

PROBLEMS WITHIN THE OAU

The Organization for African Unity has many Committees established to facilitate the implementation of one resolution or another. The concept of working for African unity and African liberation is an ideal highly esteemed by all genuine freedom-fighters and independent African states. But there are some disturbing events that frustrate the realization of the noble ideals and objectives set out in the Charter of the OAU.

The freedom-fighters and their organizations are sometimes very carelessly referred to as "refugees." Needless to say that in the African context, every inch of the continent is their motherland. In terms of the various international conventions of such bodies as the United Nations and the International Red Cross, the definition of a refugee is such that a freedom-fighter cannot readily be classified under it.

Freedom-fighters, of course, are dedicated to the struggle to liberate their countries of origin, and cannot find the time and resources to enter into litigation to establish the meaning of "refugee" and whether they fall under it. Insofar as freedom-fighters have to seek asylum in brother African countries thus gaining the opportunity to prepare for the overthrow of white minority racist regimes, to that extent freedom-fighters could be regarded as "refugees." But these are "refugees" of a different type from those who have no plans to return to their home countries to liquidate racist regimes. Any such connotation that might attach to the usage of the term "refugee" must not be extended to encompass freedom-fighters.

Liberation Committee

Freedom-fighters have to face many problems which are better dealt with through channels established by the OAU and Member States. One of the watchdog committees of the OAU set up to attend to the problems that arise in the struggle to liberate the unliberated African states is the OAU Liberation Committee. This is a co-ordinating body. As the struggle for libe-

ration develops, some of the weaknesses of the Liberation Committee become more apparent. This is not surprising, as no living organization, particularly a political one, can claim to be perfect. But that is no ground for ignoring obvious defects.

One of the main dangers facing the OAU is the creation of many Committees which in turn establish formidable bureaucratic machinery which is quite remote from the day-to-day difficulties confronting the liberation movements. The personnel who man such OAU machinery assume a status that sometimes appears even higher than that of a Head of State. In such circumstances, it is not difficult for the OAU personnel to treat urgent matters of life-and-death with a relaxed attitude of *laissez-faire*.

Careless and undedicated

It is hoped that when the Council of Ministers convenes and when the Heads of State and Government meet, that the staff employed by the OAU Committees will come up for some attention, especially with regard to the issue of funds and the disappearance of memoranda and other documentary material which the liberation movements are required to submit from time to time.

The question of the loss of freedom-fighters' memoranda after presentation to various Committees of the OAU has long been a festering sore. Now and again the imperialist propaganda agencies and their parliaments reveal hair-raising intimate knowledge of the position of the liberation organizations in terms of arms, equipment, training camps, logistic requirements, etc.

And now the liberation movements are faced with a new problem — the defection of senior executive officers of the OAU Liberation Committee. Freedom-fighters have nothing to do with the internal political problems of independent African States. But we do look forward to some form of protection against the arbitrary actions of those OAU officials entrusted with

the task of helping in the struggle to liberate the rest of Africa.

We are constrained to illustrate our point here by referring to one incident—a defection—which causes us great anxiety. A senior executive officer of the OAU Liberation Committee is now a diplomat representing his country in Lisbon. Yes, he has been accredited to Portugal, that blood-thirsty colonial anachronism condemned everywhere men cherish freedom, democracy and human dignity. Only traitors to Africa's destiny could stoop so low as to enter in to state relations with Portugal. To belabour the point is not necessary; we only trust that the senior organs of the OAU will tackle these issues when next they assemble.

Meanwhile, we reproduce here a verbatim report taken from the South African press:

Portugal gains by defection

"Lisbon — Friday. Portugal is poised for an important breakthrough in her African war campaigns as a result of the defection of a top official of the Organization for African Unity's Liberation Committee. The official is Mr. H.I.A. Ugwu, a former Nigerian civil servant recently stationed in Tanzania as assistant executive secretary of the Committee, which is charged

with planning the "wars of liberation" in African territories still under White control — among them Portuguese Angola, Mozambique and Guinea.

Some weeks ago Mr. Ugwu told friends he was going to work for the Ojukwu regime in Biafra. Since then he has been seen at the Biafra mission in Lisbon. A spokesman for the Portuguese Foreign Ministry denied that officials here have any contact with Mr. Ugwu.

There can be no doubt however that Mr. Ugwu's intimate knowledge of topsecret planning in relation to the three Portuguese territories could prove vital in the Salazar Government's campaign, which is about to drag into its seventh year with no end in sight."

This report must surely give food for thought to all people interested in the emancipation of oppressed people in Africa. Perhaps the OAU will consider what appropriate measures are to be taken to guard against such dangers caused by defection or by any other reason, grievously prejudicial to the liberation movements.

But this whole episode is a lesson to the freedom-fighters to be vigilant and circumspect, especially in the giving of detailed information so often requested by standing committees.