



Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950-1980

Jerry Dávila

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Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950-1980 Jerry Dávila In the wake of African decolonization, Brazil attempted to forge connections with newly independent countries. In the early 1960s it launched an effort to establish diplomatic ties with Africa; in the 1970s it undertook trade campaigns to open African markets to Brazilian technology. *Hotel Trópico* reveals the perceptions, particularly regarding race, of the diplomats and intellectuals who traveled to Africa on Brazil's behalf. Jerry Dávila analyzes how their actions were shaped by ideas of Brazil as an emerging world power, ready to expand its sphere of influence; of Africa as the natural place to assert that influence, given its historical slave-trade ties to Brazil; and of twentieth-century Brazil as a "racial democracy," a uniquely harmonious mix of races and cultures. While the experiences of Brazilian policymakers and diplomats in Africa reflected the logic of racial democracy, they also exposed ruptures in this interpretation of Brazilian identity. Did Brazil share a "lusotropical" identity with Portugal and its African colonies, so that it was bound to support Portuguese colonialism at the expense of Brazil's ties with African nations? Or was Brazil a country of "Africans of every color," compelled to support decolonization in its role as a natural leader in the South Atlantic? Drawing on interviews with retired Brazilian diplomats and intellectuals, Dávila shows the Brazilian belief in racial democracy to be about not only race but also Portuguese ethnicity.



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