

*Africa in the Time of Cholera* is a major contribution to the history of Africa and to the medical literature on infectious disease. It is the first to draw together the outlines of the first six global cholera pandemics and the first to explore Africa's experience with the Seventh Pandemic, during which cholera has primarily become an African disease. It will become a standard reference for scholars and policy analysts who strive to understand the reasons for cholera outbreaks within Africa and across the globe.

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## A SOVIET VIEW ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

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*The Hot 'Cold War': The USSR in Southern Africa.* By VLADIMIR SHUBIN. London: Pluto Press, 2008. Pp. xvi + 320. \$30.00, paperback (ISBN 978-0-7453-2472-2).  
KEY WORDS: Southern Africa, ideology, politics/political, postcolonial.

This engaging book provides a Soviet view and sometimes eyewitness account of the history of southern African liberation movements. A former head of the Africa Section of the Soviet Communist Party's International Department, Vladimir Shubin does not claim impartiality and he acknowledges the inadequacy of available archival materials. Nevertheless, he does not avoid critiquing Soviet policies and his scholarly background—he has authored numerous publications, including a book on the African National Congress, and held several academic positions—is evident in his interrogation of contentious details. Most of this absorbing study covers Angola but includes much shorter sections on Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, the latter briefly discussed almost as a postscript.

Shubin's central thesis that the Cold War was an ideological construct of the West explains the inverted commas in the book's title. He asserts the Soviet Union did not view events in southern Africa as a contest with the United States, but rather provided support as a genuine expression of its commitment to African liberation from European colonialism. To bolster this argument, he insists that the Soviets never limited assistance to Marxist or even radical groups nor did they pressure allies to choose sides in global politics. For example, the Soviet Union was aware of the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO)'s early support from the Chinese and later negotiations with the Americans, yet it remained a loyal patron of the Mozambican movement. Shubin therefore dismisses the notion of a 'Soviet camp', a term he explains that ceased to be used by Moscow itself in the 1960s.

A second argument is that Soviet organizations were not monolithic entities making unquestioned, top-down decisions. Shubin details the debates, disagreements, and failures of Soviet analysts and politicians and routinely includes phrasing such as '... different opinions were expressed on various crucial issues' (p. 186) to accentuate his point. Shubin portrays his Soviet colleagues as hardworking, honest, and cautious, sometimes confused about events and personalities, but usually on the mark in their analyses. While Soviet officials on occasion voiced doubts and frequently offered advice to their African counterparts, they come across as willing to please, generously arranging the travel allowances,

educational scholarships, and military equipment regularly requested by southern African leaders. Indeed, the 'volume and diversity' (p. 179) of Soviet material support for the liberation movements was quite astonishing.

A third overall theme is Shubin's effort to correct the record set by Western scholars. He is emphatic that the Soviets never dictated policy nor set conditions on assistance. For instance, he points out that South Africans made the decision to turn to violence themselves, while Moscow continued to stress political work in the struggle against apartheid. Shubin also consistently highlights the successes of the liberation movements backed by the Soviets. Many academic works have dismissed the impact of guerilla operations inside South Africa, for example, but Shubin writes of 'stunning operations' in the early 1980s (p. 251). Lastly, the author downplays disagreements amongst socialist powers, particularly between Moscow and Havana in Angola, arguing that debates between the two allies were always healthy and never acrimonious. His chapters on Angola are particularly informative and add a Soviet perspective to the Cuba-centered account offered by Piero Gleijeses in his masterpiece *Conflicting Missions*.

Among the book's most intriguing insights are the discussions by Soviet officials about southern African leaders who were met on the sidelines of international conferences, on trips to Moscow, or at meetings in host African capitals. We learn that the Soviets had mixed feelings about Angola's Angostinho Neto (he was considered too independent and sympathetic to China) and concerns about Zimbabwe's Joshua Nkomo (he was viewed as weak, at least initially). In Mozambique, the Soviets admired and respected Eduardo Mondale but were more cautious about Samora Machel, whom they regarded as recklessly radical and critical of Soviet influence. Subin's account most flatters Namibia's Sam Nujoma, a leader considered reasonable, calm, and disciplined by Soviet officials, especially during difficult times.

Since most Soviet-era records remain sealed or lost, Shubin's narrative is punctuated with expressions such as 'I recall', 'I also heard', and 'If my memory serves me well'. He had direct experience with many of the events described in the book as well as access to the personal files of a number of Soviet officials. Shubin offers many asides in his narrative, often terming what he heard in conversations or read in notes 'fascinating' or 'peculiar', and he includes many humorous stories. It is not clear if Shubin's writing or the translation from the original Russian is to blame for some minor flaws in the book. The overuse of quotation marks is distracting, particularly when surrounding the same word throughout the text. Occasionally his points are weakened by name-calling such as when he labels one South African critic a 'renegade' (p. 75) and another from Cuba a 'traitor' (p. 76) or dismisses an argument by a Mozambican as 'nonsense, and a very treacherous form of it' (p. 146). Though his explanations at times appear defensive, repeatedly calling theses by Western scholars 'controversial', Shubin acknowledges mistakes made by the Soviet Union, such as the failure to establish contact with Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) when their support was limited to Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). He criticizes Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev when '... although partly incapacitated by illness, [he] had begun looking for new titles and awards' (p. 140) and he is dismissive of the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev who, by the late 1980s, 'was visibly losing interest in the Third World' (p. 230).

*The 'Hot' Cold War* is written with sincerity and enthusiasm and balances the existing literature on the subject. As Shubin argues, in reference to the epic defeat of the South African apartheid army in Angola: '... if initially many politicians and authors tried to portray Cubans as "Soviet proxies", a new tendency appeared after the "collapse" of the Soviet Union: downplaying the role of the Soviets and

emphasizing the differences between Havana and Moscow. It is now the right time to set the record straight' (p. 73).

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## MEANINGS OF MEMORY IN THE BRAZIL-BENIN NEXUS

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*Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic.*

By ANA LUCIA ARAUJO. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010. Pp. xix + 478. \$134.99, hardback (ISBN 978-1-60497-714-1).

KEY WORDS: Diaspora, memory, political culture, slavery, slave trade.

Recently, there has been an outpouring of scholarship on the relationship between slavery and memory. Ana Lucia Araujo has been at the forefront of this rich interdisciplinary trend, producing several edited works and conference panels that bring together scholars from across Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Araujo has now produced her own major work on the topic, examining the conflicting debates over the memorialization of slavery and the slave trade, focusing particularly on the connections between Benin and Brazil. For Araujo, the Brazil-Benin nexus represents a unique field for testing the meanings of memory because of the persistent circulations of ideas and peoples between the two regions since the eighteenth century. She argues that despite deep and enduring South Atlantic connections, the memorialization of slavery in Brazil and Benin has nevertheless evolved in very local ways.

The first three chapters of the book are mostly introductory, reviewing well-worn subjects such as the slave trade (chapter one), the recent history of debates over the memorialization of slavery in the US, England, Senegal, and Benin (chapter two), and the history of connections between Benin and Brazil (chapter three). It is not until chapter four, nearly a third of the way into the book, that Araujo begins to move beyond the secondary literature and present her own original research. For experts, these early chapters will seem rather superfluous and at times rushed. Had Araujo edited these early chapters down to a single introductory chapter, she would have drawn greater attention to her own considerable contributions and spared her readers the task of wading through more than a hundred pages of uneven introductory material.

Setting aside these early distractions, *Public Memory of Slavery* has much to offer. Araujo's major contribution on the Benin side is her close historical reading of contemporary memorials – monuments, statues, paintings, castles, museums, and so on. Araujo demonstrates remarkable aptitude and creativity in teasing out the broader social and political contexts that shaped the production of public art and architecture. Araujo lays out these various interpretations and debates, revealing the deep ambivalence of these memorials. For example, the monuments of the UNESCO-funded Slave Route project in Benin are supposed to promote memories of the enduring connections between Dahomey and the African diaspora; however, monuments like the Tree of Forgetting actually imply permanent alienation and 'identity loss' (p. 176). Likewise, one of the monuments along the Slave Route was allegedly built by Ogoni refugees from Nigeria who were forced to labor on the project in conditions not unlike those of slaves (p. 179). Finally, the museum dedicated to Ouidah's most prolific slave trader, Francisco Félix de Souza,