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# The Year of Africa Remembered: Horizons of Change in African Studies 50 years after the Year of Africa[2]

**Abstract**

The year 2010 marked the passage of 50 years since the Year of Africa in 1960. For the world, and especially for Africans, 2010 became the year of soccer, the year of the Cup. Africanists taking a look back at the 50 years of African Studies can take heart in the healthy dynamics of African Studies in the United States, but in the year when African Studies Association discusses the theme of African Diaspora, in the year of massive budget cuts resulting in elimination of whole departments of foreign languages in the United States, they cannot be altogether happy with the state of academic African studies. The retrospective may be pleasantly nostalgic, but the vibrancy of today's African studies has come from

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[2] A presentation based on early research, for this paper was delivered at the 9th Annual International Conference on History: From Ancient to Modern (August 2011, Athens, Greece).

unanticipated sources and the movement has not been linear or carefully programmed.

The wave of independence that rose across Africa since the late 1950s created a worldwide anticipation of great things to follow the wonderful start. The closely related development of African studies as an academic field ensued. Among the factors unanticipated by the experts of the day was the impact of the Cold War on the postcolonial development of African studies in the United States, in Europe, and in the Soviet Union. The author is a participant in the field of African historical studies both in the United States and in Russia. These two perspectives and selected stops along the way will guide a personalized discussion of the crucial events and significant trends in African studies as observed from the Soviet and American academic circles.

*Keywords*: African studies, Year of Africa, Cold War historiography, intellectual history, Soviet Union - intellectual life

Great events generate great memories. The year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the 'Year of Africa' 1960. The United Nations declared 1960 as the Year of Africa. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December, 1960. Celebrations and commemorations for what has been called “the most important year in African history” took place in 2010 around the globe, following the African diaspora and promoted by Africanists. Ironically, for many Africans on the ground, the political jubilee may have been overshadowed on the ground by international sports events taking place in Africa. The year 2010 became the year of soccer, the year of the Cup. The African Cup of Nations ended January 11, 2010 in Angola. The FIFA World Cup was played in South Africa in June and July 2010. The African Studies Association (of North America) waited to celebrate the anniversary: the theme of the 2010 Annual Meeting was African Diaspora. The annual theme chosen for the November 2011 ASA meeting in Washington, DC, was ‘50 Years of African Liberation.’ This was the 54$^{th}$ annual meeting of the Association, which started in 1956. Then small in numbers, this small group of forward-looking academics was

inspired by the transition to independence of the first African countries. They held the first annual meeting of the Association in 1957.

Also in 1957, the International Youth Festival convened in Moscow, USSR. In then still novel atmosphere of opening to the world after the 1953 death of Stalin, Moscow and especially young Moscovites were fascinated and entranced by the arrival of thousands of young people from around the world. The Soviet leadership of the Khruschev era was motivated, less than by the Cold War framework of the day, by the independence of Asian countries and emergence of the Bandung group from the 1955 conference and resulting in the formal proclamation of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961. By 1960, the decolonization process was well under way, and in Moscow, the Central Committee of the Communist Party announced, in 1959, the creation of a research Institute for African Studies (known for many years as the Africa Institute) and in early 1960 of the first international university, to be known as the University of the Friendship of the Peoples. Additionally named for Patrice Lumumba soon after the Congo crisis, the university opened its doors in the academic year 1960-1961 and quickly became a center for students from newly-independent and developing countries of Africa[3], Asia, and Latin America (Cuba, of course), helping expand international enrollment in Soviet institutions of higher education and educating many future leaders in politics, academia, and the professions. Whatever the needs of Soviet foreign policy, most of these students (or their parents) were motivated not by Marxism, but by gaining access to free, quality higher education; over the years, some chose to remain in the Soviet Union. In English, the school became known as the Friendship University, but in Russian, the common abbreviation was either simply 'Lumumba' or '[of] Friendship of the Peoples', the phrase being part of political vocabulary of the times. In 1961, the United States, whose universities of course had been open to international students all

[3] See S.V. Mazov (1999) for a nostalgic post-Soviet analysis of those early educational steps.

along (though not always free), established the Peace Corps for service abroad in 'interested countries' with the stated purpose 'to promote world peace and friendship.' The youth thus were thrust into the forefront of global competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for Third World influence, and much of the action was to involve Africa and African Studies.

In this paper, I propose to highlight a few particular aspects and trends in the development of African studies in the United States and Russia, on two sides of the Cold War front that determined much of the scholarship during the half-century that ensued since the Year of Africa and coincidentally involved me personally – and that, too, on both sides of the dividing line. Prior to independence from colonialism, Africa did not figure prominently in academic fields neither in Russia (and/or Soviet Union) nor in America. Nor was it generally perceived as being important to foreign policy or political science and foreign affairs studies in either country. Isolated periods of interaction did not materially impact government or academic priorities, being the Barbary Wars and the foundation of Liberia in the early 19th century or World War II operations in North Africa for the United States, or the Russian volunteer involvement in Ethiopia or South Africa at the turn of the 20th century[4]. Independence changed the politics, policies and academic foci for research and teaching. African studies became a continuing, though not always flourishing, academic field in both Russia and the United States. Universities created centers and programs of African studies, and significant publication programs ensued. The history of their development is yet to be written. From the vast pool of relevant dates, facts, names, and titles, I will focus below on selected periods and events chosen for their public and personal, professional aspects relevant to the development of African studies. The resulting synthesis of biographical with academic history echoes the recent trend in American historical writing yet weakly developed in

[4] See, for example A.B. Davidson & I. Filatova (1998) and F. Lambert (2005).

Africanist historiography[5]; it has been more strongly represented in the US Middle Eastern historical studies. A differently configured thread in Russian Africanist publications has developed much more recently[6]. These highlighted stops along the timeline arc from the Year of Africa 1960 to 1991 when the USSR was dissolved and finally approach the most recent anniversaries. In following this route, the goal is not to create a broad canvas but to identify and compare significant developments and mark some differences between the priorities and emphases in African studies in the United States and Russia.

**It was the year 1960…**

I had just graduated from high school and was planning to attend Leningrad University. Now renamed St. Petersburg State University, it is second in Russia only to Moscow State University and one of the very few in the USSR where Oriental studies were taught. Until the Friendship University foundation, there was only one university in any given Soviet city; the other higher-education establishments were called "institutes" and trained students in professional fields. One was allowed to apply to only one institution, to one specialty, once a year. Entrance requirements were changed that year, and my Gold Medal high school diploma, which previously guaranteed university admission (and free choice of specialty) without entrance examinations, no longer carried the privilege. Moreover, during the admissions' interview in the Oriental Faculty (another recent innovation for the "medalists"), I was informed that no women were to be admitted to my intended field of Arabic philology. And indeed, I was not admitted that year. The USSR was then actively building contacts with Arab countries and, as I soon learned, the new academic directive from the Ministry of Higher Education was to train military interpreters, making male applicants alone eligible for logistical and cultural reasons (on both the Soviet

[5] A precedent, however, has been set by J. Vansina (1994).
[6] See, for example, A.B. Davidson (2003) for a personalized account of the field and M. V. Right (2008) for a rare attempt at Africanist autobiography.

and Arab sides). What to do? 1960 was also the year when the former Dean of the Oriental Faculty, Academician Iosif Orbeli, whom I knew since childhood, had stepped down, and I could only petition the new dean (Bogoliubov) to allow me auditing privileges, and only because my father, the botanist A.I. Tolmachev, was also a University professor. A fateful change of tack occurred: because the "philologist" class admitted was twice as large as usual, faculty resources were strained, and I was allowed to join the class majoring in the History of Arab Countries, thus fortuitously determining forever my future as historian.

The second step was to ask advice from the widow of the leading Russian Arabist I.Iu. Krachkovskii. Vera Aleksandrovna Krachkovskaia lived in the same building on the Neva embankment where I grew up and that belonged, until 2010, to the Russian Academy of Sciences (the famous "akademicheskii dom"). She suggested that I visit the Institute of Ethnography, located in the former Kunstkamera building on the University embankment. There, in the Africa department ("sector"), a multi-volume project of editing and translating medieval Arabic sources on Africa was just beginning, and because of my interest in Arabic and knowledge of English and French, I was hired as a junior assistant. Another fateful step that opened doors for me into the world of Africa, just as the African Studies was receiving a powerful boost. The initiator of the project was the leading Soviet Africanist Dmitri Olderogge (1903-1987)[7]: In 1960 he just became the Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences; he was also Chair of the Department of African Studies in the Oriental Faculty at the University. His students formed the majority of Africa Sector employees in Leningrad; some of them recently or subsequently moved to Moscow to help build the programs in African Languages. The Arabic Sources on Africa project was led by V.V. Matveev and L.E. Kubbel, my senior

[7] About D. Olderogge see, for example, N.B. Kochakova (2002), S.B. Chernetsov (2003), A.D. Savateev (2006); in English see D.M. Bondarenko & V.A. Popov (2005), E. Gellner (1988).

colleagues for many years[8]. They were later joined by V.A. Velgus working on Chinese sources, O.S. Tomanovskaia for Portuguese sources, Iu.K. Poplinsky for the Greek, and S.B. Chernetsov for Ethiopian sources. This undertaking inspired the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* proposal to UNESCO by Dr. Ivan Hrbek, who visited Leningrad from Prague to consult with Olderogge in 1964 (inevitably for those Cold War years, the approved project was domiciled in the West and for many years shepherded by John O. Hunwick[9]).

**The Language Barriers**

Focus on African language study and linguistics research was typical of Olderogge who insisted that "afrikanistika" must begin with the fundamentals of language, literature, and culture (including social anthropology as well as material culture). Russian scholarship of Africa faced multiple barriers: the USSR had limited prior access to African countries, and Soviet scholars faced the double political barrier of rarely being allowed to travel abroad and also rarely being admitted to African countries. Until the 1960s, Olderogge was the only Soviet Africanist from Leningrad allowed to travel abroad (Africa was classified with the West for exit visa purposes, and Leningrad scholars were more tightly controlled by academic authorities than Moscovites); none had done field work in Africa until 1963. Bridging the African Studies Department at the University and the Africa Sector at the Institute of Ethnography (the latter was part of the USSR Academy of Sciences), Olderogge set his own graduates to work on the first modern Russian-African-language dictionaries[10]. Very few native speakers of African languages had visited USSR prior to 1960, and even then, with independence and

[8] The Arabic series included Arabic text as well as Russian translation and academic commentary, and therefore had a relatively broad international outreach for the times. See L.E. Kubbel & V.V. Matveev (1960-2002).

[9] Under the umbrella of this series, sponsored by the International Academic Union, J.O. Hunwick published the *Fontes Historiae Africanae Information Bulletin* in the 1970s and 80s.

[10] See E.N. Miachina (1961) and I.A. Osnitskaia (1963).

the Friendship University enrollments bringing African students to Moscow, few were qualified to teach their native language to Russian students as a foreign language. Finally, few Russian scholars at the time were fluent in the dominant languages of official Africa and African studies, English and French. As a result of decades of Soviet isolation from even European countries, communication skills taught in Soviet schools and colleges did not result in fluency. Even the academic professionals who read and translated from the foreign languages were rarely fluent speakers or correspondents; this limited their opportunities not only for field work, but also for intellectual engagement and exchange at international meetings or through correspondence. In addition, political censorship and intellectual property policy severely limited opportunities to publish abroad. Somewhat paradoxically, in the post-World War II cultural environment, German was the only "Western" language that opened doors to international audiences – often through translations published in East Germany[11].

Needless to say (but only fair to remember), no comparable effort was required for US scholars who had not exit (and rarely entry) visa problems, were (usually) native English speakers, and had funding (albeit on a competitive basis) to carry out field work in Africa, research projects in Europe or at home, means to use interpreters in their field work and ready access to English-language African dictionaries compiled by (mostly) British scholars and missionaries. Sometimes translation was not required at all, as most former British possessions chose English as their official national language. Opportunities for joining professional associations, participating in international conferences, publishing in leading professional journals (and being familiar with the conventions of

[11] For example, the volume *Narody Afriki* (Peoples of Africa), published in Russian in 1954, was translated and published in East Germany in 1961. See D.A. Olderogge & I.I. Potekhin (1961). Somewhat later, the Prague publisher Artia issued the Czech, English and German editions of the D.A. Oderogge presentation of African art collections from the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, co-located and co-administered with the Institute of Ethnography. See D.A. Olderogge & W. Forman (1969).

academic writing and peer review process) were both accessible and expected. Needless to say, these differences were not unique to the field of African studies, but their impact on the prioritization of Africanist concerns in the United States and the Soviet Union was great and to an extent has continued, though diminished, in the post-Soviet period.

**Freedom of Association, Academic Freedom**

The American tradition of forming voluntary professional associations, together with greater freedom of academic and intellectual life in the West and supported by greater resources, facilitated fast growth of Africanist research and publications, as well as African Studies Programs, in the United States. The American tradition of concentrating academic research at universities to this day differs considerably from the European tradition, emulated in Russia since the days of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, to separate full-time researchers at the Academy institutes from full-time professors at universities. Thus, there has been much closer coordination in the US between the development of research on Africa and the teaching of African studies, including African languages. In addition, American decentralization of higher education instantly led to the emergence of several centers for African studies dispersed in the East-coast, Midwest, and California institutions. Supported by regional centers as well as the African Studies Association, journals dedicated to various aspects of African research soon appeared and multiplied, with the first issues of *African Historical Studies* (later the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*), the *African Studies Bulletin* (later the *African Studies Review*), and *Research in African Literatures* appearing in 1958, 1968, and 1970, respectively. The *Journal of African Studies* began publication in 1974 and *History in Africa: A Journal of Method*, in 1975. Typical of the variable American tradition of institutional support for such academic professional associations as ASA, the organization headquarters and editorial operation have

been since domiciled at several large universities with Africanist interests[12].

American grant support for Africanist projects was channeled through competitive programs, both public and private. The Ford Foundation became the dominant player in shaping the area studies program in the United States[13]. In 1950, the foundation established the prestigious Foreign Area Fellowship Program (FAFP), the first large-scale national competition in support of area studies training in the United States. From 1953 to 1966, it contributed $270 million to 34 universities for area and language studies. Also during this period, it poured millions of dollars into the committees run jointly by the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies for field development workshops, conferences, and publication programs[14]. On the public side, the National Defense Education Act of 1957, renamed in 1965 the Higher Education Act, allocated funding for some 125 university-based area studies units known as National Resource Centers at universities across the U.S. In addition, and often associated with the Centers, the Act funded Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for graduate students that included foreign language study. Despite the name change, the support of the teaching of African languages in the United States continued to be funded and prioritized according to the perceived priorities of the defense policy. In some fields, this has raised greater concerns than in others about the independence and integrity of American academics, especially those conducting research abroad, including Africa. Many, both in Africa and in America, alleged that because area studies were connected to the Cold War agendas of the CIA, the FBI, and other intelligence and military agencies, participating in such programs was tantamount to serving as an agent of the state. Even though faculty argued that, once they were established on university campuses, area studies

[12] Currently, the African Studies Association is headquartered at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.
[13] See E.C. Lagemann (1992)
[14] D.L. Szanton (2004).

agendas were not controlled by or subservient to government agencies, the independence, indeed achieved, came at a price, resulting in the loss of early influence that prominent Africanists in America had with politicians and national governing bodies[15] suspicions were directed even at the Peace Corps youth and undergraduate exchange students. African Studies Association addressed such concerns as a body and made two important decisions: the membership agreed on a policy of disclosure of non-academic sources of support and government agency association. In this, ASA followed conflict-of-interest disclosure policies adopted by other area-studies associations, such as the Middle East Studies Association of North America. Unlike MESA, however, ASA also agreed to open its annual meeting programs to debate and discussion of current African politics; it has since been a consistent champion of human rights on behalf of African intellectuals. ASA dedicated one of its three periodical Association publications (*Issue: a Journal of Opinion,* published 1971-1999) to topical multilateral fora on issues of concern to Africa and ASA. Importantly, the Association consistently addressed and assessed the state of African studies in the United States in terms of academic strength, federal support, professional involvement, evolving trends and international outreach[16]. By almost any measure these invasions had impressive results: between 1957 and the mid-1970s hundreds of new students of Africa were dispatched to Africa, received advanced degrees in North America, and found employment at leading universities. The number of full fellows of the ASA increased from 35 in 1957 to 291 fellows and 866 total members in 1960, to 1400 members in 1970, while major African Studies programs in the U.S. by that time numbered well over thirty (while the membership continued to expand, the latter number has fluctuated with the level of federal support). The proliferation of programs and centers[17] and a desire to

[15] See D. Robinson (1994).
[16] For example, vol. 23, no. 1 (1995) of the *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, dedicated the state of African studies.
[17] For program data see *African Studies* (1976).

coordinate efforts in curriculum development, increased faculty cooperation, and develop and maintain teaching standards and lobbying for scholarship support, academic units created an Association of African Studies Programs (AASP) and later the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA).

It was probably inevitable that the Cold-War era competition between the USA and the USSR for influence in Africa resulted in determining the focus of many research projects of the 1960s. The tone was set early on by *Time* magazine declaring: 'Africa: Red Weeds Grow in New Soil'[18]. In monographs and edited books on Soviet policies vis-a-vis Africa published from the 1960s through most of the 1980s, American analysts urged watchful alertness against Soviet "designs" in Africa[19] and were preoccupied with African socialism and even African Communism[20]. There was no comparable academic effort to analyze American policy toward Africa. Soviet analysis of the same subjects was much more circumspect and acknowledged, at that stage, only the possibility of a choice of socialist route toward development in selected African countries and emphasized instead the themes of national liberation[21]. There was also American interest in the development of African studies in the USSR [22]. Again, the same subject in Russia was aired only infrequently, and more often in terms of research presented to an international audience rather than teaching[23].

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[18] *Time*, 12 October 1960.

[19] See, for example, Z. Brzezinski (1963), H. Desfosses (1972), C. Stevens (1976), M. Rothenberg (1980), D.C. Heldman (1981), D.E. Albright (1983), R.C. Nation & M.V. Kauppi (1984), M. Clough (1986).

[20] For early examples, see W.H. Friedland & C. G. Rosberg (1964), A.J. Klinghoffer (1968) and (1969); for later assessment, C.G. Rosberg & T.M. Callaghy (1979), P. Vanneman (1990). For African communism, see M. Ottaway (1981) and (1986).

[21] See an articulation of this different official focus on aid and mutual friendship in E.A. Tarabrin (1980), *The USSR and Africa*. (1983), V. Lopatov (1987).

[22] See R. Desai (1968), P. Paricsy (1972).

[23] See V.G. Solodovnikov (1966) and (1974). Solodovnikov was the second director of the Africa Institute (see below).

The Gorbachev era brought about some changes, both in Africa-directed policies and in the American scholars' perspective on Soviet policies and activities toward Africa. If in 1987, a special edition of the *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* was focused on 'Africa and the Communism'[24], a more balanced approach was evident in the 1988 issue (vol. 17/1) with a selection of invited contributions by American and Russian academics on 'U.S. and U.S.S.R. perspectives on African policy'. In particular, the perceived changes in Soviet tactics in Africa made it possible for the United States to gradually reduce its support of the apartheid regime in South Africa, eventually imposing sanctions and extending a degree of recognition to the African National Congress (ANC), previously classified as a Communist and terrorist organization. For the ASA membership, some of these new US positions were only catching up with the academic perspectives on Southern Africa and US policies in the region. The academics were concerned about the level of support for African Studies and the changing American government priorities, as regularly voiced by the presidents of the African Studies Association and especially by African language programs[25].

The Russian academics' acknowledgement and analysis of Soviet policies toward Africa in the post-independence era for the most part had to wait for the document access and lapse of political censorship and other restrictions in the post-Soviet period. Any Soviet interest in US involvement in Africa never received a similar level of academic attention, nor did Soviet Africanists monitor the progress of African studies development in the United States as a field, though they eagerly sought access to American, European and African research publications and collections and became adept at productively using whatever (then quite limited and sporadic) opportunities that were becoming available. There were then only two loci of African studies: Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). In Leningrad, the person of Olderogge bridged the small University cluster of African linguists with the historians and

[24] H. Desfosses (1987), M. Ottaway (1987);
[25] A detailed case is presented in Wiley & Dwyer (1980).

anthropologists at the Academy. In Moscow, the comparatively vast resources and established administrative structures more clearly separated the 'Africa research' in the Academy institutes from the 'African studies' at the Moscow State University (in MGU's downtown Institute for Asian and African Studies; in 1956-1972 it carried the name Institute of Oriental Languages). African languages were also taught at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of Foreign Relations. In time, additional African-research clusters developed in the Academy of Sciences research establishments, such as the Institute of General History, the Moscow branch of the Institute of Ethnography, the Oriental Studies Institute (for North Africa), and the Institute of World Literature. The research institutes all have graduate programs with very limited enrollment and implement their own publication programs, including periodicals, through the publishing house of the USSR Academy of Sciences, later "Nauka" Publishers. In 1961-1990 the Institute was known as the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, and its lead publication *Narody Azii i Afriki* (formerly titled *Problemy vostokovedeniia* and *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*), remained the lead academic periodical for Africanist publications as well. The Geographical Society introduced a productive series *Strany i narody Vostoka*, where African-subject studies appeared (Olderogge was chair of the Society's Oriental Commission). The Leningrad Institute of Ethnography opened an *Africana* series of irregular periodical volumes *Afrikanskii etnograficheskii sbornik.*

The Africa Institute (*Institut Afriki*, now translated as the Institute for African Studies) went through several iterations determined by the policy considerations of the day. Under the first Director, I.I. Potekhin (1959-1967)[26], it included departments for economic and political research as well as culture and history. After his death, there was an explicit turn toward making the institute into a government think-tank and a home for retired Soviet diplomats. In

[26] About him see I.I. Potekhin (1963), I,I. Potekhin (1964) and A.B. Davidson (1974). About the early years of the Africa Institute see S.V. Mazov (1998).

1966, the Scientific Council for the Problems of Africa was founded within the network of the Academy of Sciences to bridge the needs of policy makers with qualified researchers. The Africa Institute is the host for the Council, and the Director of the Institute serves as the chairman of the Council. At some point, the Institute was moved from the Social Sciences Division of the Academy of Sciences to the Division of Economic Sciences; the Council functions under the Division of Social Sciences.

In the face of such decisive changes in research priorities of the Africa Institute, a new Centre for African Studies was founded in 1971 at the Academy of Sciences Institute of General History, headed by the historian of South Africa and Russian-African relations Apollon Davidson. This center was destined to become the leading Soviet (now Russian) academic entity for African historical studies.

**It was the year 1991…**

By American reckoning, the Cold War ended that year. The Warsaw Pact was disbanded in July, the Communist party was banned in September, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December. But in the special issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs (*vol. 71/1) themed 'America and the world 1991/92,' Strobe Talbot's contribution was titled 'Post-victory blues' and dealt with the first Iraq war[27]. Another article, on 'Collapsing Cuba' by Susan Kaufman Purcell, does mention the end of the Cold War, but still dwells on Iraq (despite Cuba's active participation in Africa at the time). An urgent reminder of Africa's needs sounds in the piece by M. Chege[28] in the same issue. Not until much later in the decade, ASA dedicated another edition of the *Issue*: *A Journal of Opinion* to the topic of 'The Clinton Administration and Africa (1993-1999)'[29].

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, American historians of Africa were engaged in assessing the state of the discipline and

[27] S. Talbott (1992).
[28] M. Chege (1992).
[29] Most recently see H. Walton et al. (2007).

debating the directions and methodologies in the discipline. The June 1987 issue of the *African Studies Review* (vol. 30/2) was dedicated to 'African history research trends and perspectives on the future'. The December 1989 issue offered an overview of African historical studies[30]. In the ensuing years much attention went to Africa's social and economic problems, while being geographically focused largely on Southern Africa, where apartheid came to an end in 1994. The 1994 ASA presidential address was titled 'Africa reconfigured'[31]. If Africa was looking for new ways and patterns, so was the Africanist field. The past president of ASA Edward A. Alpers asked: 'Is there as African studies establishment in the United States?' And although he answered himself 'Of course there is,' he concluded that there was 'no simple answer to this issue, no single correct way ahead'[32]. Among historians, in particular, there was debates and rifts[33], perceived by some as the changing of the guard and explained by others in terms of a tension between African and African-American studies. The 1995 ASA Presidential address was titled 'African Studies in the mid-1990s: Between Afro-pessimism and Amero-Skepticism'[34]. Nevertheless, this was also the time of the Internet explosion, e-mail and scanner development, immeasurably enriching academic opportunities, not least for the digital preservation of African manuscripts. Despite continuing political, economic and social frustrations and academic and budget problems, the spirit of optimism prevailed in the field. Approaching the 50th anniversary of the African Studies Association, ASA President Joseph C. Miller titled his address to the 2006 meeting 'Life beings at fifty: African studies enters its age of awareness'[35].

While in the United States the 1990s signaled a decline of area studies, in post-Soviet Russia there was a sharp decline in the support of higher education, academic institutions, and academic publishing.

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[30] B. Jewsiewicki (1989).
[31] E.A. Alpers (1995).
[32] E.A. Alpers (1995a).
[33] P. Curtin (1995).
[34] G. Hyden (1996).
[35] J.C. Miller (2007).

The Yeltsin period of government administration (1991-1999) was marked overall by a significant economic decline and reduced industrial productivity, from which Russia has not fully recovered even today. Scholarship suffered through the loss of researchers and teaching faculty as well as reduced opportunities for fieldwork and publication, acquisition of foreign books and journal subscriptions. There was noticeable feminization of the academe (men left for better-paying jobs), lack of computer facilities, lack of funds for equipment and supplies, etc., etc. Administrative chaos ensued and involved the Academy of Sciences (it was now *Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk,* RAN). The Institute of the Peoples of Asia returned to its former name, the Oriental Institute (or the Institute of Oriental Studies, *Institut Vostokovedeniia*). Not only was Leningrad returned its former name of St. Petersburg in 1991, but in 1992 the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Ethnography separated from the Moscow institution and became Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (*Kunstkamera*). The Moscow branch changed its name to Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. More recently (2007), the St.Petersburg branch of the Oriental Institute gained administrative independence from Moscow and is now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (*Institut vostochnykh rukopisei*).

On the positive side, the doors and borders opened, and contacts with international colleagues and institutions became less controlled; e-mail brought information and people within reach, and academic exchanges and travel abroad quickly expanded. Many African countries that formerly restricted access to the former "communists" now opened visas and access for Russian scholars to universities and archives. The University of Cape Town for a number of years supported a Center for Russian Studies, led by A.B. Davidson. Davidson also revived academic interest in Russian historical contacts with Africa. A series of publications themed 'Africa in Russia/Russia in Africa' ensued[36], generating even a cooperative international project in the United States[37].

[36] R.R. Viatkina et al. (1999), A.B. Davidson (2003), I.V. Sledzevskii (2003). These more recent publications revive and continue the tradition

Regular conferences now bring to Russia international participants from Africa, Europe, and the United States. The Olderogge Readings convene regularly in spring in St. Petersburg[38]. While for US scholars of greatest interest seem to have been the newly accessible documents on the Comintern[39], Russian scholars have recently delved into the subject of the Cold War[40]. As in the earlier decades, publication of the primary sources continues to be a priority: but now these are modern documents[41], and the translation is often made from the Russian into English. Russian Africanists are reaching out not only to Africa, but to America and worldwide. The most recent (12th) conference organized by the Institute for African Studies, took place in May 2011 and had the theme of 'Africa in the changing paradigm of world development.' Next, the biennial conference organized by the Institute of General History jointly with the Moscow University met in November 2011 with a broad theme of 'African studies in Russia and abroad: stages, trends, and prospects.' The Year of Africa 1960 was unforgettable. Anniversaries and jubilees provide the timeline and the highlights. Fifty years later, no longer confined by the borders, and inspired by a small group of dedicated and persistent scholars, the work of African studies continues as a global enterprise.

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established in the Soviet period: see A.B. Davidson et al. (1966), Iu.M. Kobishchanov et al. (1974).

[37] M. Matusevich (2006).

[38] '*Chteniia pamiati Ol'derogge,*' for example the I.V. Sledzevskii (2003) volume.

[39] See A..B. Davidson et al. (2003a), V.P. Gorodnov (2003), S. Johns (2007).

[40] See S.V. Mazov (2010) and V.G. Shubin (2008).

[41] A.B. Davidson (2005-2007).

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