

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

## SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records



## FOURTH COMMITTEE, 310th

MEETING

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Headquarters, New York

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**Chairman: Mr. Rodolfo MUNOZ (Argentina).****Report of the Trusteeship Council (A/2150 and Add.1) (continued)**

[Item 12]\*

HEARING OF PETITIONERS FROM THE TRUST TERRITORY  
OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION  
(A/C.4/L.265) (continued)

*At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Okala, representative of the Parti socialiste camerounais, and Mr. Um Nyobé, representative of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, took places at the Committee table.*

1. Mr. ROSHCHIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) wished to comment on the statements made at the 309th meeting by the representative of the Dominican Republic and Canada on the question of the procedure to be adopted in relation to hearings in the Fourth Committee. He felt that the procedural question could not be raised at the present time; the Committee's duty was to examine the substance of the claims of the petitioners, to whom it had granted hearings for that purpose, and the proposal of the Dominican Republic bringing up a procedural question during the hearings would create difficulties and hinder the Committee in carrying out its task. Moreover, the representative of the Dominican Republic had submitted a draft resolution (A/C.4/L.240) on that matter at the 280th meeting, which he had subsequently withdrawn. It would therefore be absolutely illogical, as well as discourteous to the petitioners, to start a long discussion on a question which the Committee had already settled.

2. Mr. DORSINVILLE (Haiti) wished to know how Senator Okala could, as a senator, appear before the Fourth Committee as a petitioner.

3. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that his presence in the Fourth Committee was proof of the freedom of movement enjoyed by the people of the Cameroons in the French Union; he wished to emphasize that no inhabitant of the Cameroons, no matter who he was or what class he belonged to, had been prevented from exercising the right of petition.

\* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

He had been authorized by his compatriots to express the views of the people of the Cameroons, or more exactly of the Parti Socialiste Camerounais, before the Fourth Committee. There were several political parties holding different views in the Cameroons and it was only when all those parties, meeting together, decided that the country had reached the necessary maturity for independence that a representative duly authorized by the people of the Cameroons as a whole, in accord with the French Government, would appear before the Fourth Committee on behalf of the entire country. The fact that he was himself a senator was in no way incompatible with his presence in the Committee as a petitioner.

4. Mr. DORSINVILLE (Haiti) asked whether the basis for the establishment of a legislative assembly and executive council existed already in the Cameroons and whether the population was sufficiently far advanced for such organs.

5. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) explained that the ideas he had put forward at the previous meeting corresponded to the aspirations of the élite of the Cameroons and that the mass of the population was not informed of those plans. The élite wished the present system to be amended so that the indigenous inhabitants could enjoy legislative power over questions on which for the time being, they had only a right of discussion, for example, questions concerning the Territory's assets, its acquisitions, any gifts it might receive and purchases which it might make, land concessions, etc. As regards the establishment of an executive council, he could say nothing before examining the question with his own party and consulting the other parties. He recalled, however, that the French Government had announced the forthcoming establishment of an executive council in Togoland and he hoped that a similar solution would be adopted for the Cameroons. Similarly, the question of the double electoral college had been settled in Togoland though not yet in the Cameroons; he felt that France would soon realize that the reforms introduced in Togoland should be extended to the Cameroons.

6. Mr. DORSINVILLE (Haiti) wished to know what the relations were between the various strata of

the population in the Cameroons and whether they presented any racial or religious problems.

7. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that since 1947 the people of the Cameroons had been in contact well above the tribal level. In 1947, the Congress of the Anciennes Jeunesses Camerounaises had met at Douala to form the Rassemblement Camerounais (Racan) and had adopted a national anthem which was a symbol of unity among all the people of the Cameroons.

8. He noted however that there was a great difference between the north and south in the Cameroons; the south was Christian whereas the north remained for the most part Moslem. Nevertheless, there was no religious problem; the young people of the Cameroons were Protestant or Catholic, except in the north, and only the old people were still animists or fetishists.

9. The unity symbolized by the national anthem had to all intents and purposes been achieved among the people, but the institutions which would enable it to become more effective still had to be created. In that connexion, the Administering Authority ought to provide the people of the north and the south of the Cameroons with more opportunity for contacts with one another, for example by organizing exhibitions.

10. Mr. DORSINVILLE (Haiti) asked what were the chief industries in the Cameroons and which the indigenous inhabitants seemed most interested in.

11. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that industry was still in its infancy in the Cameroons. The only real industry was timber. However, it would be possible to develop the cocoa industry, as cocoa was the country's chief crop, and to improve methods of cultivation, which were still very rudimentary. The Administering Authority should take the necessary steps.

12. Mr. DORSINVILLE (Haiti) wished to know what assistance the people of the Cameroons had received from the credit agency set up by the Administering Authority.

13. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that the Crédit du Cameroun had been set up to help the people of the Cameroons, but in fact the agency tended to assume a political character incompatible with the purpose for which it had been created. As matters stood, it did not give farmers the assistance they had a right to expect from it and the situation should be remedied without delay.

14. Mr. KONDAPI (India) asked whether any inhabitants of the Cameroons under French administration had emigrated to the Cameroons under British administration and, if so, why.

15. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that many inhabitants of the Cameroons under French administration had in fact emigrated to the Cameroons under British administration at the time when indigenous forced labour existed in both Cameroons, but in a less arbitrary and violent form in the Cameroons under British administration.

16. Mr. KONDAPI (India) asked Mr. Um Nyobé what he thought of the steps taken by the Administer-

ing Authority in connexion with the preparation of the electoral lists, the electoral colleges and the representation of the indigenous inhabitants in the Council of the Republic and the Assembly of the French Union.

17. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) replied by quoting the law of 23 May 1951, which had enlarged the electoral body. In addition, a representative of the Administration and representatives of the political parties interested sat on the Commission set up to review the electoral lists. He added that, like the Council of the Republic, the members of the Assembly of the French Union were elected by indirect universal suffrage, but the Assembly had only consultative powers.

18. Mr. KONDAPI (India) wished to know how far the indigenous inhabitants participated in the administration of the Territory.

19. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) explained that responsible posts were never given to indigenous inhabitants. The highest post occupied by an indigenous inhabitant was that of *agent spécial*, whose duties corresponded roughly to those of a municipal tax collector. In that connexion, he wished to protest strongly against the statement made by Mr. Senghor in October 1950 that half the magistrates in the Cameroons were indigenous inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

20. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) drew attention to the fact that the head of the *Bureau du courrier* in the office of the High Commissioner was an indigenous inhabitant, and so was the chief of administrative liaison between the Territorial Assembly and the Government. But while it was to be hoped that indigenous inhabitants would be able to be appointed *chefs de subdivision* after completing a course at the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer, it must not be forgotten that it was also necessary to see that the indigenous officials enjoyed some authority over their compatriots, which was not always the case.

21. Mr. KONDAPI (India) asked whether the Administering Authority had taken any steps to spread the idea of the unification of the two Territories of the Cameroons.

22. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that shortly before the arrival of the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1952, the Administering Authority had published a circular announcing the suppression of certain customs stations. However, the Union des Populations du Cameroun was asking for the definite abolition of all frontier controls between the two Trust Territories; only the customs stations along the frontier with Nigeria and with French Equatorial Africa should be retained. Moreover, there had been no referendum to sound out public opinion among the indigenous population on the question of unification.

23. Mr. WINIEWICZ (Poland) wished to know the exact position in the Cameroons under French administration with regard to racial discrimination.

24. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) drew the Committee's attention to an

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Fourth Committee*, 145th meeting.

article published in *La Voix du Cameroun*, an organ of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, on the system of family allowances, which was a flagrant example of racial discrimination. Moreover, there were two hospitals at Douala, one reserved for Europeans and the other for indigenous inhabitants; similarly, in the prisons, European prisoners enjoyed certain privileges.

25. Mr. WINIEWICZ (Poland) asked whether the tendency of the Administering Authority to integrate the Cameroons into the French Union was not contrary to the purposes of the Charter and in particular to the provisions of Article 76.

26. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) recalled that a referendum had been held on the draft of the 1946 Constitution in the metropolitan country but that the indigenous inhabitants had not been consulted. As long as the Cameroons was regarded as an integral part of the French Union, it would not be a Trust Territory properly so called. From the administrative and legislative points of view, there was at present no difference whatever between the Cameroons and French Equatorial Africa for example; the administration of the Cameroons was also subordinate to the Ministry for Overseas France.

27. Mr. WINIEWICZ (Poland) wished to know whether the Administration had taken any steps to strengthen the cultural traditions of the indigenous inhabitants.

28. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that on the occasion of the visit of the 1949 United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, the Union des Populations du Cameroun had requested that the local dialects should be taught in the schools and that craftsmen should be trained so as to maintain the artistic traditions of the indigenous inhabitants. *Foyers culturels* had been set up as early as 1946, but the part they played was insignificant.

29. Mr. WINIEWICZ (Poland) asked whether the French Administration supported certain political parties to the detriment of the rest.

30. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) explained that the Administration supported the Evolution Sociale Camerounaise, which had been set up in June 1949, one year after the founding of the Union des Populations du Cameroun. However, the party had very few members and had had no success in the elections. Repressive measures had been taken against the Union des Populations du Cameroun, including the imprisonment of some party members, the refusal of permits and licenses to others, and on several occasions the seizure of the party's newspaper.

31. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) asked Mr. Okala whether he thought that the question of the unification of the two Territories of the Cameroons could be settled more easily in a few years' time.

32. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that that was a question close to the hearts of all inhabitants of the Cameroons but very difficult to settle because the people of the two Territories did not speak the same language.

33. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) asked for some details regarding the numbers of European immigrants to the Cameroons since the war.

34. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that there had been a great many immigrants, including European women who took posts as typists, saleswomen, etc. Sometimes European immigrants were appointed to quite minor posts. The Provisional Government of the French Republic had therefore stipulated in an ordinance that posts which could be occupied by indigenous inhabitants should be reserved for them. The British companies which had branches in the Cameroons under French administration employed inhabitants of Nigeria and the Gold Coast. In view of the importance of the question of immigration, Mr. Okala asked that inhabitants of the Cameroons should have an opportunity to put forward their views on the matter and should be allowed to hold posts in the immigration services.

35. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) asked whether any further concessions had been granted to Europeans.

36. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) said that to the best of his knowledge no large concessions of land had been granted to Europeans in the interior. At Douala and Yaoundé, on the other hand, whole sections belonged to Europeans. European immigrants often came to the Cameroons solely in order to speculate on the price of cocoa. Two or three years after their arrival, when they had made a large profit, they left the Territory, which derived no benefit from their activities. The indigenous population thought that such practices should be stopped and that the persons concerned should be forced to invest their profits in the Territory.

37. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) also pointed out that the indigenous inhabitants had often been dispossessed of their land in favour of foreign companies, without being consulted.

38. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) asked whether the two electoral colleges had been set up to protect the interests of the European colonists or simply because the indigenous population was not politically mature.

39. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) replied that the Cameroonians had been extremely surprised to hear that the French authorities had established a single electoral college in Togoland while retaining two colleges in the Cameroons. It had been argued that two colleges were necessary to protect the economic interests of the Cameroonians by adoption, in other words the Europeans and Levantines resident in the Territory who were represented by French nationals, and to prevent the indigenous inhabitants from abusing the single college system. The indigenous electors, however, had voted in favour of European candidates, which showed that they had no racial prejudice against the French. The indigenous electorate had proved its political maturity and the single college system should therefore be introduced.

40. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) would like some information regarding the municipalities with full powers.

41. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) explained that the Administration had tried to establish a municipality with full powers at Douala, a very advanced town. Mixed communes (*communes mixtes*) had been established in other regions. The indigenous population was very desirous that the Administration should increase the number of municipalities with full powers.

42. Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia) asked whether there were enough secondary schools to ensure the intellectual advancement of the people and promote the participation of the indigenous inhabitants in the administration of the Territory.

43. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) replied that a *lycée* had been set up at Yaoundé with accommodations for thousand students. Nevertheless, there were still too few secondary schools. The people of the Territory hoped that United Nations assistance would be forthcoming in that respect. Scholarships should be established so that the necessary leaders could be trained for the time when the Territory became self-governing.

44. Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) asked Mr. Um Nyobé the names and size of the organizations he represented.

45. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that he represented, first, the Union des Populations du Cameroun, which had 30,000 members but was supported by 98 per cent of the population. The Union had its own newspaper, *La Voix du Cameroun*, with a circulation of 3,000. The collection to cover the cost of his journey to New York showed the keen spirit of his party's supporters. The Union had held a Congress at Edéa, which had been a great success.

46. He was also speaking on behalf of the Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun and its 15,000 members who were divided among 97 trade unions.

47. He also represented the Solidarité Babimbi (Solibabi) which brought together 60,000 inhabitants of the Babimbi region, in Sanaga-Maritime.

48. In addition, the Association des Anciens Combattants de Douala and l'Union Démocratique des Femmes du Cameroun, the Kamerun United National Congress, a movement in the Cameroons under British administration, and a large number of private individuals had empowered him to represent them.

49. In reply to a question by Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) explained that, without any court decision, the French Administration had seized 500 copies of an issue of *La Voix du Cameroun* containing a photograph of prisoners doing the *corvée d'eau* (water-hauling duties), another issue, number 7, which reproduced the text of a United Nations resolution on corporal punishment; and various pamphlets.

50. Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) asked whether the people of the Cameroons were kept informed of the activities of the United Nations.

51. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) replied that his party was the only organization which provided the general public with information on United Nations activities through its newspaper, pamphlets and booklets in the local dialects.

52. In reply to a further question by Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) described the steps taken by his party, together with representatives of the population of the Cameroons under British administration, to prepare the people to receive the 1952 Visiting Mission and to submit their claims to it directly without going through the French Administration.

53. Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) asked whether Mr. Um Nyobé believed that it would be possible to form the Cameroonians into a united nation, despite tribal differences.

54. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) thought that the electoral districts could be so demarcated as to allow the principal ethnic groups, particularly in the coastal belt which was a fertile region, to be represented. The Bamiléké, who constituted most of the population in the Cameroons under British administration and were an important group in the Cameroons under French administration, might form a homogeneous entity.

55. Mr. BAZHAN (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) asked Mr. Um Nyobé how he thought the unification of the two Cameroons could be brought about.

56. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) thought that the first step would be to abolish the customs barriers between the two Territories and set up an interim assembly which would draft the organic laws for the united territory and familiarize the representatives with parliamentary procedure. There was no reason why the two Administering Authorities and the representatives of the indigenous populations—who should be regularly elected by secret ballot by a single electoral college on the basis of the broadest, if not universal, suffrage—should not work together for the unification of the two Cameroons. Sufficient time must be allowed for the population to acquire the necessary experience in public administration.

57. In reply to a question by Mr. N. RIFAI (Syria), Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) regretted that economic progress had not kept pace with political and social progress. It was unfortunate that the Europeans monopolized the economy, that the Administering Authority did not do more to encourage the co-operative and credit movements and that, in practice, the Crédit du Cameroun granted loans only to Europeans and for construction work. The profits obtained by middlemen were too high, and a larger proportion of the profits which foreign companies derived from the sale of cocoa and other products should be invested in the Territory. He was sorry to have to say that the indigenous provident societies had failed. The Cameroons needed outside assistance or else its slow economic development might delay the political emancipation of the Territory.

58. In reply to a further question by Mr. N. RIFAI (Syria), Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) admitted that there was some discrimination in the fields of family grants, prison conditions and hospital treatment. There was no blinking the fact that the public authorities in the Territory were powerless in the matter. The people themselves must help the Administering Authority by making a real effort to eliminate every trace of racial discrimination.

59. Mr. COOPER (Liberia) asked Mr. Um Nyobé whether France had allowed the Cameroonians freely to choose their political status.

60. Mr. UM NYOBE (Unions des Populations du Cameroun) replied that under article 82 of the French Constitution the majority of Cameroonians had retained their personal status and had not applied for French citizenship.

61. In reply to further questions by Mr. COOPER (Liberia), Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) explained that although, theoretically, Cameroonians who had not renounced their personal status had the same rights as French citizens, that was not so in practice.

62. Although there were many more indigenous officials than European officials, they occupied only junior posts in the administration.

63. In reply to Mr. COOPER (Liberia), who asked whether there was any language common to the two Cameroons, Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that only the Bamiléké on both sides of the frontier had a common language. Apart from Bamiléké, the peoples of the two Cameroons communicated in pidgin English. His party was urging that French and English should be taught from the primary school upwards.

64. Mr. COOPER (Liberia) asked whether it was true that the Administering Authority was trying to transform the Territory into a colony.

65. Mr. UM NYOBE (Union des Populations du Cameroun) said that in 1939 the Cameroonians had not asked to become French citizens; they had simply

affirmed their loyalty to France and their refusal to agree to the return of the Cameroons to Germany, if that possibility arose.

66. Mr. OKALA (Parti Socialiste Camerounais) explained that the Cameroonians wished to remain in the French Union until they were more advanced and could ask either for complete independence or for the self-government enjoyed by associated states in the French Union. The Parti Socialiste Camerounais had six representatives in the representative bodies of metropolitan France, namely, one deputy, two senators, two members of the Assembly of the French Union and one member of the Economic Council. In 1951 his party had received more than 100,000 of the 280,000 votes cast in the elections and had obtained 22 out of the 24 indigenous seats in the first Representative Assembly.

67. The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of El Salvador to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/L.265.

68. Mr. EGUIZABAL (El Salvador) said that his delegation, together with the delegations of Argentina, Canada, China, Denmark and Thailand, had felt that if the Trusteeship Council were duly informed of the statements made by the petitioners and the opinions expressed by various delegations in the Fourth Committee, it would be in a better position than the Fourth Committee to undertake a complete study of the problems raised by the administration of the Cameroons and to try to find a solution to them. Furthermore, the Council would have at its disposal the report of the Visiting Mission and the observations of the Administering Authority. The Visiting Mission's report would contain a general picture of the political, economic, social and educational situation in the Cameroons under French administration and conclusions and recommendations which might help the Council to come to a decision. It would be unfortunate if, in its haste to come to some decision, the Fourth Committee failed to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the Cameroons.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.