REVIEW OF REVIEWS

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For a black man, there are two ways of looking at his past and the history of his people. It can be a way of forgetting about the problems of present-day life, an escape from them. Contrarily, it can be with the deeper knowledge of one's history, an attempt to draw from the past the guide for the present.

From its earliest numbers the Black Scholar has proved to be interested in the second category of readers, id est, to be concerned with what they presently call the struggle for the self-determination of the Black American. The editors make it clear that their aim is the development of a revolutionary black culture. The objective is neither conformity nor reform, but revolution. As this word «culture» is not an easy one to define, the Black Scholar proposes its definition: «the collective condition of a people and their actions in terms of that condition». Consequently, the various articles of the review are as many attempts at analyzing in truth and depth, the black structures, black economic conditions and the psychology of blackness. The review gives a strong warning: that it is better to have no black studies program at all than one that is false and in the long run damaging... We are unable to review all the contributions to these two numbers (Vol. 1, N° 8 and Vol. 2, N° 1) of the Black Scholar but we must stress upon their spirit of militancy. We would like to draw attention to «A Portrait of Marcus Garvey» by Tiki Sundiata (Vol. 2, N° 1). Garvey was the key co-ordinator of the National Conference on Black Power in 1927. We all know of the dream of Marcus Garvey, the dream of the return to Mother Africa. But we have been trained to think of it as an Utopia, to imagine Garvey as a man engulfed in his own myths. Tiki Sundiata's article helps rehabilitate a man who was also a politician and shaped the minds of generations to come. Another article worth mentioning is «Egypt Is Africa» by Mrs Shirley Du Bois, the widow of the great Du Bois. After leaving Ghana, Mrs Du Bois took refuge in Cairo and there she studied Egyptian Culture. Although the famous works of Cheikh Anta Diop and a few others after him have brought to light (to say the least) the influences of Black Africa on Egypt, it is not unnecessary for each of us to keep them in mind in the face of the constant denials of the Western world. Mrs Du Bois writes with simplicity a collection of facts amounting to evidence.

Coming at a time when the former heavyweight champion is going to be in the limelight again, an interview is not out of place and with Muhammad Ali needs no comment. It is better to allow Muhammad Ali to explain himself what boxing really is in Modern America: «Fighters
are just brutes that come to entertain the rich... We are slaves on that ring. The masters get two big ones of us and let us fight it out while they bet 'My slave can beat your slave' »...

Freedomways, a Quarterly Review of the Freedom Movement, has also made a name for itself in the same line. An interesting article is Rosa Marshall's review of « Murderous Angels », the play by Connor Cruise O'Brien, our famous man in Katanga (Vol. 10, N° 2). We are already aware of the difficulty, if not the complete impossibility, of having whites writing objectively about Blacks. No Western mind can totally get rid of its political prejudices and fairly analyse a given situation in Africa. According to Rosa Marshall, in O'Brien's play, the bias is obvious. Blurred as he is with paternalism if not downright racism, O'Brien subjectivises the Congolese drama. Lumumba, the black man, who had the audacity to flirt with the Communists is the « devil », obsessed, of course, with a lust for white women. Should we be surprised at this portrayal and these distortions? Should we be surprised that, for O'Brien, Dag Hammarjskoeld is an angel? But as we do not know from which Heaven this angel comes, the whole purpose of the play remains obscure and seems the reflection of O'Brien's own confusion. Another contribution is Lily Golden's « African Studies in the U.S.S.R. », where she wishes to destroy a myth imposed by the Western world : that the Russians being too far from the Africans (translate having no colonial empire in Africa) can neither understand them nor appreciate their culture. On the contrary, she says, Soviet Africanists consider it their duty to be of assistance to the peoples of Africa in their struggle. And she lists their achievements, especially those of the Institute of Africa of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences of which she herself is a member.

We now come to a group of reviews published in England. They are : The New Left Review (N° 63), Abstracts of English Studies (Vol. 13, N° 8), and Africa (Vol. XL, N° 4), the internationally known journal of the African Institute. These are no instruments for revolution. Their readers are scholars, that is to say, people interested for academic reasons in pure research, even if they do not necessarily dissociate science from action. A few titles like « Politics, Procedures, and Norms in Changing Africa », « Traditions of Yoruba Music » and « Aspects of the Ashanti Northern Trade in the 19th Century » suggest solid facts and figures, passionless comments. Africa's bibliography of current publications which appears in every issue of the Journal of the African Institute is an invaluable aid for one involved in academic studies.

If in Africa, we deplore the fact that the press has too often an amateurish air and is but « its master's voice », the Journal East Africa is a pleasant exception to the rule. It is an interesting harvest of serious
articles, well-documented and fairly objective, on the various problems facing the Eastern States of Africa. Ann Seidmann writes an economic survey of the East African economies. This is, in fact, part of a book which is to be published soon. The economy of East Africa is more intricate than that of West Africa owing to the very rich potentialities of these countries and the risk of misusing them. The progress towards industrialization has been slow, but it now seems that it has really started. Ann Seidmann wrote, we must deplore it, before the recent changes in Uganda and some of her conclusions are subject to revision. Without waging another sterile war against the dying concept of Negritude, Fola Soremekun, of the School of Humanities of the University of Zambia, deals with the cultural revolution in Zambia. What does he mean by « cultural revolution »? Simply the desire to see restored the dignity of the African person. Simply a sort of brain-washing of the Zambians so that they can be proud of their heritage. We might be surprised to see so much importance attached to minor problems such as mini-skirts (by the way, abandoned in Europe) or tight trousers... but are they minor? Are they not the evidence that African youth is ready to follow blindly any fashion coming from Europe, without considering whether it suits their traditions and appearance? When we know that slavery began by an innocent desire to get red material that Africa could not yet produce, is there anything that can be considered minor?

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