

View of Africa Is Questioned

I appreciate your generous coverage of African news, but ask that you keep your reports at your usual high standards of objectivity and good reporting. I refer to Thomas Patrick Melady's "Lesson" Learned From a nightmare" (Oct. 10) which disappointingly resembled the statements that used to appear about Africa in the American press several years ago.

It is written from an outsider's view and also it is seriously inaccurate. "Nigeria's ancient history is for a practical purposes buried with the past" according to the writer who begins with the British occupation, ignoring the spectacular recent advances that have been made, by historians, anthropologists and archeologists, in our knowledge of African history.

Again, the writer asserts that the grave historic problems of Nigeria were overlooked by the United States: while it is true that there was in some quarters an unfounded optimism, from 1960, the year of Nigerian independence, reputable scholars raised serious doubts as to Nigeria's viability. These, however, are relatively minor points compared to the gross misinterpretation of policy.

Tragic as the current situation is, it is folly to suppose that Britain or the United States should have intervened, when Biafra seceded. Intervention would have been disastrous, whatever the temptations. . . . By contrast with the vague and misleading generalities of Melady, you have on your staff an excellent observer, Stanley Meisler, who combines compassion with accuracy, insight and a very high order of journalism.

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