



United Nations Trusteeship Supervision in British Cameroons 1946-1958

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ABSTRACT

This article examines United Nations trusteeship supervision in British Cameroons. It highlights the objectives, perspectives and roles the organisation adopted to achieve its goals in the territory. The UN supervision of the British Administration in the trust territory took place within a larger context of its action on all colonial problems during an era of East-West tensions. Once the United Nations began to function, the fundamental disagreement on colonial problems that had been apparent at the San Francisco Conference reappeared. United Nations initiatives transformed these problems by showing how they could be solved and by making it apparent that a solution was possible. The study is thus an attempt to raise questions and seek answers to the understanding of the roles the United Nations played in the territory during the period of the trusteeship. The objective is to evaluate the extent to which British colonial practises in the Trust Territory were in accordance with the Trusteeship objectives and principles.

KEY WORDS: United Nations, British Cameroons, Trusteeship Supervision, Visiting Missions, written and Oral Petitions.

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Introduction

When the United Nations was created, the question of freedom and self-government for colonized peoples was a prime concern to the founding fathers. The Charter made it absolutely clear that members would have to show respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. In an attempt to fulfill these fundamental

objectives, the Charter enunciated the goal of self-government for all colonial territories; it adopted self-government or independence as the goals for the former mandates for which a trusteeship system was established.¹ The above declared objectives were easily agreed upon but the question of

¹Ngarka, "United Nations and Decolonization in Trust Territories".



how freedom and self-government were to be achieved split the delegates at the April 1945 San Francisco conference into two camps, the colonial powers and the anti-colonialists.²

Britain and France led the colonial group while those hostile to colonial rule included the Soviet bloc, Latin American nations and the Afro-Asian group. Britain and France were very determined to keep their colonies. David E. Gardinier suggests that these two European powers did not wish to relinquish their colonies, which could mean further weakness after severely being weakened by the war.³ Another concern of these powers was that, though they realized that they could not continue to rate their oversea territories in the same way as in the past, they wished to direct their territories political evolution without the interference of other nations or the United Nations. The anti-colonialists had one hope. They sought to make the United Nations the guarantor of freedom and self-government for colonized peoples all over the world. Gardinier lucidly explains that the anti-colonialists, by contrast, sought to have all colonial territories placed under International Trusteeship so that they could utilize the United Nations to bring colonial rule wherever it still existed to an end as rapidly as possible.⁴

The above conflict of interest was eventually resolved, although not without some compromises. While the anti-colonialists got the Charter to clearly define the objective of self-government for all colonial territories as well as the establishment of the trusteeship system, the colonial powers ensured that not all colonial territories should come under the trusteeship system. They also obtained fifty percent of the seats on the Trusteeship Council, whose function was to supervise the territories placed under its control. Other compromises related to the functions of the Trusteeship Council as well as the objectives and implementation of the Trusteeship System⁵.

This article analyses the Trusteeship Supervision in British Cameroons. Specifically, it treats the Annual Reports, Written Petitions and Oral Hearings from the citizens in the territory. It also examines the activities of the four UN Visiting Missions sent to British Cameroons, which enabled the UN to influence the policies of the colonial power.

Examination of Annual Reports

Article 87 of the UN charter requested that Administering Authorities should submit annual reports of their activities in the territories to the Trusteeship Council for consideration. The importance of these reports laid in the fact that they offered the Council the basis for assessing the extent to which administering authorities were working towards the attainment of the

² Ibid.

³ D.E. Gardinier, *Cameroon, United Nations Challenge to French Policy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1963, p.4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gardinier, *Cameroon, United Nations Challenge to French Policy*, pp. 6.



United Nations objectives. However, it should be observed that the membership structure of the Council was such that it limited the extent to which it could go towards ensuring that its mission was realized.⁶ The fact that administering powers and non-administering powers were equally represented on the Council meant that colonial powers, if they persuaded the other non-administering powers to vote with them as a bloc, could prevent the Council from acting against their wishes.

The UN expected the Administering Authorities to work towards the realization of similar goals for colonial territories. Thus, the Council ensured that reports from the different administering authorities followed a uniform pattern that was based on a questionnaire whose structure was defined by Article 88 of the Charter, which requested that; the Trusteeship Council shall formulate a questionnaire on the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of each trust territory, and the Administering Authority for each trust territory within the General Assembly shall make annual report to the General Assembly on the basis of such questionnaire.⁷

It was not until at the 25th meeting of the Council, which held on April 25th, 1947,

⁶United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1946-1948*, New York, Kraus Reprint, 1976, p. 841.

⁷United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), "Report of the Trusteeship Council covering the period from 23 July 1955 to 14 August 1956/ Cameroons under British Administration, A/3170," Supplement NO 4, 1956. pp.15-19.

that the draft questionnaire demanded by Article 88 of the Charter was adopted. The questionnaire which was referred to as provisional was comprehensive. With 247 questions, it was divided into twelve sections with numerous sub-sections and a statistical appendix. The twelve sections had the following headings: brief introductory description, status of the territory and its inhabitants, international and regional relations, maintenance of law and order, political advancement, economic advancement, social advancement, publications, research, suggestions and recommendations, summary and conclusions.⁸

Britain as an administering authority was expected to comply with the questionnaire. Beginning from 1947 to the end of the trusteeship, Britain used the questionnaires to send annual reports as requested by the Trusteeship Council. It should be observed that the questionnaire examined above was very flexible. It was subject to revision from time to time if there was need to do so. To be exact, the decision to revise the questionnaire was taken by the General Assembly on December 9th, 1953. Resolution 751 (VIII) December 9th, 1953 of the General Assembly further established a Sub-Committee that was assigned the task of studying the possibility of adapting the questionnaire to the special conditions of each territory.⁹ This adaptation made it

⁸ United Nations, *Year book of the United Nations*, p.735.

⁹ United Nations Document. T/1267 "Progress Report of Sub-Committee on



possible for the correct information to be received from the territory.

Written Petitions

At the establishment of the International Trusteeship System, it was realized that in the course of administering the territories, there may be issues over which indigenous peoples and others in the trust territories might not be satisfied with the role of the Administering Authorities and would wish to seek direct intervention from the Trusteeship Council. In order to address such a phenomenon, an opportunity was provided for petitions to be accepted from trust territories. Article 87 (b) of the Charter stated that one of the functions of the Trusteeship Council was to “accept petitions and examine them in consultation with the Administering Authority.”¹⁰In accordance with the prescribed rule and regulations, the examination of petitions, be they written or oral, followed a well-organized procedure. The petitions to general questions were examined by the Council during its examination of annual reports, while those on specific issues were handled when dealing with the appropriate agenda item.¹¹

In British Cameroon, the southern portion made maximum use of the opportunity to present petitions. Petitions were received from the Southern Cameroons indigenes as well as other residents. Some of the earliest petitions to be received from

Southern Cameroons included two from the Bakweri Land Committee, which were respectively dated August 24, 1946 and November 17, 1947. The petitioners revealed that, as a result of German annexation, the Bakweri had lost about 1,500 square kilometers of land. They emphasized that even after the two world wars, they had not been given back their land by the British who were now the administrators of the territory. The petitioners requested that all alienated land of the Victoria Division, which formerly belonged to the Bakweri be returned to them; the compensation for this land be given to the Bakweri and that mission lands, except those containing ecclesiastical and educational buildings, be returned to the Bakweri without compensation for exploitation.¹²

Some petitions came from political and social associations, ethnic groups and individuals. From political associations, petitions were received from the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) in December 1949 in which they requested improvement in education, health, communication, economic development and administration as well as regional autonomy. The Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), in 1952, forwarded a petition which centered on the main subject of regional autonomy. The Ex-Service Men’s Union, Victoria also petitioned in 1951 requesting among other things, the payment of bonuses and

Questionnaire,” United Nations Trusteeship Council, Official Records, New York, 1954, p.6.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations* 1946-1947, p. 841.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations*, 1946-1947, p. 771.



allowances as well as employment.¹³ Petitions from ethnic groupings included those from the “Mengen Community and Widikum Community League” in April 1949, requesting their lands which had been falsely handed over to the Bali people to be released to them. The Ejagham people in Mamfe also petitioned in December 1949, requesting improvement in water supplies, education and health services, road infrastructure and rights to land. The Bafaw Improvement Union petitioned in December 1949, requesting the abolition of forest reserves and the improvement of people’s condition in Kumba Town.¹⁴

Individual petitions were received by the Trusteeship Council from people who had difficulties sorting out their problems with British Administrators in the territory. A petition was received from M.S.T. Arrey who had been dismissed from his post as a teacher with the education department, requesting that he be reinstated or permitted to retire voluntarily and enjoy retirement rights. M.S.M. Efesoa of Victoria Native Administration also petitioned requesting that the benefits and salary increases of his new office as sanitary overseer be implemented. Sama Ndi on his part did not petition on personal issues, rather he

petitioned in March 1952, complaining that the administration was not taking adequate steps to settle the land dispute between Bali and the Widekum.¹⁵

Oral Petitions

According to the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council, petitions could either be written or oral. Article 78 clearly stated that, petitions might be presented written in accordance with Articles 79 to 86 or orally in accordance with articles 87-91.¹⁶ Oral presentations or petitions were allowed in support of previously submitted petitions, or in exceptional cases oral petitions were allowed for cases which had not previously been submitted in writing. It should be remarked that the granting of request for oral hearings stirred upon a lot of political activity in the territories. In spite of the fact that the petitioners rarely got what they asked for, Vernon Mckay remarks that “their trips to the United Nations General Assembly stimulated much excitement at home and often compensated the petitioners with handsome rewards.”¹⁷

It should further be observed that oral hearings in the General Assembly were considered to be more rewarding than written petitions. This was because in the Assembly the petitioners presented their stories to all members of the United Nations, while in the Council the Administering

¹³ Cameroon National Achieves Buea (CNAB), file No. Ba/1948/6,PB.23-119.

¹⁴Interview with Chief Victor E. Mukete, aged 99, Paramount Chief of the Bafaw people, former Federal Minister in Nigeria under the KNC Government, 1954-1959, presently chairman of the Board of Directors CAMTEL Yaoundé and Oldest Member of the Cameroon Senate, Kumba 12 September 2017.

¹⁵ United Nations, DOC. No. NO.T/L, 397,pp.1-2

¹⁶ UN DOC. T/1/Rev. DF, April 23, 1947

¹⁷ Vernon Mckay, “Too Slow or Too Fast? Political Change in African Trust Territories”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 35, no. 2, 1957, pp.304-6.



Authorities who constituted half of the membership hardly sympathized with them. The General Assembly however, could not force the Trusteeship Council to take specific actions because, like the General Assembly, the Trusteeship Council was a principal organ of the United Nations and possessed an authority of its own.¹⁸ British Cameroon citizens made maximum use of the opportunity for oral presentation of petitions in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. A greater number of oral presentations were presented from 1952 to 1958 when the question of self-government and independence was dominant. Political parties, students organizations and chiefs made use of this opportunity to present their views on what they thought was the best way forward for the territories.

In the British Cameroon, Gorji Dinka, Victor Ngu and Albert Mukong appeared in the Fourth Committee on behalf of the National Union of Cameroon Students (NUCS) in 1959, while Magnus N. Mokeba also appeared for the Cameroon Students Association (CSA) of America. Both delegations spoke in support of Secession from Nigeria and Reunification with French Cameroon.¹⁹ The political parties that made appearances in the Fourth Committee from British Cameroons were: One Kumerun (OK), Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP), Kamerun National Congress (KNC) and the Kamerun National Democratic Party

(KNDP). Oral petitions presented in support of continued association with Nigeria were made by the KPP whose spokesman was Nerius Namaso Mbile, and the KNC which later became the CPNC, whose spokesmen were Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and Rev. Ando-Seh.²⁰ In all its appearances, OK led by Ndeh Ntumazah, spoke in favour of secession from Nigeria and immediate reunification with French Cameroon. Another party that made oral presentation in support of Secession and Reunification was the KNDP party led by John Ngu Foncha²¹.

Visiting Missions

The United Nations instituted Visiting Missions to the trust territories was one of the agents through which the Trusteeship Council could supervise the territories. Article 87(c) of the Charter demanded that in carrying out its functions, the Trusteeship Council may also provide for periodic visits to respective trust territories at times agreed upon with the administering authority.²² Periodic visits by the United Nations Visiting Missions were very significant in the entire development process of the territories. Vernom Mckay, in his study of African territories, argue that in most cases Visiting Missions helped tremendously in

²⁰ National Archives Buea (NAB), A/C.4/399, Statement made by Dr. E. M. L. Endely, Leader of the Opposition in Southern Cameroons House of Assembly at the 850th meeting of the Fourth Committee on 25 February, 1959, pp. 1-2.

²¹ National Archives Buea (NAB), A/C.4/398, Statement by Mr. John Ngu Foncha, Premier of Southern Cameroons at the 849th Meeting of the Fourth Committee on 25 February, 1959, p.3.

²² United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations*, 1947, pp.840-841.

¹⁸ Interview with Mukete.

¹⁹ United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations* 1959, New York, Kraus Reprint 1980, p.810.



stimulating general political awakening in the trust territories. He notes that: “These visits are great events in Africa and they convey to the people, as the League of Nations could never do the idea that the outside world wants them to advance. The Missions are deluged with many thousands of oral requests and written communication, and thousands of complaints are sent directly to the Trusteeship Council.”²³

The general objectives of each Visiting Mission was to investigate and report on the progress made in the territory towards realization of the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants and their progress towards self-government or independence, as requested by Article 76 of the Charter of the UN. During the period of the trusteeship, four different Visiting Missions were dispatched to Cameroon under British Administration in 1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958.

First Visiting Mission

The first Visiting Mission to British Cameroons was sent in 1949. It was composed of four delegates to which were added six members of the United Nations Secretariat. The members of the Mission were Awni Khalidy (Iraq), A-Ramous Pedrueza (Mexico), B. Gerig (U.S.A) and the chairman of the mission A. Claeys-Buaert from Belgium. The objectives of this Mission centred on the expectations of

Article 76 (b) of the UN Charter.²⁴ The Missions visit to Southern Cameroons effectively took place between November 1 and 24, 1949. It began from the Cameroons Province where they had meetings with political leaders and traditional rulers, visited various government offices, plantations of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) as well as educational establishments and other investments.²⁵ The delegation continued their visit to the Bamenda Province after making some visits to Yola in Northern Cameroon.

The contribution of the 1949 Visiting Mission towards the political development of British Cameroon was very remarkable. The observation was based on the fact that the views that were gathered from the territory were very instrumental in the shaping of the 1951 Nigerian Constitution as it concerned the peoples of Southern Cameroons who were demanding greater autonomy. The demands presented to the Visiting Mission by the leaders of Southern Cameroons had been drafted between May 14 and 15 in Kumba where 17 socio-political groups of the territory met to harmonise their views in anticipation of the visitors.²⁶

²⁴ United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations*, 1950, New York, Kraus Reprint 1950, p.348.

²⁵ United Nations Trusteeship Council Official Records, Annex vol II, p.70.

²⁶ United Nations, Doc. NO. T/461 “Report of the first United Nations Visiting Missions to the trust territory of Cameroons under British Administration,” 1949, .p. 47; Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and his colleagues of the Cameroon National Federation also demanded unification just as a

²³ Mckay, “Too Slow or Too Fast”, p.305.



The 1951 Constitution also referred to as the Macpherson Constitution, offered the people of British Southern Cameroons their first opportunity to go to the polls in primary and other elections for the new Regional House of Assembly. The Macpherson Constitution provided for one Minister without portfolio to the Central Council of Ministers in Lagos and six members to the House of Representatives from the territory in the Federal Capital. It also made provision for two members of the Eastern Regional Executive Council and thirteen members from the territory in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly.²⁷

In British Northern Cameroons, nationalist activities began a decade after it had started in Southern Cameroons. The earliest traces of activities in the territory were recorded in November 1949, when the first United Nations Visiting Mission visited the trust territory. During the visit the Emir of Dikwa, a political activist in Northern Cameroons, made two important demands to the Mission. He asked that the UN should separate the Kanuri and Shuwa Arabs of the Northern Region of French Cameroun and unite them with those of the Northern Cameroons under British administration, outside the Nigerian framework.²⁸

Second Visiting Mission

means of putting pressure on the British to grant a regional status to Southern Cameroons.

²⁷ Colonial Office, Report of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the year 1951, Colonial Office No. 28.1952, pp.39-40.

²⁸ Chem-Langhee, "The British and Northern Cameroons Problems 1919-1961" in *ABBIA* May 1982, p.312.

The United Nations Second Visiting Mission to the British Cameroon was dispatched in 1952 in accordance with a General Assembly Resolution 553 (VI) of January 18, 1952. Action on this decision was taken at the 409th meeting of the Trusteeship Council held on March 27, 1952. Like the first, the Second Mission, that was to visit all the trust territories in West Africa, was composed of four persons. They included; Roy A. Peachey from Australia who acted as the chairman of the Mission, Robert Schegvan from Belgium, H.K Yaoung from China, and Robert E. Quiros from El Salvador. The delegation was accompanied by a technical staff of seven members of the United Nations Secretariat.²⁹

The objectives of the Second Mission were clearly defined in the Trusteeship Council Resolution 465 (XI) of July 22, 1952. In addition to asking the Mission to investigate and report on the progress made towards the realisation of the general objectives of the trusteeship as spelt out in Article 76 (b) of the Charter, the Mission was also specifically called upon to:

Give attention, as might be appropriate in the light of discussion in the Trusteeship Council and in the General Assembly and of Resolutions adopted by them, to issues raised in connection with the annual reports on

²⁹ UN DOC.T/1043, Report on the Cameroon under United Kingdom Administration and the Cameroun under French Administration submitted by the United Nations visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1952, New York March 5th 1953. P.2.



the administration of the four trust territories concerned, in petitions received by the Trusteeship Council relating to those trust territories in the reports of the first periodic visiting mission to the trust territories in West Africa and in the observation of the Administering Authorities on those reports.³⁰

As usual, the observations of the Mission were made in their report in the political, economic, social and educational domains. In the political domain, the Mission noted that certain constitutional changes had taken place in the territories since 1949. In British Cameroon, the 1951 Nigerian Macpherson Constitution, examined above, had provided for the Southern Cameroons to be represented on the regional and central executive and legislative organs of government and introduced modern methods of suffrage. With this innovation, it was possible for the citizens to begin to adopt some levels of Western political culture. Thus, by the time of the 1952 visit, there was, according to the report of the Mission, the emergence of what it described as “a promising genuine and valuable experience in democratic institution.”³¹ To be specific, the report noted the presence of political groups like

³⁰ UN Doc No T/1045 “Report on the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration and Reports on the Cameroun under French Administration submitted by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1952” United Nations Trusteeship Council, official Document, New York, 1954, P.2

³¹ Ibid ; p.5

the CNF and the KUNC, which had split from the CNF in August 1951.³²

As a result, it urged the Administering Authority to continue by all practical means to foster the political and educational advancement of the inhabitants and encouraged them to play their full part in the operation of the new structure of their government.³³ It paid tribute to the British Administration for encouraging political development in an atmosphere of freedom and democracy. It discussed local problems with representative groups and individuals and noted their growing maturity and interest demonstrated with dignity and self-confidence.

On the economic activity of the territories, the 1952 Mission like its 1949 counterpart dwelt extensively on the CDC plantations which definitely had a great impact on the general level of economic development in British Cameroons. This was in cognisance of the numerous petitions written by trade unionists for the improvement of their working conditions.³⁴

³² Endeley was the leader of the KNF while N.N. Mbile was the honorary general secretary of the KUNC. The split came because Endeley did not cherish the idea of unification between British and French Cameroons which was highly cherished by Mbile and Dibongue.

³³ V.J. Ngoh, Cameroon 1884-1985 : A Hundred Years of History, Yaoundé, CEPER, 1988, p. 63 ; P.M. Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, Buea, Government Printers, 1967, p.31; N.N.Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story : Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness*, Limbe, Presbyterian Printing Press, 1999, pp.52-53.

³⁴UN DOC. No. T/1044, “Report on the Cameroon under United Kingdom Administration and on the Cameroon under French Administration,



The Mission also called on the Administering Authority to lay more emphasis on the improvement in agriculture and communication networks in the territories.

Concerning social advancement in the territory, the Mission noted that the standard of living was low and primitive and still at the subsistence level, particularly in the northern part of British Cameroon. Educational facilities in view of the Mission were still inadequate. The Mission received general requests for new schools and maintenance of educational establishments by the government. In its overall assessment on the educational situations, it felt that intensive and extended efforts were needed in the territories if the high percentage of illiteracy was to be reduced.³⁵ On the whole, with the exception of constitutional advancement in the trust territory, there were slow rates of development in the economic, social and educational fields since the visit of the First Visiting Mission in 1949.

Third Visiting Mission

The United Nations Third Visiting Mission to the trust territories of Cameroon under United Kingdom Administration was dispatched into the territories in October 1955. The delegation, whose nomination

was approved on June 14th 1955, was composed of Max H. Dorsinville from Haiti as chairman, Robert Schegven from Belgium, Hsi-yun Yang from China and Edward W. Mulcahy from U.S.A. The 1955 Mission that was expected to be in the territory for one month beginning from mid-October was assigned to achieve goals clearly defined by the Trusteeship Council Resolution 1253 (XVI) ,³⁶ which among other general issues requested the Mission:

...to give attention to the issues raised in the Council and the General Assembly and in reports of previous Visiting Missions and in the observation of the Administering Authorities on those Reports. To give attention to the issues raised in the hearings in the General Assembly of petitioners from the trust territory ...; To receive petitions and to investigate on the spot after consulting the representatives of the Administering Authorities concerned, those which it considered warranted special investigation.³⁷

The impact of the visit of the Third UN Visiting Mission on the development of British Cameroon towards the eventual achievement of the goals of the Trusteeship

1952", pp. 9-11; The situation was the same in the Central legislature and Central Executive where the Europeans were in a very dominant position as they occupied two third of the seats; See also V. J. Ngoh, *Constitutional Developments in Southern Cameroons, 1946-1961: From Trusteeship to Independence*, Yaoundé, Pioneer Publishers, 1990.

³⁵UN DOC.NO.T/1044, p.11.

³⁶ UN DOC. No T/1046. "Report on the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration submitted by the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under British Administration and the Cameroons under French Administration 1955". United Nations Trusteeship Council, Official Records, New York, 1956, p.1

³⁷ Ibid. p. 2; see also V.J. Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification: 1955-1961*, Limbe, Press Print PLC, 2011.



was profound. At the end of the visit, like the first two visits; it was characterised by meetings with political leaders, oral hearings, and visits to educational institutions, social and economic establishments. The report submitted by the delegation, clearly revealed that the territory was very anxious about moving towards the final objectives of the Trusteeship Agreement.

In British Southern Cameroons, the report noted that the question of autonomy and unification featured prominently in the petitions they received while in the territory. It specifically noted that the inhabitants of the territory appeared to have been satisfied with the innovations brought about by the 1954 Constitutional changes except that, in the Southern Cameroons, there was dissatisfaction with the situation where the territory was still “dependant in the event of deficits on the Federal Government of Nigeria and that its laws must receive the assent of the Federal Governor General.”³⁸

In this connection, the Mission noted that Southern Cameroons politicians had strongly proposed that the next revision of the constitution that was scheduled for 1956 should provide for a full measure of self-government for the Southern Cameroons.

Constitutional developments within the Southern Cameroons had brought in its wake some polarisation of views as to the future of the territory. The Mission noted the differences that existed in the political lives

of British Northern and Southern Cameroons. The principal divergence between the two groups was in the objectives of their political future. The three political parties in Southern Cameroons expressed two main desires: first, unification of Northern and Southern Cameroons,³⁹ and second, eventual reunification of British Cameroon and French Cameroon.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Northern Cameroons wanted complete integration with Northern Nigeria. However, the Mission observed that the majority of the non-Muslim population of the Northern Cameroons was not yet in a position to give an opinion on its political future. Furthermore, there was no expression of any wish in the Northern Cameroons to join the Southern Cameroons. Consequently, the Mission concluded that the Northern Cameroons desired the fusion with Northern Nigeria and added that there was no demand for unification and reunification in Northern Cameroons.⁴¹

³⁹ The KNC and KNDP felt that road links between Northern and Southern Cameroons would lead to unification and enable ideas from the latter to spread to the former. The KNC went further and demanded the immediate establishment of a joint council of Northern and Southern Cameroons.

⁴⁰ According to Chem-Langhee, none of these political parties and groups provided any sound argument in favour of Reunification, and none of them provided concrete proposals for effecting it. Instead, they saw unification and Reunification as a means of achieving more constitutional advances for Southern Cameroons.

⁴¹ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Report of the Trusteeship Council covering the period from 23 July 1955 to 14 August 1956 17/3170, supplement 4, 1956, pp.120-124.; B. Chem-Langhee, *The Paradoxes of Self –Determination:*

³⁸ United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations* 1956, New York, Kraus Reprint, 1980, P.346.



In the economic domain, the Mission still noticed an overriding need for more and better roads, particularly in the northern divisions of the Southern Cameroons specifically in Wum and Nkambe Divisions. These were fruitful areas for economic development, which still awaited adequate connections with markets. The Mission encouraged the governments of the trust territory to attract the investment of foreign capital and to take all such measures as were within their powers to attract foreign enterprises to the territories in all spheres of economic activities. Although this policy was understandable, the Mission noted the Administering Authority's opinion that the uncertainty of the territory's political future and the issue of reunification with the French Cameroon advocated by certain groups might act as deterrents to foreign investors, especially those from within the sterling area.⁴²

Fourth Visiting Mission

The 1958 UN Visiting Mission to the trust territories in West Africa can be described as the most significant when one considers the stage at which the territories had reached towards the realization of the objectives set forth in Article 76 (b) of the Charter. The territories had gained a higher level of self-government and what was thus left was the attainment of independence from

the Administering Authorities. The delegation of the Visiting Mission was composed of four members whose nominations were approved at the Trusteeship Council's 924th meeting on July 18, 1958. The members were: Georges Solomon from Haiti, Rikhi Jaipah from India, Gray Thorp from New Zealand and Benjamin Gerig from USA, who acted as the Chairman. They were accompanied on the mission by six members from the Secretariat.⁴³

The objectives of the Fourth Mission were adopted in resolution 1007 (XXI) of the Trusteeship Council on July 28, 1958. As set out they went beyond the general goals defined by Article 76(b) of the Charter to include:

Taking into account the terms of General Assembly resolution 821 (IV) of 15 November 1949 and other relevant General Assembly resolutions to give attention, as might be appropriate in the light of discussions in the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly and of resolutions adopted by them, to issues raised in connection with the annual reports on the Administration of the two trust territories concerned. In petitions received by the Trusteeship Council relating to the territories, in the reports of the previous visiting Missions to the Territories and in the observations

Cameroon Under United Kingdom Administration, New York, University Press, 2004, p.61.

⁴² Chem-Langhee, *The Paradoxes of Self – Determination*, p.8.

⁴³ United Nations, DOC. No T/1440. "Report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, on the Cameroons under British and French Administration" in United Nations Trusteeship Official Records, New York, 1959, pp. 2-3.



of the Administering Authorities on these reports.⁴⁴

Given that the question of independence appeared urgent in view of the impetus that the Nigerian move towards independence had generated, the Trusteeship Council had to respond to a statement made by the British Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, on the future of the Cameroons. At the Nigerian Constitutional Conference of 1957, the Colonial Secretary had stated that:

When Nigeria becomes independent, one possibility would be that the Cameroons should remain part of it. This would involve the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and would require consultation with the United Nations. I can state quite categorically that there can be no question of obliging the Cameroons to remain part of an independent Nigeria contrary to her wishes. Before Nigeria becomes independent, the people of the North and South of Cameroons would have to say freely what their wishes were as to their own future.⁴⁵

It is in connection with the statement of the British colonial secretary quoted above that the Trusteeship Council decided to give the Fourth Mission an extra assignment. It further requested the Mission to include in its report on the Cameroons

under United Kingdom Administration its views on the method of consultation, which should be adopted when the time came for the people of the territory to express their wishes concerning their future.⁴⁶

The Mission visited the British Cameroons from 29 October to 14 November 1958. However, it was in connection with the visit of the Mission that the Southern Cameroons leaders more clearly defined their policies. The KNC-KPP alliance, supported by a significant number of the electorate made it clear to the Mission that its objective was integration on federal basis and demanded a fully self-governing state of Southern Cameroons within the Nigerian Federation.⁴⁷ It was against reunification because the various segments of Kamerun had developed in different directions, their inhabitants had become accustomed to different foreign traditions.

The traditional rulers who spoke for their subjects requested that Southern Cameroons sever all links with Nigeria, continue under trusteeship for a short period and gain its independence. Their ultimate goal was first and foremost secession.⁴⁸ The KNDP, which by now was receiving the support of the traditional leaders who advocated a position similar to their programme and who had no political party

⁴⁶ United Nations Doc. No T/1440, p.3.

⁴⁷ United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations* 1958, New York : UN Department of Public Information, 1958, p.325.

⁴⁸ United Nations, "United Nations Visiting Missions to the Trust Territories in West Africa" 1958, pp. 6-17.

⁴⁴ Ibid.; p.3.

⁴⁵ Colonial office, Doc. No. 340, "Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, Report for the Year, 1957," London, HM Stationery office, 1958, p. 127.



of their own, requested that Southern Cameroons sever all links with Nigeria, continue under trusteeship for a short time and then gain independence in its own right. It would welcome unification provided the Northern Cameroonians had first severed all links with Nigeria. Reunification would ultimately be effected provided the “two self-governing states” were in favour of such a move.⁴⁹

At the other end of the road, and with very little support from the electorate, stood One Kameroun (OK) pleading with the United Nations to unilaterally effect reunification and grant Kamerun independence immediately. Using authentic, but misleading evidence, it argued not only that Kamerun was partitioned without the consent of its people but also that all the Kamerunians desired reunification.⁵⁰ Unlike in the Southern Cameroons there was no demand for reunification in the Northern Cameroons. During the visit of the fourth and last UN Visiting Mission to the territory in 1958, a group of Northern Cameroonians led by Crown Prince Victor Bang, petitioned the UN to separate the Northern Cameroons and integrate it into the Southern Cameroons. They argued that they were not related to those who administered them, and that all local powers were vested in the

district heads appointed from Yola in Northern Nigeria.⁵¹

Another opposition to the policy of integration came from the local branches of the major Nigerian parties, with the exception of the NPC. These parties including the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), the Northern Elements People Union (NEPU), the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and the Action Group (AG), asked the Visiting Mission to separate the Northern Cameroons from Northern Nigeria and grant it full regional status. They held that the association of the Northern Cameroons with Northern Nigeria had resulted in the abolition of many of the traditional institutions of the territory. As a consequence of this domination, the parties suggested that the UN should conduct a plebiscite as a means of resolving the conflict.⁵²

Contrary to these feelings, the Lamido of Adamawa, Mallam Aliyu Mustapha, assured the Mission that his loyal Northern Cameroonians were living in peace with their Northern Nigerian brothers that they were represented in the Native Authority Council and could not, therefore, be expected to support any move that would

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations* 1958, p.452; B. Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites 1959-1961: Perceptions and Strategies,” PhD Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976, p.76; “Reports on the Trust Territory of the Cameroons Under British Administration 1958,” NAB. T/d/1959/2.p.17.

⁵¹ Chem-Langëë , “Kamerun Plebiscites 1959-1961,” p.67; J.B. Ebune, *The Growth of Political Parties in Cameroon, 1916-1960*, Yaoundé, CEPER. 1992.

⁵² Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination*.p.99; See also C. E. Welch, *Dreams of Unity: Pan Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa*, New York, Cornwell University Press, 1960.



sever their Northern Nigerian connection. As for the Sardauna of Sokoto, he found it difficult to see if anyone who knew of Northern Cameroons could conceive of any political future of the area without Nigeria, taking into account the historical, geographical and economic factors. He accepted the principle of the plebiscite, suggesting, however, that only one question should be asked, namely “Do you want union with the Northern Region of independent Nigeria,⁵³” Only in the event of a negative vote should the electorate be presented a choice between integration and reunification.

The Visiting Mission appeared convinced by the arguments of the integrationists. In its report to the Trusteeship Council, it wrote that:

The mission has come to the conclusion... that there is no difference of opinion on the principal question of the future of the Northern Cameroons which would require or justify the holding of a formal consultation on the subject. It believes it to be manifestly the opinion of the northern population as a whole...that they would become permanently a part of the Northern region of Nigeria. The mission accordingly recommends that, if the general assembly accepts such a union as the basic for the termination of the trusteeship

agreement, no further consultation need be held.⁵⁴

When the Mission’s Report came up for discussion, the British representative, Sir Andrew Cohen, tried to pre-empt the debate by declaring that he did not think the Trusteeship Council would wish “gratuitously to burden the people of Northern Cameroons with the paraphernalia of more formal consultation.”⁵⁵ Addressing the Council later, the Minister for Northern Cameroons Affairs in the Northern Nigerian Regional Government, Mallam Abdulahi Dan Buram, said that all the Northern Cameroonians unanimously desired their permanent integration with Northern Nigeria and because of that unanimity, no further consultation was necessary.⁵⁶ With regard to the issue of the plebiscite, he replied that, as paragraph 178 of the Missions Report had indicated, the Consultative Committee would have been willing to accept a plebiscite if it were thought necessary, but it did not so consider it. This position was taken before the Mission recommended that a plebiscite was in fact unnecessary, for reasons entirely convincing to the regional government of Northern Nigeria.

The same reasons which the regional government of Northern Nigeria found

⁵³ Report on the Trust Territory of Cameroon Under British Administration, NAB. TD, 1959/2, p.18, and United Nations Visiting Missions to the Trust Territories in West Africa 1958, p17.

⁵⁴Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination*, pp.100-101; Report of the UN Visiting Mission to the Southern Cameroons, p.8; and United Nations, *Yearbook of the United Nations* UN Information Centre Yaoundé, 1959, p.354.

⁵⁵“Report of the UN Visiting Mission to the Southern Cameroons,” p.8.

⁵⁶Ibid.



entirely convincing failed to convince the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly as a whole. Thus, on 13 March 1959, the General Assembly endorsed the Trusteeship Council Resolution 1926 (XXIII) of 18 February 1959 and it became General Assembly Resolution 1350 (XIII). This resolution among other things, called on the British to organise, under the supervision of the United Nations separate plebiscite in Northern and Southern Cameroons in order to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of the Cameroons concerning their future.⁵⁷ It stipulated that the plebiscites in the Northern Cameroons should take place in November 1959 and should be based on the following questions: “(a) Do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent? Or (b) are you in favour of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons in a later date? It also allowed for the electoral register of Northern Cameroons for the Nigerian elections to the House of Representatives to be used for the plebiscite.⁵⁸ Northern Cameroon was thus

set for the plebiscite in 1959 while the imbroglio in Southern Cameroons remained unresolved.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed the United Nations Trusteeship supervision in British Cameroons. It revealed that, the anti-colonialists failed to secure the end of colonial rule everywhere at the end of the Second World War. Their attempts to have all colonial territories placed under international trusteeship came to nothing. Despite their opposition, a Trusteeship System was created in which the Administering Authorities held half of the seats in the organ of routine supervision, in the Trusteeship Council. The anti-colonialists had to give approval to Trusteeship Agreements with provisions which they disliked. Therefore, they tried once the Trusteeship System started to function to make the United Nations use its supervisory powers in the widest possible way in order to hasten the end of colonial rule.

The United Nations, due to its nature, provided a forum for the British Cameroonian nationalists to present their grievances. It also exercised the role of a supervising agency, for it was mandatory for the Administering Authority to forward annual reports on their respective territories. The written petitions and oral hearings provided the members of the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly to have genuine views and request from the nationals of the trust territories. The four

⁵⁷Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination*, pp.100-101; United Nations General Assembly, *The Future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroons Under United Kingdom Administration: Resolution 1926 (XXIII)*. Adopted by the Trusteeship Council, 18 February 1959 and Accepted by the General Assembly; United Nations, *Year Book of the United Nations* 1959, p.368.

⁵⁸ Chem-Langhëë, *The Paradoxes of Self-Determination.*, 100-101; United Nations General Assembly, *The Future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroon Under United Kingdom Administration* p. 368.



periodic Visiting Missions to the territory, 1949, 1952, 1955 and 1958 enabled the members of the UN Visiting Missions to cross-check its evidence on the spot. The examination of these mechanisms ensured that the trust territories achieved the gold of eventual self-government and independence as defined in article 76 (b) of the UN Charter.

Thus, after the 1958 Visiting Mission in the Cameroons under British Administration, UN policies in these territories were tilted towards the termination of trusteeship and the achievement of independence. In British Northern Cameroons, the citizens were prepared for the 1959 Plebiscite to decide on the future of the territory, while in the Southern Cameroons the citizens were divided over the issue of independence with three distinct political programmes, Integration, Reunification and Secession.

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