

OCAM: Structure and Objectives



THE *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM), is primarily a grouping of the French-speaking African countries, the ex-colonies of France and Belgium.

OCAM was founded in Nuakchott, the capital of Mauritania, in February 1965. A short time later, in April of the same year, the Congo Leopoldville, with Moises Tshombe at the head, was welcomed with open arms into OCAM, and Mauritania, in a gesture of protest, quit the organization.

OCAM had its antecedents in the *Union Africaine et Malgache*, founded in September 1961. It was a military and political coalition of 13 former French colonies which later united with Rwanda, an ex-trusteeship of Belgium.

In the colonial period, the French possessions in Africa south of the Sahara were united in two federations: French Ecuato-

rial Africa and French West Africa, with their administrative centers in Brazzaville and Dakar. The Republic of Guinea, liberated from colonialism in 1958, remained aloof from OCAM and its predecessor. Sekou Toure defined his position with these words: "Our sovereignty and neutrality are absolute; we want to be ourselves and not be dragged along by any of the blocs."

France renounced its political domination over its colonies in this part of Africa in 1961. The tragic and costly defeat in Indochina and the bloody war in Algeria begun November 1, 1954, impelled the French colonialists to adopt new methods to deal with the upheaval in its colonial empire. After acceding to independence, France signed with its colonies—weak countries lacking in resources—agreements for military and economic aid and regional accords directed at maintaining the close ties with the old metropolis.

The *Union Africaine et Malgache* lasted a short time. In the first session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of

African Unity, held in Dakar in the middle of 1963, the majority of those present sharply criticized the *Union Africaine et Malgache*, considering it a slap at African unity. Faced with this situation the Union was converted into a kind of economic community under the name of *Union Africaine et Malgache de Cooperation Economique* (UAMCE). The change took place in March of 1964. A year later the politico-military coalition was reorganized under the name of OCAM. Present at its formation was U.S. imperialism which had begun to penetrate the Ivory Coast, the Malagasy Republic and other former French colonies. The new organization from its start had its knife out for the liberation movements of Africa. Present at its inaugural meeting was the well-known Belgium diplomat Rothschild, expert on Congolese affairs, defender of Tshombe and close associate of the U.S. monopolies.

The following countries currently belong to OCAM:

Senegal	197 000 km ²	3 200 000 hab.
Ivory Coast	323 000	3 300 000
Upper Volta	274 000	4 000 000
Republic of Togo	57 000	1 500 000
Dahomey	116 000	2 000 000
Niger	1 188 000	3 000 000
Chad	1 284 000	2 700 000
Republic of Cameroon	475 000	4 000 000
Central African Republic	617 000	1 300 000
Congo (Brazzaville)	342 000	800 000
Gabon	267 000	500 000
Malagasy Republic	590 000	6 000 000
Congo (Democratic Republic)	2 346 000	16 000 000
Rwanda	27 000	3 000 000

Rwanda and Togo were German colonies. As an outcome of the First World War

they passed, respectively, into the hands of Belgium and France. Congo (Leopold-



ville) was a Belgian colony. The other nations of OCAM formed part of the French colonial empire.

In total, the *Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache* comprised more than 8 million square kilometers populated by more than 50 million human beings.

The members of OCAM, with the exception of the Congo (B), constitute the right wing of the Organization of African Unity. The rulers of Brazzaville have stated that

they will maintain an independent policy of support for the Organization of African Unity in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

OCAM has five specialized organizations: the Air Afrique company, the Afro-Malagasy Union of Mali and Communications, the Afro-Malagasy Bureau of Industrial Property, the Afro-Malagasy Union of Development Banks and the Afro-Malagasy Coffee Organization. Now it is in the process of

organizing a common press agency and an Afro-Malagasy Council on Sugar. Through France OCAM maintains relations with the European Common Market.

The territorial expanse of the countries that form part of OCAM, the number of inhabitants and the indigenous natural resources of these nations could contribute to the economic development of the entire region. But the real situation is very different. The wealth is in foreign hands. The present rulers of these countries, with rare and honorable exceptions, are more interested in serving the foreign monopolies than in blazing a path for their peoples. The majority of these countries face constant deficits in their balance of payments and live in an atmosphere of economic instability produced by underdevelopment.

Recently the sharp contradictions between the French and the U.S. monopolies have been very apparent. The current situation in the Congo (Leopoldville) with Mobutu in power, inclines more and more toward the U.S. side. Progressive African leaders have denounced the policy of OCAM as being destined to divide the liberation movement.

Recently OCAM tried to mediate between Algeria and the Congo (L) to achieve the freedom and exile of Moises Tshombe, assassin of Patrice Lumumba. At the head of OCAM at this time, functioning as Secretary General, is Falikon Kane, of the Republic of Senegal.

Last January 21, the Fourth Regular Session of OCAM was held in Leopoldville, the Congo, with the Ministers of Foreign Relations of the member countries in attendance. Among the accords adopted was a projected Economic Union of West Africa that will include the countries of OCAM and Ghana and Liberia, states which do not belong to the organization but whose rulers have close ties with the United States. Re-

presentatives from the Congo (Brazzaville) and the Central African Republic did not attend the meeting.

On the 27th, also in Leopoldville, the Fifth Conference of Heads of State of the member countries of OCAM was held. The Congo (B) and the Central African Republic did not attend the meeting. The two countries have broken diplomatic relations with the government of Mobutu. Rwanda and the Republic of Cameroon did not send their chiefs of state and were represented by their Ministers of Foreign Relations. This occurrence is normal in the meeting of OCAM. Very often the chiefs of state of the unstable African governments consider it unwise to move away from the seat of power.

The development of this Cumbre Conference, with Mobutu acting as the gracious host, reveals the character of OCAM. For three days the chiefs of state met in different settings. First in the ostentatious residence of Mobutu, located some 50 kilometers from the capital; the following day the session was held aboard Mobutu's luxurious presidential yacht in the Congo River and the closing session unfolded in Mobutu's official residence on Mount Stanley.

The official communication says nothing of the real African problems, of the fight against colonialism and imperialism, of the battle for economic development and true independence. The document is limited to affirming that "after having examined the political situation of Africa and the world, the heads of state decided to coordinate their efforts in the domains of inter-African and international policies."

With Mobutu as the gracious host and central figure, one could only expect a policy of division, intrigue, and maneuvering at the service of the imperialist masters and against the peoples of Africa.