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**FOURTH COMMITTEE 853rd  
MEETING**

Thursday, 26 February 1959,  
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**NEW YORK**

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**Chairman: Mr. Frederick H. BOLAND (Ireland).**

**AGENDA ITEM 13**

**The future of the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration: special report of the Trusteeship Council\* (A/4092, A/4093/Rev.1, A/4094, A/C.4/395, T/SR.953-963) (*continued*)**

**HEARING OF PETITIONERS (*continued*)**

At the invitation of the Chairman, the petitioners took places at the Committee table.

1. The CHAIRMAN called for greater co-operation from the petitioners, some of whom had been unable or unwilling to speak at the time scheduled for them by the Committee's officers, thus hindering the Committee's work.

2. Mr. CARPIO (Philippines) said he agreed that the work of the Committee must proceed expeditiously, but felt that the petitioners, who were not accustomed to the procedures of the United Nations, must be treated with understanding by the Committee.

3. Miss BROOKS (Liberia), Mr. RASGOTRA (India), Mr. SEARS (United States of America) and Mr. GOEDHART (Netherlands) associated themselves with the Chairman's remarks.

4. Mr. Fongum YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) said that the Cameroonian students and graduates represented by his organization were disinterestedly devoted to their country and could therefore claim to speak with objectivity. They had instructed him and his fellow delegates to state that they would resist any attempt to take away any of their country. The juridical personality of the Cameroons, as established through peaceful treaties with Germany, had in no way been prejudiced by its transfer to trusteeship, and must not be prejudiced by the accession to independence. The Cameroons had hitherto been administered without a central authority for the whole country, so that the problem before the United Nations was to help the people of the Cameroons establish a central government before the country became independent.

\*In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1281 (XIII).

5. The obstacles to the establishment of a central government arose from two sources. The first was the unwillingness of France and of Mr. Ahidjo, the Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration, to delay independence for even a few months. But if France was unwilling to wait, then the trusteeship it was so anxious to terminate could be taken over immediately by Guinea; while if Mr. Ahidjo was unwilling to wait because of the popular pressure for independence to which he had referred, he need only resign.

6. The other obstacle to unification had its source in the United Kingdom's long efforts to "de-Camerounize" the people of the United Kingdom zone by both educational and administrative means. The United Kingdom had first arbitrarily partitioned its zone into two sectors and then proceeded to isolate the administrative districts of the northern sector from each other and to link them with local centres in Nigeria. The United Kingdom claimed that that arrangement was designed to bring people of the same ethnic origin together. But approximately three-fourths of the people of the Adamawa Province lived in the Cameroons and only one-fourth in Nigeria. What the United Kingdom was therefore suggesting was that the one-fourth in Nigeria must draw the three-fourths in the Cameroons into the Commonwealth. But the entire Territory was part of the Cameroons not only by ethnic affinity but by treaty.

7. The administrative grip of Nigeria on the Northern Cameroons was so strong that in its report on the Cameroons under British administration (T/1426 and Add.1)<sup>1/</sup> the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, itself had mentioned evidence of it and of the intimidation used by the majority party to suppress opinions contrary to its own. The petitioners who had come before the United Nations to argue the contrary could not claim to represent the people of the Northern Cameroons, for a democratic election under universal adult suffrage and by secret ballot had never been held in the Northern Cameroons. It was, moreover, the stated intention of the Government of the Northern Region to continue to withhold the suffrage from women. For that reason alone, if for no other, the United Nations should not acquiesce in the separation of that zone from the rest of the Cameroons.

8. He would waste no time on the newly invented and untenable argument for the continuation of a so-called modified trusteeship system for the Southern Cameroons, which the United Nations would surely reject. In order to solve the problem of establishing a central government for the Cameroons, he would propose the following programme. General elections to a central parliament should be held throughout the country in October 1959, under the complete supervision of the

<sup>1/</sup> Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4093/Rev.1).

United Nations. The special commission established to maintain that supervision should leave for the Cameroons immediately after the closure of the Assembly's resumed thirteenth session, and remain there for the following six months in order to ensure a free atmosphere for energetic campaigning. The central legislature resulting from the elections would then work out the details of unification, with the advice and guidance of the United Nations commission. The people of the Cameroons would then at long last be united in freedom.

9. Mr. TURKSON (Ghana) asked what evidence the petitioner could offer to substantiate his statement that the United Kingdom had placed the Northern Cameroons under the rule of Nigerians.

10. Mr. YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) said that the complaints to that effect made to the Visiting Mission were evidence of the truth of his statement. He would add that in 1953 the Northern Cameroons had risen up to demand unification with the South, and emissaries had even been sent to negotiate such a unification. But the Administering Authority had intervened to frustrate the plan, deposing the Emir of Dikwa and bribing the other emissary with a political appointment.

11. Mr. EL-RIFAI (Jordan) asked for an explanation of the apparent contradiction between the petitioner's rejection of the idea of a modified trusteeship system and his suggestion that France's trusteeship should be transferred to Guinea.

12. Mr. YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) said that in suggesting the transfer of the trusteeship to Guinea his intention had been to emphasize that unification of the country must precede independence. He could not, however, accept the idea of the continuation of trusteeship for an indefinite period.

13. Mr. RASGOTRA (India) asked what procedures the petitioner contemplated for effecting the transfer of trusteeship from France to Guinea.

14. Mr. YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) said that the methods of transfer could be worked out by experts on the subject. His reference to such a transfer had been intended only to emphasize the point that if France did not wish to maintain the trusteeship for the few additional months required it could be transferred to some other State.

15. Mr. RASGOTRA (India) asked the petitioner what reasons he had to presume that Guinea was prepared to take over the trusteeship of the Cameroons under French administration.

16. Mr. YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) replied that any independent African country would be prepared to assist the French Trust Territory and that Guinea, owing to its geographical situation and the fact that it was French-speaking, would be best suited to that task.

17. Mr. CAMARA (Guinea) said that he appreciated the confidence expressed by the petitioner in the young, independent State of Guinea. Within the scope of its international responsibilities as a Member State, Guinea was prepared to assume the trusteeship of a Territory if the United Nations should so instruct it. However, it had no ambition to do so in the case of the

Cameroons under French administration. Its position on the future of that Territory would be dictated by the interests of the Cameroonian people.

18. Mr. CASTON (United Kingdom), reverting to the petitioner's reply to the question put earlier by the representative of Ghana, pointed out that the complaints reported by the Visiting Mission had come from the opposition party, the United Middle Belt Congress. It was the proper function of opposition parties to make complaints, but it was significant that, despite its complaints, the party favoured having the Northern Cameroons remain within the Northern Region of Nigeria.

19. Mr. YGORJI-DINKA (National Union of Kamerun Students) said that the United Middle Belt Congress, like all political parties in the Northern Cameroons, was dominated by the Nigerians. He reiterated that the Visiting Mission had found, upon investigation, that the reports that the Native Authorities associated with the Nigerian majority party had used threats, intimidation and unlawful arrests to suppress opinions contrary to those they wished expressed were true.

20. Mr. Jean-Martin TCHAPTCHET (Union nationale des étudiants camerounais), presenting the views of his organization, took issue with the conclusion of the Visiting Mission as set forth in paragraph 141 of its report on the Cameroons under French administration (T/1427 and T/1434)<sup>2/</sup>, to the effect that the present Legislative Assembly was representative and that there were insufficient grounds for holding new general elections before the termination of the trusteeship. The Mission, having spent only three weeks in the Territory, could not possibly examine all the problems relating to new elections, and its conclusion could therefore not be regarded as definitive.

21. The present Assembly was not representative because it had emerged from the unpopular elections of 23 December 1956. Those elections should have been preceded by the promulgation and enforcement of an amnesty law. Moreover, reports from Cameroonian newspapers which could not be suspected of being in the pay of those calling for elections before independence showed that there were serious irregularities in the social and financial policy of the present Government. In an under-developed country like the Cameroons under French administration, where the average annual income amounted to 20,000 francs at the most, the annual salary of the Prime Minister was at least a thousand times that amount, and members of the Legislative Assembly were among the best-paid representatives in the world. The disparity was further emphasized by the fact that the total sum spent by the Government on the maintenance of Cameroonian students per year was equivalent to the Prime Minister's annual salary. Moreover, favouritism, in particular, the favour of members of the Government or high-ranking persons in the Administration, was sufficient to ensure the access of individuals to the civil service. Nepotism was also practised freely, and members of the Government had already staked out places for their relatives in the future Government of the independent Cameroons. Finally, the Press had reported financial scandals, in particular, the embezzlement of Government funds.

<sup>2/</sup> Transmitted to Members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/4092).

22. There were important reasons for holding general elections under United Nations supervision before independence. The Union nationale des étudiants camerounais contested Mr. Ahidjo's assertion that his Government was popular, and opinion was generally divided regarding the representative nature of existing institutions. In the circumstances, elections under United Nations supervision before independence would guarantee a full and fair consultation of the people and the establishment of a truly representative Government. If they were held after the country had attained independence, there was nothing to guarantee that they would be free and democratic and the United Nations, as the guardian of world peace and security, would be held responsible for any disorders that might ensue.

23. In the view of the Union nationale des étudiants camerounais, independence negotiated hastily between a Cameroonian Government which had thus far been reticent regarding national aspirations, and the French Government, which had shown itself to be opposed to the right of peoples to self-determination, was, at the very least, suspect. The French position regarding self-determination had been demonstrated only too clearly in Indo-China, Tunisia and Morocco, and the French attitude towards newly independent Guinea was still fresh in memory. France should agree to general elections under United Nations supervision prior to independence if only to prove to the world and to public opinion in the Cameroons that its determined support of the Ahidjo Government did not mean that there were previous commitments between the two Governments.

24. The recently enacted amnesty law<sup>3/</sup> did not grant the total and unconditional amnesty which his organization, and some parliamentary groups, would have welcomed. The bill put forward by the Opposition, calling for a total and unconditional amnesty for all offences of a political nature or related to political incidents which had occurred in the Cameroons prior to 1 January 1959 had been rejected by the Assembly. Moreover, the Decree of 13 July 1955 dissolving the Union des populations du Cameroun, the Jeunesse démocratique camerounaise and the Union démocratique des femmes camerounaises should be repealed. If, as Mr. Ahidjo had asserted, it was true that those movements had virtually disappeared, he would lose nothing as a result of the repeal.

25. The Union nationale des étudiants camerounais therefore called for a total and unconditional amnesty, repeal of the Decree of 13 July 1955, organization of a referendum on the reunification of the two Cameroons before the end of June 1959, and general elections for a constituent assembly before November 1959. The assembly thus elected would proclaim independence not later than 1 January 1960. The referendum and the elections should be supervised at all stages by a United Nations commission which would see to it that all Cameroonian political movements were free to campaign throughout the Cameroons.

26. Mr. PIGNON (France) asked whether Mr. Tchaptchet knew what was the total amount of financial aid given by France to the Cameroons under French administration since the beginning of France's trusteeship.

27. Mr. TCHAPTCHET (Union nationale des étudiants camerounais) said that he was aware that the Visiting Mission had stated in paragraph 41 of its report that the total amount of that aid from 1946 to 1957 had been 71,500 million francs CFA.

28. Mr. KURKA (Czechoslovakia) said that he had three questions to ask relating to the statement made by Mr. Ntumazah at the 850th meeting.

29. First, he asked Mr. Ntumazah if he could give in detail the reasons for the view expressed in his statement that unification of the two zones of the Cameroons should precede independence.

30. Secondly, with regard to Mr. Ntumazah's suggestion that there should be general elections in the Cameroons under French administration, Mr. Kurka asked him if he could explain in detail why such elections were desirable, and what effect he thought they might have in the Cameroons under British administration.

31. Thirdly, he asked Mr. Ntumazah if he considered that economic conditions in the Cameroons under British administration were such that that Territory was capable of becoming a truly independent country.

32. Mr. NTUMAZAH (One Kamerun) said that he had stressed the importance of unification less because of his personal views than because he knew unification to be the dearest wish of the Cameroonian people. In early years the Cameroons had been one country; none of its inhabitants had wanted it to be divided in two, and now that it was divided, all Cameroonians wished to see it reunified. All Cameroonians who were familiar with political affairs realized the importance of that question; there was a reference in paragraph 117 of the report of the United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under British Administration and the Cameroons under French Administration, 1955, (T/1226) to a statement on that subject by Dr. Endeley.

33. He had said before that the only way to discover the views of the Cameroonians on this important question was to hold a referendum. In accordance with the principle of self-determination embodied in the United Nations Charter, the Territory had chosen independence, and in accordance with that same principle the people should be given the opportunity through a referendum to choose unification. Democratic principles demanded that there should be such a consultation, and it would not be right if the trusteeship came to an end and the United Nations relinquished its guardianship before the important question of unification had been settled.

34. He did not consider, as the representative of Czechoslovakia's question seemed to imply, that there should be elections only in the Cameroons under French administration. If the people were consulted before the elections on the question of unification, there could be elections in both zones, with a view to forming a government to establish a constitution and draw up an economic and social programme for the Cameroons as a whole.

35. In that connexion he quoted the following passage from the Joint Declaration of 29 June 1954 by President Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill:

"We uphold the principle of self-government and will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to

<sup>3/</sup> See A/C.4/395.

secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire and are capable of sustaining an independent existence. We welcome the processes of development, where still needed, that lead toward that goal. As regards formerly sovereign States now in bondage, we will not be a party to any arrangement or treaty which would confirm or prolong their unwilling subordination. In the case of nations now divided against their will, we shall continue to seek to achieve unity through free elections supervised by the United Nations to ensure they are conducted fairly."

That statement by two world statesmen who had been instrumental in founding the United Nations supported the view that the people of the Cameroons should be consulted about the division of their country before independence. Even some representatives on the Fourth Committee had suggested that it might be desirable to hold, if not a plebiscite, then fresh elections, in the Cameroons under French administration. Such elections would also enable the political parties to explain their stand on future foreign relations and economic plans, and would give the people the opportunity of choosing those who would best represent their interests.

36. With regard to the economic self-sufficiency of the Cameroons under British administration, especially the Southern Cameroons, it had never been believed by any political party that that Territory was economically capable of becoming an independent country. The general opinion was that it should be united with Nigeria. That Territory in isolation would not have the resources to meet the social and economic needs of its people, or their legitimate desire to raise their standard of living. Apart from the question of economic viability, if that Territory were a separate entity, it would be surrounded by customs barriers and find itself constituting an unfavourably situated enclave. It would have either to be united with Nigeria, which would be against the wishes of the people themselves, or with the Cameroons. However, there was some fear in the Southern Cameroons that union with the Cameroons under French administration might involve a subsequent integration into the French Community. In that connexion it might be necessary to revise the arrangements for the representation of Europeans in the Legislative Assembly.

The meeting rose at 10.45 p.m.