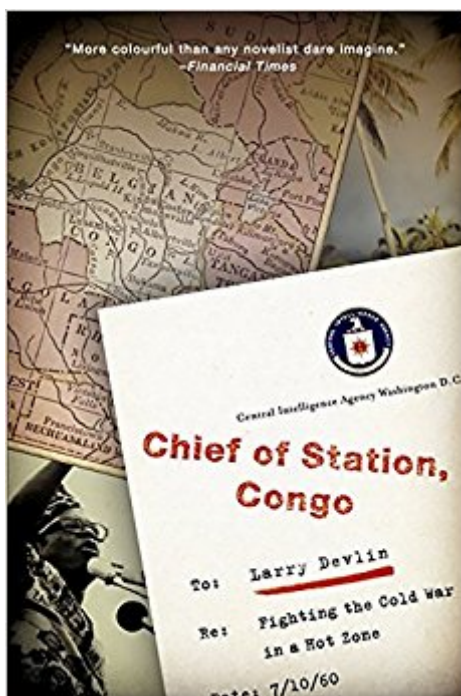


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Chief Of Station, Congo: Fighting The Cold War In A Hot Zone



Synopsis

Larry Devlin arrived as the new chief of station for the CIA in the Congo five days after the country had declared its independence, the army had mutinied, and governmental authority had collapsed. As he crossed the Congo River in an almost empty ferry boat, all he could see were lines of people trying to travel the other way out of the Congo. Within his first two weeks he found himself on the wrong end of a revolver as militiamen played Russian-roulette, Congo style, with him. During his first year, the charismatic and reckless political leader, Patrice Lumumba, was murdered and Devlin was widely thought to have been entrusted with (he was) and to have carried out (he didn't) the assassination. Then he saved the life of Joseph Desire Mobutu, who carried out the military coup that presaged his own rise to political power. Devlin found himself at the heart of Africa, fighting for the future of perhaps the most strategically influential country on the continent, its borders shared with eight other nations. He met every significant political figure, from presidents to mercenaries, as he took the Cold War to one of the world's hottest zones. This is a classic political memoir from a master spy who lived in wildly dramatic times.

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Customer Reviews

In this vivid, authoritative account of being CIA station chief in Congo during the height of the Cold War, Devlin brings to life a harrowing tale of postcolonial political intrigue, covert violence and the day-to-day reality of being a key player in a global chess match between superpowers. Posted to Congo in 1960, Devlin quickly found himself at the swirling center of conflict — the Belgian

colonial rulers had pulled out, the local strongmen had begun what would be a decades-long struggle for power and the Soviet Union was sending agents to influence events. Arriving on the scene with his wife and young daughter in tow, Devlin finds "central authority had broken down; there was no one in control who could prevent random acts of barbarity." As the country begins to fall apart and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba starts flirting with the Soviets, orders come from Washington for "his removal." Within weeks Lumumba is not only out of power but dead. While the rest of the book is full of exciting cloak-and-dagger derring-do and scrapes with death, it is this incident that haunts Devlin. He devotes the last chapter of the book to a point-by-point refutation of his or the agency's involvement in Lumumba's death. That alleged assassination is often used to illustrate the hypocrisy in U.S. foreign policy. Devlin's straightforward, plainly written approach to the task lends credence to his assertion of innocence. (Mar.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When Belgium ceded independence to the Congo in 1960, one of the cold war's most acute crises erupted. The French-speaking Devlin was there as the CIA's man in Leopoldville (today, Kinshasa) with a charge to defeat a Soviet and Chinese Communist surge into the country. This memoir shows the author in best light as a station chief with personal courage and cultural astuteness, a quick thinker in sticky situations, many potentially lethal. The hair-raising incidents, often at roadblocks, once with burglars in his house, so common in Devlin's narrative will instill those interested in operational intelligence careers with the 24/7 risks of a posting in the field, while his involvement with political developments in chaotic, post-independence Congo contributes primary testimony to the history of the period. Devlin acknowledges, for example, receiving an order to assassinate leftist premier Patrice Lumumba, but says he opposed it as immoral and did not carry it out. Including his personal impressions of Mobutu, the eventual victor in Congo's early 1960s turmoil, Devlin's retrospective will rivet the espionage set. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Larry Devlin shows how a resourceful CIA agent can cause a difference in the Cold War. He reluctantly received the chief of station of the Congo Republic in 1960. He was advised he needed two proper suits and his golf clubs, he went into Brazzaville expecting no problems. Upon discovering the hoarde of whites fleeing across the Congo River, he prepared himself for the worst. I really enjoyed this story. The former Belgian Congo is such a large country, and the rivalries were

so complex, it is difficult to understand. Devlin reveals all the rivals for power, and his assessment of them. Even though I doubt Mobutu was all that good, maybe the rest of the lot was worse than him. His book makes sense of the warring factions competing in Zaire. Other books did not always give that view. Lumumba was viewed in a very negative light. This is a great book for those trying to understand what a CIA agent does in a foreign country. It also shows an activist agent determining policy, since Washington was unable to lead the way. A very interesting read.

With the U.S. assassination of Osama Bin Laden still fresh in the public's mind, Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone is an incredibly timely piece of writing. Lawrence Devlin provides a perspective not often represented in many discussions surrounding the Bin Laden assassination. Devlin details his feelings of frustration and concern when given orders to assassinate the leader of the Congo, Lumumba. This honesty may come as a surprise to the reader expecting Devlin to be the typical an-order's-an-order CIA agent. His honesty is equally shocking regarding his defense of his decision to back the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in two separate coups. While Devlin attempts to examine his past decisions with a cold eye, there is undoubtedly a bias in his reporting. As an ex Chief of Station for the CIA, Devlin is not always examining his own actions, as well as the actions of the United States, from a global perspective. Though often insightful, the novel lacks a complete account of events in the Congo. All in all, certain details in the book lack international understanding. However, Devlin's perspective serves as a unique commentary on cold war politics, and on the early years of the CIA. Of course, what would a book about the CIA be without some sexy tales of espionage? Devlin presents even some of the most mundane details of working in the Congo through the lens of a fresh faced agent, making each experience a wild and unexpected plot twist. Devlin is careful to toe the line of confidentiality, revealing intimate details about the Eisenhower administration, but maintaining secrecy regarding other agents and issues that may still carry weight in the global political sphere. This well written, fast paced book is a must read for cold war enthusiasts, whether buff or beginner. The anti-communist mindset permeates almost every detail of the book, and is highlighted by Devlin's commentary nearly 50 years after the end of Cold War. The book addresses controversial questions surrounding international interference, government sponsored assassinations, and U.S. foreign policy in a Hollywood caliber action narrative. Not to mention the kindle edition is environmentally friendly and affordable!

This is a good read for someone who wants to know how things were like in the Congo during the

Cold War. So many Congo books are written by Academics who have no real world knowledge but merely wish to assign blame for the problems faced there. Instead, I challenge you to read this book to see how things were on the streets. It never ceases to amaze how many folks in University-land write books about places they have never been, and with a pre-conceived notion that everything bad that happens everywhere is because of the 'evil Western man'. Reality check in this book - many of the issues in the Congo were because it was the Congo. No need for more Western apologists. As someone living in Africa now (but not during the Cold War) I can tell you this book is refreshing!

I am half-way through this book and find it very, very interesting. Considering it is a true story it is filled with so many facts unknown to me. The writing is fantastic and the story line, well, it is hard to put the book down and get to work for I keep wanting to know what happens next. Each chapter has so much suspense; then when one realizes this is a true story, well, it leaves the reader wanting to keep reading. I love what I have read so far (1/2 way through this great book)

Bought this to do research for a college paper...which turned into three papers and a brief...which turned into my final essay. EXTREMELY well written; an informative yet entertaining memoir - not the usual double-speak and bureaucratese we see from many officials today. Re-reading it for the second time to make sure I didn't miss anything.

I could hardly stay awake reading this book other than its explanation of our meddling in the affairs of the Congo.

Great insight into one of the most interesting playing fields of the cold war.

Very interesting account about the internal workings of an embassy and its different sections. The writer also provides a good understanding of the personalities in the new Congo politics and how they handle to handle situations where they were not prepared for. Definitely worth to read for those who like to understand better the early days of the DRC.

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