

Skyne R. Uku. *The Pan-African Movement and the Nigerian Civil War*. New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1978. Pp. XIII + 106.

Professor Uku examines the birth, growth and application of Pan-Africanism as an African solution to an African problem. Nothing has happened in the tortuous history of Africa to undermine the need for such an inquiry. Events, in fact, have accentuated its necessity in order for the African to appraise his past, and match the present toward a peaceful and progressive future. The Nigerian civil war was actually a case which tested the strength and weakness of Pan-Africanism. An analysis based on a scholarly inquiry is therefore timely to collate the events that led to the Nigerian crisis. This is exactly what Professor Uku's *The Pan-African Movement and the Nigerian Civil War* has done very successfully, using the principles of Pan-Africanism as the basis for the examination (p.3).

We are reminded of the visionary efforts of the pioneers of Pan-Africanism, a movement which is also the history of the people behind it. Henry Sylvester Williams began the movement in the 1900's and it was nurtured through infancy by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey during the 1920's. In the 1950's, the heroic attention given it by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his peers made Pan-Africanism an anthem of African concerns.

It is appropriate then for Professor Uku to define Pan-Africanism as "an effort to unite the black race in the struggle for emancipation from racial discrimination as well as from colonialism." (p.2) But in the sense in which the author has applied the principles of Pan-Africanism, one might add that Pan-Africanism also means the joint efforts of independent African nations to save the sovereignty of their territories from neo-colonialism, and from the Africans themselves. The enemy is no longer the outsider alone but also the insiders as well. However, it was not until the 1945 Manchester Conference that a vigorous African participation in Pan-Africanism began; in time, this participation transformed itself into the Organization of African Unity.

The remote cause of the Nigerian Civil War lies in British exploitation of Nigeria's diverse ethnic nationalisms, which created a political imbalance. Professor Uku acknowledges that the diversity had always created "rivalry and antagonism," a polarity or state of intolerance that is so often referred to as "Tribalism," "even though the concept of tribe is not a very precise term to apply..." The author mocks the platitudes which outsiders usually shower on Nigeria as the "cornerstone of democracy." Professor Uku defines Nigeria as "nothing more than a

political unit that embraces many different languages and cultures. There are as many cultural differences within the confines of this large West African entity as there are cultural and language differences among the nations of Europe." These differences should not have been sold as the panacea for unity as the British made it. Each linguistic entity, such as the Ibo, Hausa or Yoruba, is traditionally a nation on its own. Each had developed economic, political and social systems in their respective city-states as far back as 500 A.D. It should have been honestly anticipated that a harmonious political relationship between the forest-coastal states and the extremely conservative Hausa-Fulani suzerainty would not be easy. Colonialism therefore helped to exacerbate existing group differences since British motives were commercial, evangelical and territorial. This provided the British the excuse to divide and rule the people through the hackneyed philosophy of Indirect Rule.

The traditional ruler was constituted as a native authority and each native authority and each native authority was advised by a British officer who wants only to exert his powers in a critical situation. Normally he would assert his influence rather than give command. The system of indirect rule was thought as true tyranny for self-government and new responsibilities.

The exercise succeeded most in the northern axis of the country, principally because the Fulani were "recent conquerors, anxious to stabilize their position"; and also because the social setup in the north was feudalistic. The south on the other hand claimed to be socialistic; an idea which had nothing to do "with state enterprises, programs of income redistribution or social welfare."

The difference in regional thinking culminated in mutual distrust between the north and the south. As independence drew near "the North became increasingly aware of its unreadiness. It realized that religious pedagogy was not an adequate education for parliamentary democracy or for coping with the complicated business of a modern state."

Within the south itself, there was no unanimity of purpose. Ethnic leaders emerged and based their political parties on ethnic appeal. There was the Action Group, dominated by the Yoruba, led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo; and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. Each party sided with the north and its Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), while accusing the other of planning to dominate. The schism between these groups

and their leaders became part of the dangerous interplay of national politics in the post-independence period. It was clear that the British ingenuity at maneuvering diverse ethnic entities into federations had not succeeded. Thus, it was not surprising that a military take-over based on ethnic loyalty took place on January 15, 1966. Subsequent military replacements followed a similar pattern. The seed for the disintegration of Nigeria into fracticidal war zones had been sown.

Hereafter, Professor Uku, with a disciplined, scholarly analysis examines the roles and responses of each component of the Organization of African Unity in the Nigerian crisis. In other words, the Pan-African Movement had to show through the Nigerian Civil War, that it is a reliable continental political force.

The O.A.U. attempted to match the intricacies and implications of the Nigerian crisis. This effort went on to confirm the realism in the vision of the mentors of Pan-Africanism. The majority of African governments realized that the breakup of Nigeria would trigger similar fissures in other African states. The boundaries of most African states are artificial since they were established by the former colonial power. It was argued that the "success of one tribal group in Nigeria would encourage the Somalis in Ethiopia and Kenya, the Ashanti in Ghana, the Baluba in the Congo...." The former Head of State of Nigeria, General Gowon, put it aptly: "It was the Congo and Tshombe yesterday, and it is Nigeria and Ojukwu today, who knows what African country will be next...."

Professor Uku argues that for Biafra to have succeeded would have splintered Africa into "countless anthill economies..., rather, African nations should consolidate their resources and widen their markets." With all these realizations in mind, the O.A.U. sent the first of its numerous reconciliation missions, of six nations, to mediate the Nigerian crisis. The problem was not merely domestic. Its implications were far reaching. President Mobutu spoke for all when he said: "The Nigerian crisis is not a moral question but a matter of principle and we in the Congo have for too long suffered from secessionist attempts and we just cannot come round to accept the idea of secession."

The major world powers sided with one group or the other in the conflict, for interests which were economic, political, and/or global. A few of the principal powers, the author points out, were Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

In chapters IV and V, Professor Uku places the strength and weakness of the O.A.U. on the success or failure of its ini-

tiatives to solve the Nigerian crisis. The O.A.U. is, after all, the mouth-piece of the said Pan-Africanist principles; and it is sometimes a talking workshop, fond of making inept resolutions. However, as ineffectual as some of its actions were, the O.A.U. sought to consolidate Nigeria, and in effect, the continent as a whole. A spate of peace conferences followed under its auspices: London Preliminary Peace Talks, May 6-15, 1968; Addis Ababa Peace Talks, August 5-13, 1968; Algiers Peace Talks, September 13-16, 1968; Kampala Peace Talks; and Aburi Peace Talks.

A majority of the O.A.U. members heartily supported these efforts such that only four countries recognized the rebellious Biafra. Professor Uku points out that the efforts of the O.A.U. to gain stability in Nigeria were a measure of the success of the ideals of the organization. However, many problems still remain in the O.A.U., such as: statesmanship and the quality of its leadership; liberation for the still-dominated parts of Africa; boundary disputes between member nations; and economic self-sufficiency for its rank and file members states.

On each application of the principle of Pan-Africanism the author provides incisive analysis and its implication for the future. Other features include copies of agenda and resolutions on which political actions of the time were based. However, the author concludes:

In an attempt to understand or analyze some of the manifestations of the O.A.U., it would be necessary to have a clearer view of the political, economic, and social problems of the new African states. It is up to the O.A.U. to prove to Africana and the world its ability to survive as a viable institution. Virtually without exception, African leaders see the coming years as one of the most critical periods in the continent's post war struggles.

The importance of THE PAN-AFRICAN MOVEMENT AND THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR lies in its ability to capture the mood and emotional center of events in Africa, the relationship between past visions and the present; the O.A.U. as a force on trial, learning and toiling to translate the dreams of Pan-Africanism into a commensurable reality. The work is a prosody of African political development; a midterm report on the success and failure of the principles of Pan-Africanism in its most practical application.

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