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African Views of the West by Jo Ann White; Soviet Policy toward Black Africa: The Focus on National Integration by Helen Desfosses Cohn

Review by: James M. Lutz

The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Jun., 1973), pp. 321-322

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160114>

Accessed: 04/02/2014 11:54

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a touch of Houphouët-Boigny's economic management to this, Ghanaians might not have rejected him.

P-KIVEN TUNTENG

Institute of International Studies, Yaoundé

African Views of the West edited by JO ANN WHITE

New York, Julian Messner, 1972. Pp. 206. \$5.95.

Soviet Policy Toward Black Africa: the focus on national integration

by HELEN DESFOSSES COHN

New York, Praeger, 1972. Pp. 270. \$17.50.

One of the main topics of interest concerning Africa is the interaction between the various independent states and 'the East' and 'the West', or – perhaps better still – between the peoples of Africa and those of Europe and North America. As might be expected, these two books offer quite distinct approaches to these relationships, and thus present different facets of them for our benefit.

Jo Ann White has put together a reflective book: a useful cross-section of various *African Views of the West*. Although there will always be disagreement about any edited volume regarding the criteria and type of selections made – and thus the specific contributions which are included or excluded – her collection ranges widely from the political speeches and manifestos of present-day politicians to the observations and reflections of Africans when encountering European visitors for the first time. In general, however, all the items have a usefulness in that they give the beginnings of an insight into the values, ideas, outlooks, and even structures of African peoples at different stages of their integration into the westernised world. The young African who faces city life today shares many of the same thoughts and problems as his predecessor who first experienced such modern conveniences and wonders over 50 years ago.

The writings which have been chosen demonstrate both the favourable and the unfavourable views that exist towards the West, as well as the changing hopes and expectations of past and present generations. Perhaps the more literary of the contributions provide the greatest insights into the Africa of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, for they are more expressive of what is felt and believed than most of the political speeches. This book is not a good starting point for an understanding of Africa, for it reads much better against a substantial background of other basic information. But neither is it an ending-point in any way; indeed, it reawakens old questions which have been momentarily forgotten and left unanswered. Dr White is looking out from Africa, and she demonstrates that there is a great deal more to understand about the continent and its peoples than has so far been touched upon, or maybe even thought about.

By way of contrast, Helen Desfosses Cohn is looking in at Africa from the outside. She does a thorough and competent job of following *Soviet Policy Toward Black Africa*, and in the process catalogues the significant changes and shifts which have taken place since 1960. It was then that the Soviet theorists and leaders began to realise that the new African states were not just simple extensions of the capitalist system. The rash of major *coups d'état* during

1965–6 brought new perspectives and attitudes, as a search was made for the causes and remedies of what seemed to be an inherent instability in the new governments. Dr Cohn presents a clear picture of these changing viewpoints, and although it might be presumptuous to expect her to have a thorough knowledge of both vast areas, it is a pity that she seems to know less about Africa than the Soviet Union. But even if there are occasional comments that indicate unfortunate gaps in her knowledge, these do not constitute serious flaws in her book.

In the chapter dealing with the various segments of the African population – including peasants, workers, bureaucrats, and the military, generally from the Russian point of view – the author raises a number of issues that are extremely thought-provoking for those interested in internal African conditions. Here are some ideas which could prove to be of importance in determining the root causes of instability, including militarism. It is not within the scope of her work to pursue this theme, but there is a tremendous potential here for future studies. Her book is thus useful to the general Africanist, as well as those who are concerned primarily with Soviet interactions with black Africa.

The reader is not sure until the final chapter whether or not the Soviet leaders have ever really desired African unity. The apparent conclusion is that they do now, although this may generate some disagreement, and certainly some earlier sections seem vague and contradictory at times on this point. The author's view that the Soviet Union today, under Brezhnev and Kosygin, wants stability in Africa is quite well documented. Although this is also a controversial matter, she presents the case for the Soviet desire to avoid international entanglements and to further national integration in individual African states. If this is achieved, then there will be greater internal stability in the continent, and less chance of the Soviet Union being drawn into a local crisis.

JAMES M. LUTZ

Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin

Nigeria: crisis and beyond by JOHN OYINBO

London, Charles Knight, 1971. Pp. xxviii + 214. £2.50.

Perhaps no African crisis has evoked more attention and excited the interest of literary intellectuals more than the Nigerian civil war. Fundamental issues relevant to the continent as a whole, and of the Government's backers in this conflict, remain to be resolved in this giant state, still expected to play a leading rôle in Africa. Sensibly enough, John Oyinbo – a pseudonym for a 'man of recognised academic talent who has spent many years in Nigeria', according to John P. Mackintosh's Introduction – did not principally set himself to inform outsiders about what has happened in so complex and turbulent a history. Instead, using available sources and relying on his deep personal knowledge, the author makes a sober analysis of the major events of this period and suggests guidelines for the future. He writes from the perspective of a believer in Nigerian unity. Of course, it would hardly be valid to write from a different standpoint, given the Federal victory and the general