and the End of Apartheid', *Latin American Perspectives*, 33, 2006

⁷ The website of the Swapo Party Archive and Research Centre (SPARC) in Windhoek, Namibia (www.sparc.na), has disappeared from the internet.

introductory and concluding sections of his book, - verges on the polemical.⁸ While his overall argument is convincing - that the Cubans acted independently of the Soviet Union, selflessly and to good effect, while the Americans and South Africans acted reprehensibly - it is in places stated too baldly, with, in my view, insufficient reference to context. More nuance and complexity would have made this book even more impressive.

While there is no question that the Cubans came to the defence of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) in Angola and helped it to both come to power and maintain itself in power, the Cuban role in ending apartheid, especially through Cuba's 'victory' in Angola in 1988, is not as straightforward as Gleijeses sometimes suggests. A large body of scholarship now points to the need for a multi-faceted explanation for why apartheid ended when and as it did. My reading of the South African documents, along with discussions with relevant people, leads me to a somewhat different interpretation than that advanced by Gleijeses. The South African documents, he writes, "prove that [Prime Minister, then President] PW Botha and his generals had no intention of implementing Resolution 435". They "wanted to bring [General Jonas] Savimbi to power in Angola and then... would ...impose an internal solution in Namibia" (505 and cf. 278). But that is a controversial reading of some of the evidence. Those involved in government at the time confirm that the South African Government (SAG) in the years before 1988 did not seriously contemplate either abandoning UN Resolution 435 totally, or allowing a form of UDI (unilateral declaration of independence) in Namibia. The SAG knew how important international legitimacy was. Both in respect of Rhodesia and of the Bantustans' attempts to achieve 'independence' outside an internationally-recognised framework that had failed. For most of the 1980s the SAG strategy was to try to arrange matters so that a UN-organised election in Namibia would not be won outright by SWAPO. Nor did the SAG, from the documents I have seen, work in the 1980s to install Savimbi in Luanda, even if the Cubans may have feared that that was its intention; the South Africans hoped there could be some form of reconciliation between the MPLA and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), but mainly saw and used Savimbi as an ally against SWAPO.

Seeking to emphasise the importance of the Cuban role in bringing change to both Namibia (in the form of the process leading to independence via the implementation of Resolution 435) and to South Africa (in ending apartheid there), Gleijeses quotes the remarks made by the Cuban Foreign Minister at the signing of the New York agreements (491) without being critical of what he said, and writes of Cuban skill in the 1988 negotiations without comparing their alleged skill with that of anyone else. He quotes Chester Crocker, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, as saying that in July 1988 the South Africans had taken no decision to leave Angola, yet the reason why the South Africans decided to withdraw from Angola less than a month later "is abundantly clear in the U.S. and South African archives. It was Cuban military might." (508). The problem with this is that the stalemate on the battlefield did not change in that month, while the U.S. archives

⁸ It is hardly accurate to write of the Cuban soldiers "routing the South Africans" at Cassinga in 1978 (269), or to say that in late 1988 South Africa "had decided to fold" (487).

for 1988 remain closed and he does not demonstrate that the documents in the South African archives that he has read reach that conclusion. Though he writes that “when it came to Angola, the South Africans liked to thump but had no interest in talking” (505), I revealed, in an article published in 2010 and readily available on the internet, that there were numerous meetings between South African and Angolan MPLA officials from 1976 to the mid-1980s (meetings from which the Cubans were excluded).⁹ Gleijeses writes repeatedly of a Cuban “victory” in Angola in 1988 (e.g. 481) that forced Pretoria to set Namibia free, but, as many have pointed out, though the Cubans dramatically altered the military balance of power, there was no military victory as such.¹⁰ To say that “It was not Reagan that made the New York agreements possible. It was Fidel Castro” (514) is to set up an unconvincing binary; even if ‘Reagan’ is used as shorthand for an administration that included Chester Crocker, those agreements came about as a result of a complex set of factors, as Gleijeses shows in a previous chapter. With hindsight we can see that South African fears of ‘a communist onslaught’ were unnecessary, and based on very incomplete information, but one needs to understand those fears in the Cold-War context of the time, when regimes that proclaimed themselves Marxist-Leninist had come to power in both Angola and Mozambique.

There is no doubt that Piero Gleijeses has written a great book, and he must be congratulated on an amazing achievement. For all the astonishing research on which it is based, however, *Visions* is not the definitive account of all aspects of its subject-matter.

⁹ Chris Saunders, ‘The South Africa-Angola Talks, 1976-1984: A Little-known Cold War Thread’, *Kronos* 37 (2010), 104-19

¹⁰ A recent example: Leopold Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2013), especially chapters 14 and 15.

Review by Elizabeth Schmidt, Loyola University Maryland

In 2002, Piero Gleijeses published a monumental book, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, which explored the role of Cuba in Africa during the early decades of decolonization and the Cold War¹. It seemed to be his magnum opus--the culmination of a rich scholarly career. Yet, a decade later, Gleijeses has produced another extraordinary volume that carries the story through 1991, the intervening period having witnessed the collapse of white minority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia, the near destruction of apartheid in South Africa, the successful struggle to safeguard sovereignty in Angola, and the end of the Cold War. Although it touches on most countries in the Southern African region, *Visions of Freedom* focuses especially on Angola, where tens of thousands of Cuban soldiers protected the country governed by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) from South African onslaughts, and on Namibia, where the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) waged an armed struggle against South Africa's illegal occupation. Cuba's defeat of the South African Defence Force in Angola in 1988 set the stage for Namibia's long-delayed independence and helped to weaken the Pretoria regime, thus laying the groundwork for the end of apartheid in 1994.

Gleijeses's new book revolves around four key propositions. First, in its effort to establish a subordinate 'constellation of states' in Southern Africa, Pretoria waged wars of destabilization against its neighbors, targeting especially those that offered alternative development models and/or sanctuary to South African and Namibian guerrillas fighting apartheid rule. In Angola, Pretoria was determined to install a compliant government that would expel SWAPO soldiers, thus denying the organization a rear base and allowing South Africa to retain its hold on Namibia in contravention of international law. Namibia was not only a rich source of strategic minerals, but it was apartheid's last buffer against the forces of decolonization and majority rule that had swept most of the continent in the preceding decades. A puppet regime in Angola would also expel African National Congress (ANC) guerrillas who were engaged in a struggle for the liberation of South Africa itself.

Second, without the assistance provided by Cuban soldiers armed by the Soviet Union, Pretoria would certainly have toppled the MPLA government and replaced it with that of its protégé, Jonas Savimbi, leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Third, Cuba conducted an independent foreign policy in Southern Africa, one that emanated from its larger quest to vanquish racism, colonial oppression, and imperialism in the Third World. Idealism and internationalism, the core principles of the Cuban revolution, were central to this policy. In keeping with these ideals, Cuba bore most of the costs of its technical, humanitarian, and military assistance to Angola and made great human and material sacrifices for Angolan emancipation. Far from the American caricature that portrayed Cubans as Soviet mercenaries or puppets, Havana pursued a policy that was

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

often at odds with Moscow's wishes. The Kremlin's desire for détente with the United States sometimes trumped its concern for justice in Southern Africa. As a result, Cuba often forced Moscow's hand--pushing the Soviet Union to aid Angola even when it was reluctant. Cuba also challenged Soviet military policies and took action without consulting the superpower. While the MPLA's relationship with the Soviet Union was often tense--MPLA officials resented Soviet impingement on Angolan sovereignty--Angola's relationship with Cuba was characterized by mutual respect and egalitarian treatment.

Fourth, the West, led by the United States, adopted policies that promoted South African intransigence. Whether under the Democratic administration of President Jimmy Carter or the Republican administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, Washington opposed the use of sanctions to force South African compliance with international law. Although voices within these administrations sometimes counseled more aggressive action, they were unable to change the direction of U.S.-Southern Africa policy, which invariably tilted toward the Pretoria regime. The Reagan administration's 'constructive engagement' policy, in particular, provided South Africa with the protection it needed to advance its own agenda in the region. The American proposal that independence in Namibia be linked to Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola offered South Africa increased motivation to escalate its attacks on its neighbor, thus ensuring the continued presence of Cuban troops and further delay in granting Namibia independence. The United States, supported by other Western countries, did nothing to thwart South African aggression and vetoed UN Security Council sanctions at every turn. Beyond condoning South African assaults on neighboring states, Western countries demonstrated their hypocrisy by denouncing the presence of Cuban troops in Angola while supporting French and Belgian military interventions that shored up African dictators elsewhere on the continent.

Visions of Freedom is an extraordinary feat of scholarship that is painstakingly researched, cogently argued, and beautifully written. Making extensive use of the post-1959 Cuban archives, which have not been available to any other foreign scholar, and to recently opened archives in South Africa, Gleijeses offers unique insights and perspectives and fills gaps left by still-classified American documents. He supplemented these unprecedented archival records with information gleaned from official and private sources in Angola, Britain, France, Russia, the United States, Zambia, the former East Germany, and the former Yugoslavia. Finally, he conducted more than 150 interviews with participants from Angola, Cuba, Namibia, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other African countries. The diverse narratives Gleijeses constructed from the puzzle pieces are masterfully interwoven. He juxtaposes contradictory assessments of the same events and provides evidence from divergent sources, which allows readers to weigh and judge the various claims. This remarkable book provides a unique window on the processes of decolonization and the Cold War in Southern Africa. It will be an invaluable resource for scholars, students, and libraries for years to come.

In recent times, there has been a trend amongst diplomatic historians researching Africa to adopt a truly international approach to their sources. This methodology is to be welcomed. Previously, publications addressing that continent's foreign relations were often confined to the perspective of just one country, or more accurately confined to archival documents that could be accessed in this single state. Consequently, most of the English language literature on this topic is based on materials available in the United States or the United Kingdom. The U.S. presidential libraries, the U.S. National Archives in Maryland, and the UK National Archives (formerly the Public Records Office) were, and continue to be, the primary hunting grounds for historians seeking to explore Africa's diplomatic history.

Piero Gleijeses, with his 2002 book *Conflicting Missions*, offered something different.¹ This earlier volume was at the forefront of the internationalisation of our discipline. *Conflicting Missions* explored Cuba's role in the politics of southern Africa from 1959 through to 1976. It did this by cross-referencing documents sourced from Havana, the United States and South Africa. The result was a rich history of the international relations of the region that eloquently charted the interests and influence of these three actors. Gleijeses's multi-actor, multi-archive and multi-continent approach to his methodology reaped rich rewards.

Visions of Freedom builds upon this earlier success of *Conflicting Missions* on several levels. In the first instance, this book, like the last, represents scholarship of high quality. There has been no decline in the excellent standard of research, nor in the accessible manner in which the findings are presented. Second, Gleijeses has continued his impressive work utilising Cuban, U.S., and South African archives (in addition to a number of other documents accessed from the UK, Russia, Italy, and Germany). In the case of Cuba, Gleijeses has, once again, enjoyed unique access to official materials. The third continuity is that *Visions of Freedom* follows on from *Conflicting Missions* chronologically. Gleijeses picks up the history of these international relations in 1976, where he had left off with his earlier volume.

Visions of Freedom offers a detailed study of Cuba's political and military intervention in the Angolan war, while also addressing the regional and international ramifications of this intervention. The book's starting point is the arrival of the Jimmy Carter administration in 1976. The narrative then progresses chronologically through events until the withdrawal of Cuban troops from the region in 1991. Gleijeses exhaustively charts the interaction of Angolan, Cuban, and South African interests, alongside these actors' policy decisions and policy implementation with respect to Angolan security. We also learn of the influence of the United States and the Soviet Union on this conflict. In this respect, the motives behind Shaba I and Shaba II are forensically investigated, as is the support from Presidents Jimmy

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hills: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Carter and Ronald Reagan for the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), and Angola and Cuba's support for the regional liberation movements. The book's main focus is the military strategies adopted by the various actors, alongside their diplomatic approach to the protracted 'linkage' negotiations that accompanied these hostilities. Each milestone is considered in impressive detail. Given that the independence of Namibia was central to this history, this territory is also covered in some detail within the book, as are U.S.-Cuban and Soviet-Cuban bi-lateral relations.

What *Visions of Freedom* is not, however, is a complete diplomatic history of the southern African region during this period. The book's subtitle, in this respect, is slightly misleading. Other aspects of the 'Struggle of Southern Africa' are largely omitted. Carter's Rhodesia policy is giving an airing, but policies addressing apartheid itself, Mozambique, and the positions of the other Front Line States and liberation movements are only seriously addressed when they have an impact on Cuba or Angola. This by no means detracts from the quality of the book, but a different sub-title might have been considered. Gleijeses has illuminated only one strand of the highly complex set of relationships that make up the diplomatic history of the region at this time.

Visions of Freedom may also occasionally stray too far away from the objective for some readers' tastes. Personally, I did not find this a distraction. Gleijeses's enthusiasm for his subject, and the quality of research, more than make up for any pre-disposition he displays favouring Cuba's intervention. The book produces a reasonable case that Cuba was "the engine" of international history in this region, and there can be little doubt that "Cuba changed the course of history in southern Africa," as the author suggests (15). Throughout the book, however, it is evident that Gleijeses's sympathies lie with the Cuban government's position. This is by no means to say that *Visions of Freedom* is uncritical of Cuba, or generally lacking objectivity, as most of the author's points are supported by an overwhelming balance of evidence, but there is an emphasis here on Cuba as a positive 'engine of history'. The narrative is one of Havana dutifully standing guard in Angola, willing to pay the price of "humiliating one superpower and repeatedly defying another." As Gleijeses has it, Cuba successfully held "the line against apartheid" (15).

I would also point to this book's lack of a 'meta-narrative'. The detail is impressive, as is the coverage of the of the individual incidents that make up this period of diplomatic history, but, at times, more could have been said about the broader perspective, providing more sign-posts to readers as they progress chronologically through these years. Likewise, a more detailed introductory chapter could have highlighted the book's structure a little better, and more time could have been spent in the final chapter summing up the findings of this research.

As a British reviewer, I also feel bound to chastise Gleijeses for referring to the United Kingdom as "England" (38, 185, 199, and 262), but all the grumbles above are insignificant when measured against what Gleijeses has achieved with *Visions of Freedom*. Whereas previously we largely only had one perspective on these events, related via the memoirs of Chester Crocker (President Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs), Gleijeses has given us the viewpoint of Cuban, Angolan, and South African actors, in

addition to other U.S. and (to a lesser extent) Soviet participants.² The nuances of these differing policies, and the interests they served, have been revealed. As a consequence, scholars and politicians alike can no longer claim that Cuba was merely a stooge of the Soviet Union, nor can the Angolan government be characterised as being beholden to its Cuban guests. Luanda is shown to have acted without consulting Havana on a number of occasions. *Visions of Freedom* is also adept at identifying fissures in U.S. policy created by conflicting (domestic) political and diplomatic agendas. In short, Gleijeses has introduced nuance into the account of these events; nuance that this chapter of Africa's history richly deserves, given the various self-serving ideological and racist narratives that have served as the history of the region in the past. In this respect, once again, Gleijeses is leading the way in providing a truly international diplomatic history of the region.

² Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: Norton, 1992).

I awaited this sequel to Piero Gleijeses' first groundbreaking book, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976*¹, with much anticipation. Being of Afrikaner heritage, I had brothers who were conscripted soldiers in the apartheid government's 'Border War'. Growing up in those years, and seeing my folks agonize over the safety of my brothers, the realization became increasingly stronger that on the other side, there was also someone's son, maybe not in the same situation of having no choice in the matter, but nonetheless someone whose mother most likely agonized over his well-being. Besides adding tremendously to my knowledge on geopolitics in southern Africa, *Conflicting Missions* provided me with a glimpse into 'the life on the other side', and I eagerly awaited *Visions of Freedom*, which would reveal more of the story. I wasn't disappointed. Like *Conflicting Missions*, *Visions of Freedom* boasts a rich historical narrative built on unprecedented multilingual and multi-archival research, spanning more than a decade, in the United States, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and Cuba. The detail is incredible, spiced with apt and numerous quotes as well as photos and political cartoons. I have to confess I was very impressed when I met Gleijeses on his first visit to South Africa, and experiencing how quickly and fluently he managed to read Afrikaans books and documents. Historians of this period are also in his debt for pulling off the declassification of South African archival documents pertaining to the State Security Council, with the assistance of African National Council (ANC) heavyweights such as Aziz Pahad and Ronnie Kasrils.

Turning to *Visions of Freedom* itself, it kicks off with an overview of the rise of Cuban internationalism through military aid and humanitarian assistance, which eventually found its way to Angola in the form of foot soldiers. From there, the book gradually weaves a narrative of opposing systems in Washington, Havana and Pretoria all focusing on a region that Gleijeses describes as "until 1974 ... a backwater of the Cold War" (9). Following the 1974 revolution in Portugal, Washington's support of Portugal was brought to an end. Portugal withdrew from Angola after the revolution, and what started as a local conflict was soon catapulted into a Cold-War crisis. Washington chose to focus its support on forces such as the Angolan movement National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which opposed the pro-communist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government, and, even while publically distancing itself from Pretoria, turned a blind eye to atrocities committed by forces such as UNITA and the apartheid government in Pretoria, instead collaborating with these entities in an effort to force the MPLA out of power and to squash the activities of the Namibian liberation movement, Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). Within this narrative, which documents in minute detail all the battles and diplomacy in southern Africa from 1976-1991, Gleijeses places the focus squarely on Cuba, which sent pilots, planes, weapons, and thousands of troops to Angola, alongside Cuban and Soviet instructors who trained SWAPO and ANC guerillas in military camps in the region.

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Gleijeses succeeds in thoroughly destroying the prevailing perception that the Cubans acted as “Moscow’s mercenaries” (29). Indeed, far from this contention, Cuba acted unilaterally despite Soviet opposition, relegating the Soviets to a supporting role only. For example, in November 1975, when Cuba sent troops to Angola, and in November 1987, Castro sent reinforcements to Angola in an effort to force the South African troops out once and for all (13-14), leading Gorbachev to later write in his memoirs: “the Cuban government got us involved in ... difficult situations, like Angola” (14). Yet, throughout all the years that Cuban troops were on the ground in Angola, the Soviet Union steadily supplied military and economic support. The outcome, according to Gleijeses was a Cuban victory in 1988 that forced Pretoria to withdraw, set South West Africa free, and broke the back of apartheid, thereby fulfilling Castro’s commitment to “the most beautiful cause, the struggle against apartheid” (30).

There is no doubt that this book and its prequel contribute valuable information to the historiography of the Cold War in southern Africa. No other set of books recounts the Cuban story in such a colorful and detailed manner. Undoubtedly, the sacrifices that Cuba made in order to maintain thousands of troops on the ground for more than a decade lends some truth to former freedom struggle leader and South African President Nelson Mandela’s closing epitaph: “What other country can point to a record of greater selflessness than Cuba has displayed in its relations to Africa?” (526). In short, Gleijeses does a fabulous job of telling the Cuban, Soviet and even American side of the story. However, I could not help but notice that the interviews in South Africa was a bit unbalanced when compared to the interviews done in Angola and Namibia. This might have been to counter the fact that there were few or no documents in the latter states, in comparison with South Africa, whose archives are described by Gleijeses as “brimming with documents that shed light on U.S. policy in the region” (16). Another observation is the scornful use of language when referring to Washington or Pretoria; for example, the prolific use of “lame” (58) when detailing explanations or statements, in comparison to praise being constantly heaped on Cuba. Yes, Cuba did sacrifice a lot in maintaining its commitment to “the most beautiful cause” (15) in Angola, but does that totally discount the South African side of the story – a South Africa where ordinary white citizens were forced to fight in a war they did not always understand or support? In this regard, I think interviewing South African troops on the ground could have added a varied dimension to the scornful treatment of white South Africa as perpetually racist, fascist, and imperialist.

I am curious about how the Cubans perceived the rampant rumors of South Africa developing a nuclear deterrent, especially following the discovery of the Kalahari test site in 1977 and the perceived nuclear explosion in the South Atlantic in 1979. The issues around South Africa’s perceived nuclear development enjoys no particular attention in the book, despite contentions by Jorge Risquet, Cuba’s leading civilian negotiator in Africa who enjoyed close ties to Fidel and Raul Castro, on two occasions (one during a meeting with

former apartheid foreign minister Pik Botha during a visit to South Africa in 2010²) that Cuba was aware of the rumors and that it did play a role in troop deployment, i.e. not congregating troops in one specific location, in fear of a possible South African nuclear attack.

Glejeses is to be congratulated on another important book, which should become part of the collection of every historian working on southern Africa, and essential reading for any module dealing with Cuba, southern Africa, the Border War, and geopolitics. It is a real page-turner.

² R.F. Botha, Dave Steward and Waldo Stumpf, "Nuclear disarmament in South Africa: Historic events and lessons for the Middle East", *Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East Policy Brief*, Nos. 28-29 (November 2013): 10.

Author's Response by Piero Gleijeses, Johns Hopkins University

I am delighted that H-Diplo organized a roundtable on *Visions of Freedom*, and I thank Tom Maddux, Diane Labrosse, and the participants. I am very pleased that all the readers considered the book a worthy successor to *Conflicting Missions*.

In my reply, I will focus only on what I consider the readers' major criticisms.

First, Jamie Miller and Sue Onslow upbraid me for not discussing South Africa's domestic politics. In so doing they both display great erudition about South African politics. However, this topic has no place in *Visions of Freedom*. The story I tell and analyze is complicated and, frankly, long. I have therefore kept my focus clear: *Visions of Freedom* is not about domestic politics – in the United States or in Cuba or in South Africa.

Second, several of the reviewers allege that I am biased in favor of Cuba. There is an enormous literature on bias and objectivity in history, and I do not propose to rehash these debates here. To me, objectivity – or lack of bias – means that I follow the evidence *wherever* it takes me; then, and only then, do I draw conclusions. I have never tailored my evidence, or my conclusions, to please the bias of my readers or my reviewers or my editors. The evidence leads me to my conclusions, and I dare say that on this subject no one has gathered more evidence. Years of combing through the documents – Cuban, US, European, and South African – and of interviewing the participants has led me to believe that the Cuban contribution to the liberation of southern Africa is beyond dispute. I am not biased. Nor am I – or could I be, after weighing the evidence – neutral. I am both objective *and* judgmental. I believe that it is a grave mistake to confuse 'judgmental' with "lack of objectivity." I also believe that this mistake is made only when the judgment does not fit the bias of the reader.

Does the evidence support my conclusions? Yes. Let me give two specific examples countering objections raised by Onslow and Chris Saunders.

Onslow objects to my treatment of the South African foreign minister, Pik Botha, particularly my statement that "Most of what he said [when I interviewed him] was in sharp contrast to the South African archives." Onslow comments, "I would like 'most' to be quantified and analyzed. ... I was curious which archives Gleijeses used to cross reference material from the interview." This is puzzling because my footnotes are thorough, and on the very page from which Onslow quotes (288) I specifically indicate in what regard Pik Botha's recollections did correspond with the written record.

Onslow questions my treatment of the June 1988 Cairo meeting, asking why I did not include Pik Botha's recollections of it. Onslow writes: "As Gleijeses spent six hours interviewing former Foreign Minister 'Pik' Botha, he would have been treated

to Botha's account of the Cairo meeting.... There is no mention of this." She is right on both counts: like everyone else who listens to Pik Botha, I got his take on the meeting, and I omitted it from my analysis. Why? Because as a serious historian I have a responsibility to separate the factual from the fictional. What Pik Botha told me is contradicted by the evidence from the South African, the U.S., and the Cuban archives. The accounts of the Cairo meeting in all these archives (which are footnoted extensively) tell a similar story. Even though the governments of these three countries saw the events from very different points of view, they all agreed that it was the shift in the military situation on the ground in southern Angola that turned the tide of the negotiations. The version that Pik Botha likes to tell his listeners is relevant only if one wishes to ridicule or psychoanalyze the man. Because I have no vendetta against Pik Botha, I omitted his account.

Saunders is skeptical of my conclusion that it was the Cuban victory in southern Angola that changed the dynamic at the negotiating table. However, he brings no contrary evidence to the table. He simply remains skeptical despite the mass of evidence, from many archives, that led me to this conclusion.

Allow me to cite four of the most telling pieces of evidence. The first is from US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James Woods who told Pik Botha on June 24, 1988, hours before the Cairo meeting began, that the Cuban troops in southern Angola were strong enough to "take and occupy" South African bases in Namibia "and drive South African forces further south."¹ The second is from the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. On July 28, 1988, they stated: "The South African Defense Force (SADF) is extremely concerned about the tactical advantage that the Cuban forces have in southern Angola. ... If it comes to major battles with the Cubans, there will be significant losses in the SADF. ... Cuban air superiority and excellent anti-air capability pose a real problem to the South African Air Force."² The third piece of evidence is from a close aide of Pik Botha, also in July 1988: "If we are not prepared to grant independence to SWA [South West Africa, or Namibia] ... we must face up to the consequences." These included "the very real risk of becoming involved in a full-scale conventional war with the Cubans. The results of which are potentially disastrous. ... We must be prepared to accept white casualties running into the thousands."³ The fourth is from the chief of the SADF, General Jannie Geldenhuys, in August 1988. After acknowledging that the Cuban air force was stronger than the South African, he said, "We must therefore do our utmost to prevent a confrontation. If this is not possible, and a confrontation is inevitable, then we should take the

¹ "Summary minutes of a meeting held at the U.S. embassy in Cairo on 24 June 1988 between the South African and U.S. delegations to the Cairo talks," SWA/Angola, Angola Talks, v. 2, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria.

² JCS, 28 July 1988, National Security Archive, Washington DC.

³ Mike Malone to A. Jacquet, enclosed in Jacquet to Pik Botha, 20 July 1988, SWA/Angola, v. 2, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria.

offensive knowing that our air force will be neutralized in a short time.”⁴

True, as Onslow says, documents can lie, but the historian’s task is to ferret out the truth. When multiple documents from multiple archives converge, particularly when the archives represent different worldviews, lies – and truths – can be detected. Furthermore, historians must use their common sense. U.S. and South African officials repeatedly asserted in the summer of 1988 that the Cuban forces in southern Angola had gained military superiority. Why would they lie about this?

The conclusions of *Visions of Freedom* are rigorously based on the evidence. I would welcome a serious debate contesting these conclusions -- if it were based on the evidence. To contest its conclusions without reference to the evidence is -- if I may be allowed the word -- bias.

Finally, Alex Thompson points out that I give short shrift to Rhodesia. He is right. Rhodesia was tangential to my story and, as I say above, in constructing this complicated story I tried to maintain a rigorous focus. Moreover, I had no desire to try to duplicate a manuscript that will be published next year by Stanford University /Wilson Center Press. Nancy Mitchell’s “Race and the Cold War: Kissinger, Carter and Africa” offers by far the best treatment that I have seen of U.S. policy toward Rhodesia (and also the Horn crisis). Therefore, in *Visions of Freedom* I provided the bare bones, awaiting Mitchell’s path-breaking work.

⁴ Geldenhuys, “Samevatting van notasmbt SAW-operasies in Suid-Angola,” 23 Aug. 1988, H SAW, gr. 4, box 160, Department of Defense, Documentation Centre, Pretoria.