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Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1970s
ed. by Chris Saunders, Helder Adegar Fonseca, and Lena Dallywater (review)

Roger Kanet

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ideological framework, its domestic motors, and its connection to shifts in the U.S. economy. Kapstein's triumph lies in presenting U.S. efforts to export capitalism since 1945 as an area of current historical enquiry, and his work will be a valuable foundation for further studies of this topic.



Chris Saunders, Helder Adegar Fonseca, and Lena Dallywater, eds., *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1970s*. Oldenbourg, Germany: De Gruyter, 2023. viii + 372 pp. \$93.99.

Reviewed by Roger Kanet, University of Miami (deceased)

For more than five decades, studies of Soviet and East European Communist states' relations with Africa have been an important topic for scholars. When I first began exploring this topic, the literature was quite small and limited in its coverage. The book under review here, *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa: New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s*, fills much of the gap that still exists for the decades immediately after World War II—the initial years of decolonization. However, the resulting volume is not a single, integrated treatment of the topic; rather, it is a collection of essays that deal with multiple aspects of policy and relations during this period. In fact, it really comprises three volumes—the first concerned with Lusophone Africa, the second with South Africa, and the third with a variety of issues related to Soviet and East European policies toward other African countries.

In an introductory chapter discussing Soviet-bloc relations with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the co-editors (Chris Saunders, Helder Adegar Fonseca, and Lena Dallywater) highlight several important questions that are posed in the chapters to come. First are reconsiderations of assessments of the topic prevalent during the Cold War, which tended to view the relationships primarily within the context of East-West conflict. The second of these issues concerns the resources available to Soviet-bloc states and African countries in their relations. The third question pertains to the outcomes of these various relationships.

The first part of the volume includes, after a brief introductory section, five chapters about the relationships of Soviet-bloc states with the Portuguese-speaking anti-colonial movements and colonies of southern Africa. The authors examine the initial contacts of Communist states with Angola; China's and the Soviet bloc's dealings with Angolan guerrilla movements and the impact of the Sino-Soviet split; the Lusophone African movements and the Soviet-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions; the impact of Yugoslavia's cinematic and cultural work on ties with Mozambican guerrillas fighting colonialism; and Czechoslovakia's provision of technical experts to independent Angola—part of an emerging policy adopted by other Communist countries as well.

These chapters are clearly written and provide detailed information not readily available elsewhere. Students of East-bloc relations with Africa in the postwar period will find this section of the book of great value. One important strength is the wealth of references it makes to the existing scholarly literature on the topic. Almost every important item about the issue is cited by the individual authors.

Part II of the volume takes generally the same approach in southern Africa, especially South Africa, offering detailed descriptive studies based on a broad range of primary and secondary sources. The first of these essays treats the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on Soviet policy toward independence movements in southern Africa in the 1960s. The second chapter in this section treats the relationship between Marxism-Leninism and alignment, primarily for the Soviet bloc's ties with the independence movement of Basutoland.

The role of the Soviet bloc in contributing to the end of apartheid in South Africa is the focus of the third chapter in part II. The events described in the chapter coincided with the political changes in Europe that led to the demise of East European Communism, the end of the Cold War, and eventually the dissolution of the USSR. The final chapter in this section concerns the relationship between the Soviet Union (in its final days) and South Africa and the role of the former in the latter's successful attempt to sign on to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Section III of the book covers a disparate set of topics concerning European Communist policies and specific issues in Africa. The first chapter discusses a major African student conference held in 1962 in Belgrade, where Soviet-bloc states attempted to establish solid relationships with potential leaders from Africa. The next chapter deals with the relationship between the Soviet Union and the federal military government of Nigeria that included substantial cooperation between the two countries during the Nigerian civil war. Economic, political, and military contacts between the Warsaw Pact and Libya in the 1970s and 1980s is the focus of the third chapter in section III.

The final chapter in that section briefly touches on some legacies of past relations between African countries and Communist states. Many of the African students who spent time in Soviet-bloc states maintained their ideological affinities, with a commitment to the establishment of a socialist society. The amicability of the Soviet Union's relations with African countries carried over into the post-Soviet era in favor of the Russian Federation. South Africa and other key African countries declined to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the brutal war that ensued.

The most valuable part of the book is Part I, which will be of great interest to anyone concerned with the Soviet bloc's involvement in Africa, especially in the Portuguese colonies. One noteworthy feature of the book as a whole is that the editors and contributors to the book are exclusively from Europe (including Russia) and Africa. In the past, most of the scholars who discussed the topics covered here were from North America. This, perhaps, explains why the editors declare at the outset that one of the purposes of the book is to reassess the issues discussed by scholars during the Cold War. The book is a welcome effort to reexamine and add to the earlier literature.

