

therefore, taken account not only of Soviet policies and actions but also of those of the other superpower. Ogunsanwo rightly observes that China's anti-American stance derived both from the determination that the US had assumed leadership of the imperialist system and was playing this role with ruthless vigour (in Vietnam, Latin America, etc.), and from the fact that the US had for decades sought the 'containment' or total isolation of the PRC. Hence, one main objective of China's Africa policy was to terminate this isolation and to neutralize containment. In line with this perspective the PRC sought to establish diplomatic and other types of relationship with as many African States as possible. Starting with Egypt in 1956, the PRC gradually overcame resistance and reversals so that by the mid-1960s she had established diplomatic relations with well over a dozen African States. One measure of the PRC's diplomatic success was the fact that 26 African States were among the 76 UN member States that voted to restore the PRC's rights in that body in October 1971.² (Fourteen African States voted against. These included South Africa, the Ivory Coast, Chad, Malawi, etc.)

With the entry of the PRC into the UN and the reversal of America's 'traditional' China policy by Nixon and Kissinger, the question naturally arises as to whether the PRC will pursue its anti-imperialist policy with the same vigour and consistency as before. The author of this book poses but does not really answer this question. No doubt a definitive answer can only emerge after the further evolution of Chinese policy. There is, however, some evidence suggesting that PRC opposition to imperialism has not been compromised by the 'thaw' in Sino-American relations. PRC diplomatic tactics at the UN and in other international forums such as the recent UN-sponsored Law of the Sea Conference in Caracas reflect Chinese commitment to Third World interests and concerns. At least at the level of policy declarations, the PRC continues to inveigh against 'the two superpowers' and this partly for their anti-Third World policies and actions.

Competition with the two superpowers is only one dimension of China's policy in Africa. China's policy has also been influenced by internal political developments in that country, e.g., such events as the Cultural Revolution. The onset of the Cultural Revolution saw a severe curtailment of Chinese diplomatic activities in Africa: all ambassadors, for example, were recalled to Peking to participate in the Revolution with the exception of Huang Hua, then ambassador in Cairo. Moreover, the Cultural Revolution may have had the effect of reinforcing the image—entertained by the more conservative African regimes—of China as a violently revolutionary country that gloried in turmoil and confusion. It is notable that in the three years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) five African States—Ghana, Burundi, Tunisia, the Central African Republic and Dahomey—either broke off or suspended diplomatic relations with China. The ruptures and suspensions of relations were in every case carried out by a reactionary military or civilian regime and

² See Mohamed El-Khawas, "Africa, China and the United Nations", *The African Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1972), pp. 277-287.

followed the allegation that the PRC was seeking to "subvert" such regimes. In all these instances no firm evidence could in fact be adduced linking China to plots to topple an African Government. In any event, it is hardly likely that the Chinese would take their support of revolution to the point of directly fomenting, financing or otherwise directing plots against Governments with which they maintain diplomatic relations. Such C.I.A.-type activity seems to run counter to the Chinese concept of revolution which stresses the point that revolutions are neither exportable nor importable. Each people must make its own revolution. Genuine revolutionary movements do not reduce themselves to the status of puppets on outside forces no matter how friendly the latter may be. The Chinese communists themselves learnt this lesson the hard way in the 1920s in relation to the Comintern's inept and disastrous attempt to teleguide the Chinese revolution from Moscow. The political and other costs of puppet status can only prove prohibitive to those involved in such a relationship.

The same general point can be made with greater force with regard to the oft-repeated Western claim that recipients of Chinese aid—both independent States and anti-colonial liberation movements—will fall prey to Chinese political domination. For example, it is often asserted that PRC aid to Tanzania and Zambia (the Uhuru Railway in particular) will lead to these countries' becoming satellites of China. This is an obvious red herring. Chinese aid has been extended to African States in response to their own needs as defined by themselves. Such aid has, moreover, been given on terms that are more generous than that available from other sources. The author notes that Chinese aid to Africa typically comes in the form of interest-free loans with a long gestation period before the amortization of the loans begins. Further, Chinese technical aid involves the supply of experts whose main task is to show Africans how to operate Chinese equipment, etc., and who require no privileged conditions of service in the host country. These experts have invariably promptly departed for China upon completion of their assignments so that the claim that the Chinese seek to establish an effective physical presence in order to carry out some neo-colonial design is shown to be without merit.

Claims about the political implications of Chinese aid to Africa suffer from two further defects. Firstly, they are not based on any palpable evidence about Chinese actions with respect to any country in Africa or beyond. There exists no country today that can be said to be a Chinese satellite. There are no Chinese troops on foreign soil anywhere at present. Secondly, these claims insult the leaders of the African countries receiving Chinese aid in so far as they ignore these leaders' obvious determination to maintain their countries' independence. These leaders have repeatedly stated that their people's victory over colonial imperialism was not achieved in order to facilitate the substitution of new masters for the old ones. Ogunsanwo refers to statements that President Nyerere made in Peking in June 1968 which bear on this point. The author summarizes the President's comments about Sino-Tanzanian relations as follows:

He [Nyerere] told the Chinese that he had not come to ask China to declare Tanzania a nuclear protectorate as this would be a new form of colonialism. China's friendship with Tanzania was based on respect and equality and did not stop Tanzanian from being friendly with states hostile to China—this was an assertion of the country's independence. (p. 213)

In general, Chinese policy in Africa has been successful. It has gained new friends for China; reversed the country's isolation; facilitated the PRC's regaining of her UN seat; resulted in the establishment of fruitful economic aid and commercial relationships between China and the African States. All these gains are discussed in great detail in this book. The author also defines the instruments of policy China has used in its interaction with Africa. These range from regular diplomatic dealings to personal diplomacy (involving exchanges of visits by top political leaders and responsible Government officials), to the more informal processes of "people's diplomacy". The latter has included political, cultural, scientific and professional exchanges involving private individuals and groups on either side. Then too, China has extended material and moral support to revolutionary movements such as the Algerian FLN during its struggle against French colonialism and FRELIMO in Mozambique.

It may already be evident from the foregoing that this book explores many aspects of China's policy in Africa in the period indicated, and that it does so with great care and thoroughness. The book makes a notable contribution to the study and understanding of Chinese foreign policy in general and Sino-African relations in particular. However, the study is less satisfactory methodologically and with regard to one or two substantive points.

Regarding the method of analysis, Ogunsanwo describes his approach to the study as "analytical and situational in a general historical framework" (p. IX). This seems to mean that particular aspects of policy are explored against the background of changing domestic and world situations. The assumption is that these changing situations influence, and hence are dynamically linked to, particular policies and changes in these policies. The author, for example, points out that Soviet scientific and technological advances in the late 1950s (e.g., Sputnik and the development of the ICBM) led the Chinese to believe that the socialist world system would soon triumph over imperialism. Hence, Chinese policy thereafter took a decidedly left-wing, anti-imperialist, cast. When, however, the USSR under Khrushchev showed no inclination to confront imperialism and, instead, sought detente with the USA, China set about projecting an image of herself as the only reliable friend of the oppressed peoples of the Third World. Chinese foreign policy accordingly began to give emphasis to the relevance of the PRC as a model of political and revolutionary development that Third World countries could profit by.

Whilst it is true that changing situations influence foreign policy in certain instances, it is taking matters too far to proceed on the assumption that all foreign policy is a product of these changing situations. Although Ogunsanwo does not explicitly state this extreme as his position, the way this book is organized suggests that it is. Each of the six chapters of the book refers to

a specific period of time (two or three years) delimited, it appears, in consideration of the major situations that allegedly impinged on Chinese policy in Africa in that particular period. There are, however, pitfalls in such a mode of analysis. For one thing it is the analyst who chooses what factors or situations to hold constant in explaining particular policies. In this case the possibility of error is rather considerable since the analyst's 'definition of the situation' may in fact be quite different from the policy-makers'. Furthermore, "situational" analysis, taken too far, runs the risk of interpreting all foreign policy in an ad hoc fashion. Put differently, such an approach sees foreign policy as nothing but a series of pragmatic responses to changing circumstances. Yet this is a view which flies in the face of reality. The foreign policy of a State should be studied from the point of view of the nature of the given regime and especially the class forces that it represents. Foreign policy reflects the interests and perspectives of these forces. The PRC regime in its foreign policy proceeds from a definite standpoint, a class standpoint or world view. It proceeds from a definite analysis of the contemporary international system and it has definite ideas regarding the tactics and strategies appropriate for the transformation of contemporary international reality. The author of this book is too sophisticated an analyst to be oblivious to this fact; however, he does not systematically define in global terms the PRC view of the contemporary international conjuncture and the PRC strategic perspective relating to the transformation of the international system. (Larkin's study cited above goes some way towards doing this sort of thing). Finally, we may also note that situational analysis suffers from the fact that it cannot provide a conceptual framework that would enable one to undertake comparative analysis of foreign policy.

Two further features of this book that the present reviewer was not too happy about may be noted quickly. Firstly, the author's attempt to cover every aspect of Sino-African relations has resulted in rather laborious and plodding descriptions of some events and interactions, the full significance of which is sometimes not explained in systematic fashion. (One almost misses the wood for the trees as one meanders through details that include seemingly minor aid agreements, minor delegations to and from China, all taking place year in year out and involving scores of African countries on the one hand and the PRC on the other). On a different matter, it seems that the author could have given more attention than he does to PRC relations with liberation movements in Southern Africa. It is, of course, true that there are problems about researching these relations—sensitivities about security, for example—but certain lines of inquiry might nonetheless have been pursued. One might, for instance, have sought to elicit liberation movement assessments of the relevance or otherwise of the Chinese revolutionary model to their own problems and circumstances. Or one could have assessed the impact of the Sino-Soviet conflict on the liberation struggles in Southern Africa since that conflict appears to have injected itself into these movements as well.

Putting aside the objections noted above, *China's Policy in Africa* is a

welcome and valuable addition to the literature on the foreign policy of the PRC. The book is well researched. The author was, for example, able to interview certain policy-makers and interested observers, particularly in Tanzania, and it would appear that the results obtained were very useful in clarifying the context and rationale underlying particular policy moves. More generally, this book competently assembles material bearing on China's policy in Africa and presents the data in a readable manner while maintaining high analytical acuity throughout much of the presentation. One cannot but recommend it to all who wish to gain a fuller understanding of China's relations with Africa.

JAMES OLNEY, *Tell Me Africa*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

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1973). Anybody can criticize a literary work who knows what he expects, what he is talking about, but I think at the moment we are having to put up with white critics. These books are published abroad and so are for the most part for the European reader. Therefore it is a logical development that they should have a white critic interpreting a book to a white audience. Most of the white critics are not interpreting African literature for the Africans. They don't have that audience in mind. They are thinking of their own people.¹

As can be judged from the above quotation, majority, if not all critical works on African literature have been written by Western critics whose primary concern is to interpret African literature for their immediate audience.

James Olney's *Tell Me Africa* is one more addition to the stock of critical works on African literature by Western critics. Like those who wrote before him, Olney is also mainly interested in helping his local audience understand African literature. He quite honestly and modestly makes it clear on the first page of his preface that: "I am not African, neither am I what is called an 'Africanist' or an 'African studies' expert. My 'approach to African literature' is addressed to a non-African and a non-specialist audience".²

One would dare say that this opening alone is warning enough for the African reader and the specialist in African literature not to waste their time and money on *Tell Me Africa*. Yet for the curious minded among the excluded group, it would not hurt to find out what approach the author adopts in his criticism of African literature.

For the audience which Olney has in mind, the book would be a nice acquisition because his approach is quite new, besides, he uses as his refer-

*At the time of writing, Dr. Phaniel Egejuru was a lecturer in literature at the University of Dar es Salaam.

1 Ezekiel Mphahlele's answer to the question: "who is qualified to be critic of African literature" when he was interviewed by Dr. Phaniel Egejuru in 1974.

2 James Olney, *Tell Me Africa* (Princeton University Press) 1973, p. VII.

ences, several books that one would not normally find in most anthologies on modern African literature. For instance to illustrate his theory of the constancy of the Ibo personality, he cites the works of the following authors: Equiano Olaudah, *The Interesting Narratives of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), Ojike Mbonu, *My Africa and Portrait of a Boy in Africa*, Okafor-Omali, Dilim, *A Nigeria Villager in Two Worlds*, Uchendu Victor, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, Umeasiegbu Rems, *The Way We Lived*. Finally he adds Achebe Chinua, all of whose works he considers as constituting an "autobiographical dramatization of three plus generations of Ibo experience."³

In his book *Metaphors of Self*, Olney has formulated a theory about autobiographical literature in which he maintains that any autobiography constitutes a psychological-philosophical imitation of the autobiographer's personality.⁴

In his present book, *Tell Me Africa*, Olney puts his theory into practice. Thus he interprets African Literature from an Autobiographical standpoint. And to suit his purpose, the word 'autobiography' assumes a greater dimension surpassing its dictionary meaning: "Writing the story of one's own life, story so written".⁵ By his own definition the meaning of the word expands to include: "autobiographical fiction, autobiographical ethnography, autobiographical sociology and philosophy—as well as all books that bear the title as Autobiography".⁶

However he concentrates on what he conveniently calls the autobiography of a people, with a strong bias on culture and habits of different groups in Africa. He argues in effect that once you've seen one African you've seen them all. Because everybody undergoes the same process of growing up, of living and of dying. Therefore the various groups in Africa, each one appears as one individual. The recurring examples he gives are the Ibos and the Gikuyus as they are portrayed in the writings of their peoples.

Following his theory on communal identity, the author comes out with four main individuals viz: The Gikuyu, the Ibo, the South African Blacks and the French African. All these merge into one giant Africa Individual. He then proceeds to cite examples from representative writers of each group to prove that all writings done by Africans fit into one or the other category of his definition of Autobiography.

Chapter one is entitled "African Autobiography and the non-African reader". Here we are given a panoramic view of African autobiography, a word which could more appropriately be replaced by literature according to the context of the book. In addition to the four motives of autobiography outlined by Benjamin Franklin in his own autobiography, Olney discovers three extra ones that, if not peculiar to African autobiography are more likely to be found there than in European or American practice of autobiography.

3 Ibid., p. 158.

4 J. Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, p. VII-VIII.

5 The Concise Oxford Dictionary.

6 Olney, *Tell Me Africa*, p. 6.