

United Nations

Nations Unies

TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCILCONSEIL
DE TUTELLE

UNRESTRICTED

T/PET.4/3
22 March 1948

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

PETITIONS FROM THE BAKWERI LAND COMMITTEE

DATED 24 AUGUST 1946 AND 17 NOVEMBER 1947

In accordance with Rule 85 of the Rules of Procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations transmits herewith to the members of the Trusteeship Council two communications, dated 24 August 1946 and 17 November 1947 respectively, from the Bakweri Land Committee, concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration.

The foregoing communications were forwarded to the Secretary-General by the Permanent United Kingdom Representative to the United Nations on 12 March 1948.

COPY

United Kingdom Delegation
to the United Nations,
New York.

No. 54 (144/2/48)

12th March, 1948

Sir,

I am directed to forward herewith copies of the following documents concerning the territory of the Cameroons under United Kingdom trusteeship in accordance with Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure of the Trusteeship Council.

- (a) A communication dated 24th August, 1946 addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Secretary to the Bakweri Land Committee and General Secretary of the Bakweri Improvement Union.
- (b) A communication dated 17th November, 1947 from the Secretary of the Bakweri Land Committee requesting that his previous petition be reconsidered and further that it be forwarded to the Trusteeship Council. The date of receipt of this communication by the competent local authority in the territory was the 19th November, 1947.

2. On receipt of the former communication the Secretary of State for the Colonies asked the Governor of Nigeria, through whom it had been forwarded, to inform the petitioners that after consideration he was not prepared to intervene, as he understood that both the Bakweri Clan Council and the Bakweri Land Committee were now satisfied that the establishment of the Cameroons Development Corporation was in the best interests of the people of the Cameroons. Moreover, the Nigerian Government had posted a senior Administrative Officer to the Cameroons to investigate allegations that the peoples residing in and around the plantations were short of land and had undertaken, if those investigations showed that there was a genuine shortage of farming land in the plantation areas, to arrange for a sufficient amount of land to be made available for the needs of the native reserves.

His Excellency Monsieur Trygve Lie,
Secretary General,
United Nations,
Lake Success, L.I.

/3. The Secretary

3. The Secretary of State observed that the petitioners had asked that their petition be passed to "the permanent Mandates Committee of the League of Nations or any other body that has something to do with matters concerning Mandates". In the normal course the Secretary of State would have felt it desirable to pass the petition to the Trusteeship Council, but in view of developments since the petition's submission he considered that the petitioners might no longer feel it necessary to proceed with a petition to the Trusteeship Council. He asked the Governor of Nigeria, however, to confirm from the petitioners whether they wished their petition to be so forwarded.

4. It is in accordance with the request contained in the communication dated 17th November, 1947 that I have been instructed to forward these documents to Your Excellency.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your Excellency's obedient servant,

(signed) Alexander Cadogan

Received at the United Nations on 17 March 1948.

COPY

The Bakweri Land Committee,

c/o The Native Administration Office,

Buea, Cameroons Under Br. Mandate,

24th August, 1946.

The Rt. Hon. The Secretary of State for the Colonies,
Colonial Office, Downing Street,
Whitehall, London.

Thro' The Resident, Cameroons Province, Buea,
Thro' The Chief Commissioner, Eastern Provinces, Enugu,
And Thro' His Excellency the Governor and Commander-in-Chief
of Nigeria, Lagos.

THE BAKWERI LANDS UNDER THE CROWN, CUSTODIAN AND MISSIONARY BODIES, SITUATE
IN THE VICTORIA DIVISION OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER
BRITISH MANDATE - PETITION ON CLAIM OF.

Sir,

We the undersigned for and on behalf of the entire populace of the Bakweri people i.e. including the sub-tribes of Bota and Bimbia of the Victoria Division in the Cameroons Under British Mandate (for which a Committee known as Bakweri Land Committee stands) humbly bring forward a

/case

case which has been long-lying, and overlooking of which has perpetrated very unbearable economic deprivations.

A similar petition dated 7th August this year was sent to the Chief Commissioner when he had an interview with the Clan Council here. In reply to the petition which was referred to in the agenda, he said that when he was here as Divisional Officer he had not got such a complaint for land, and therefore was at a loss to see why it should arise now. He further promised sending out a surveyor to see whether any increase of land was necessary, and whether the indigenous natives' population had increased.

In our petition to the Chief Commissioner, we gave figures which were from a certain book published in Berlin 1911, but as we intend to make our case up-to-date, we have now quoted figures as can be got from the Camerons Plantations Head Office, Busa. Other particulars have been given in fuller detail, thus bringing in some little differences.

This reply given by the Chief Commissioner has caused great unrest among all the people, as they were not asking for increase, but for the return of the whole land. It is therefore their/our desire that this case be brought to you, and copy be passed to the Permanent Mandate Committee of the League of Nations or any other "body" that has something to do with matters concerning Mandates for treatment. After all we wonder if the case of population arises - we all know that even three people can own an estate equal to our whole area which is about 580 square miles.

PARTICULARS OF THE CASE

A. NATIVE LAND TENURE. As a background to showing how land was owned we find it necessary to state what land tenure was in this place before the advent of Europeans.

Land was owned in villages, and each village had to chose its area for farming, after which, each family chose its plots, and boundaries made. This land chosen by any family automatically became the family's property. According to native law and custom this land has to be handed down by predecessors. It is considered a very serious crime if a member of one family encroached on the farm-land of another family. This law is more intense now that there is very little or no farm-land left to the native.

B. THE COMING OF THE GERMANS AND THE ACQUISITION OF OUR LAND

By 1892, the Germans had proclaimed our country (the Bakweri country) a German Territory. When they had begun to settle they started surveying the land and piecing it out. We the natives not knowing what was meant by this "making of tracks" - as we thought it - did not pay any heed except in very few cases when the surveyors insisted on people removing their houses that

/there were

there were objections, which were of course quelled with the most atrocious measures. There was no treaty or agreement whatever, in which we the Natives gave over our land to the Germans, as was the case with our brothers, the Dualas, who signed a treaty with the Germans in 1884 giving them their right of legislation and their land - from 4.10 degrees north latitude to river Qwakwa to the south, with exception of the land on which they were building and farming at the time. This as the treaty shows, did not include us at all.

C. ALIENATION OF OUR LANDS BY SALE TO INDIVIDUALS, MISSIONARY SOCIETIES AND COMPANIES

The area in the Victoria Division which belongs to the Bakweri Natives is about 580 square miles, and we state with much consternation that between 1897 and 1905, under Von Puttkamer as Governor, over 400 square miles (258,000 acres) of what is now Victoria and Kumba Divisions were alienated to European individuals and Companies. (See hand book of Nigeria page 257).

Of this lot, about 83,000 hectares were alienated out of the Bakweri lands situated in the Victoria Division. Sometime ago the British Government found that the Native reserves were very inadequate, so some more land was added, thus reducing - very negligibly of course - the number of hectares alienated.

1. Present figures of Plantations in the Bakweri Lands

<u>Plantation</u>	<u>Hectarage</u>
Bwenga Ambas Bay Trading Coy	150
W.A.P.V. Bota)	
" Tolle)	9,818
" Molyko)	
" Missellele	2,445
" Bimbia and Mabetta	4,455
Moliwe Plantation	12,900
Ombe	240
Likomba	6,345
Holt forth	675
Ekoha	11,056
Dibunsha	1,764
Bibundi A.G. Mukundange)	
Isongo)	14,705
Bibundi)	
Oechlhausen	2,200
Idenau (Sanje)	4,001
A.F.C.	4,998.83
Bueau Farms	250
Palotine Mission	500
Meanja	6,000
	82,502.83

There are 259 hectares in a square mile, therefore 82,502.83 hectares are about 318.5 square miles. The areas mentioned above do not include several plots, say in Buea, which were alienated to Messrs. Holtforth, Justo Weiler, and Baptist and Basel Missions, of which the acreage is considerable. Other parts of Buea still, are proclaimed "Crown Lands", thus keeping away Natives from using them.

We do not think this justifiable as we are but a Mandated Territory, and not a British Colony or Protectorate.

2. USELESS WASTE LANDS: Areas occupied by rocky barren upland slopes are equal to 220 square miles (see intelligence report on the Bakweri area prepared in 1941 by the District officer in charge then). Areas occupied by swamps or bogs are equal to 30 square miles approximately. This leaves with us nothing which was once our own.

D. CONSTANT COMPLAINTS AND CONTEMPLATED REDRESS BY THE GERMAN IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

Severe land deprivation (to a people like us the Bakweris, who are by nature extensive farmers) grated increasingly on our forbearances, thus giving rise to constant protests to the German Imperial Government. One of the many complaints to the Reichstag against Governor Von Puttkamer and other officials, such as the Chief Judge Von Brauchitsch, was on the forceful obtaining of lands and labour for the Plantations in which they were financially interested, so no justice could be expected from them by the natives. (see handbooks prepared under the direction of the historical section of the foreign office - No.111, page 23)

After the Reichstag Inquiry and Von Puttkamer's dismissal in 1907, Dr. Seitz (1907-10) and Glein (1910-12) followed, but no improvement on the Native land question was made until K. Ebermeier came into power in 1913. He, after hearing this complaint over and over, decided to tour the Bakweri villages in order to see for himself whether our complaint was founded.

After a seven-day tour, he returned fully convinced that we needed amends. So early 1914 a surveyor known as Van da Laan was sent to re-survey the land. He had not quite started when the first world war came on (1914-18) thus leaving us in our old bonds still.

E. THE COMING OF THE BRITISH

With the coming of the British who took up the reigns of government in 1916, we thought we were going to be saved from the wreck - we expected that the British would not regard as German, all property that was not acquired in any constitutional way. With this anticipation, we waited patiently to see what redresses were being contemplated. To our surprise, in 1922 and 1924, the plantations were put out to auction by the Custodian. At first

/there was

there was enemy restriction but when it was withdrawn, most of the plantations were bought back by their former German owners who took charge in March, 1925. These yielded huge profits to Britain.

We were not daunted still, for we knew that the promotion of our interests and development in all ways, formed sacred trusts to the British, and therefore we needed only reminding them and they would set things right for us, but till this date, despite constant reminding of our local Administrative officers, we are still as we were under the Germans (with regards to the land question).

We ask that this mistake should not be repeated, that is, THESE LANDS SHOULD NOT BE RESOLD TO TRADING COMPANIES OR OTHER PLANTERS.

F. DEPRIVATIONS RESULTANT UPON OUR LAND HAVING BEEN GRABBED.

Since the more fertile plains were taken from us, we had to try framing on the rocky mountain slopes, about 6 to 8000 feet above sea level. No economic crop can thrive well on this height, except probably coffee. All the former Native staple food-stuffs which were yams of all species, gourds of all species, etc, cannot in any case do well on such a height.

As a last resort to eking out a living, we fell on planting a foreign foodstuff, which is the coco-yam (*Xanthosoma sagitifolium*). It was introduced into this country in about 1860 by people who were imported from Fernando Po by the English Baptist Missionaries who began settling here in 1858.

This crop thrives fairly well on the basalt rock which dominates this area, especially on the heights of 4 to 8000 feet above sea level, and is considerably easy to cultivate. But unfortunately this is not a suitable food as the medical authorities testify, and it forms the only or chief food here, because of sheer necessity. Therefore it make it obvious that malnutrition is rampant.

Our women, who by custom are the planters of our locally consumed foodstuffs, have to climb the above mentioned heights to farm, and on their return from the farms they carry very heavy loads, because it is not an easy task to frequent those "sky-high" farms. This causes our women to have "early break-down" in health.

This climbing of heights by mothers is also responsible for the great infant mortality in this area because pregnant mothers have to climb these heights, if they are going to provide for themselves and for their families. Their husbands who have only known to work in the plantations as the only source of obtaining money for some domestic needs (This is a psychological reaction on the minds of the people, which has been brought about by all the land having been taken away, thus making them/us slaves in our own land

to work in plantations) are away, so they cannot give wives sufficient help as they ought to. Malnutrition and exacting physical activities by mothers, both, lead well to decrease population and deterioration of a people.

Natives who want to plant some economic crops only rent land from Missionary bodies etc., thus paying for what to all intents and purposes, belongs to them. This we think, does not promote our material and moral well-being and our social progress, as was imposed by the Mandate.

G. SUMMARY OF OUR POINTS.

1. Our land which is our life-blood property was acquired by the Germans most unconstitutionally, for there was no treaty or agreement of any sort concluded between the German Imperial Government and the Natives of this place.
2. The Germans did not even proclaim these lands "Crown Lands", and even if they did, - which is not the case - they had no right to sell out our lands to Missionary bodies and companies as records in our possession show. (vide attached copy of contract.)
3. We being a Mandated Territory, and the British, Trustees, we do not consider it equitable that they should declare any part of our land as belonging to the Crown (the King of England).
4. We all fought side for freedom and respect for other peoples rights, and now we have conquered - conquered also cupidity by other peoples property; so we hope like any other people to benefit by the struggle, or else we will be left to ask ourselves this question viz, "Over what or why did we fight, and what did we conquer?"

In view of the above mentioned points, we hold by the common laws of fair-dealing, dictated by love of simple truth, and enforced by justice that, since these lands were not acquired in a justifiable way, they were and are misappropriated property and therefore should rightly be returned to us the rightful owners.

H. CLAIMS.

On the strength of the afore-mentioned points, we make the following claims:

1. That all lands in this Mandated Territory known as "Crown lands" hereupon be known as "Native lands", to be controlled by the Natives.
2. That all alienated land of the Victoria Division in the Cameroons Under British Mandate, which belong to the Natives of Bakweri of the same place, be returned to us, the Bakweris.

As land is very important to our economic well-being, after getting it all back we shall conclude and regulate its keeping with the Native Administrations so that it shall not be liable to wrong use; that is the Native Administrations shall look after the plantations on co-operative basis, after enough of the cultivated and uncultivated areas have been given to the Natives for growing local and other crops for consumption and economic purposes. Proceeds accruing from the Plantations shall be used by the Native Administrations in concert with the permanent land committee, for the benefit of the people.

3. As compensation for the many years of exploitation of our land, we ask to be given costs equal to the proceeds which have accrued from all the plantations afore-mentioned for the past five years, and every thing now standing on Plantations.

4. All Mission lands should be returned to us without costs, except plots on which, strictly speaking, houses for ecclesiastical and educational purposes are situated.

The above, Sir, is our case and our claims, and we shall be extra-grateful if early treatment is given to it and the developments made known to us.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient and willing servants

(signed)

D. Maffany ma Lififfafa I'Endeley
Hon. Secretary to the Bakweri
Land Committee, and Gen. Secretary
of the Bakweri Improvement Union.

(signed) J. M. Mokege

(signature illegible)

(signature illegible)

(signed) Y. M. Molute

(signed) Manda Linvonjo

Loka Lingange

his thumb impression

(signed) J. M. Jaffa

Nanga Mbele

his thumb impression

(signed) H. W. Ewoma

/(signature)

(signature illegible)

(signature illegible)

(signed) P. Malafa

(signed) A. E. Harry Moujimlo

(signed) Molinge Ngalo

Njia Ngando

his thumb mark

(signed) J. E. M. Ewoma

(signed) E. N. Wanjave

Ilome Mbanje

his thumb impression

(signature illegible)

(signature illegible)

Monono Monde

his thumb impression

(signature illegible)

(signature illegible)

Max Bwana

(signature illegible)

his thumb impression

(signature illegible)

COPY

AGREEMENT FOR PURCHASE

Between the Imperial Government of the Cameroons with the sanction of the Foreign Office Colonial Section and P. H. Vieter Apostolic of the Catholic Mission of the Pallotines the following agreement is hereby concluded.

1.

The Imperial Government sells to the Catholic Mission of the Pallotines a plantation property situated in the Cameroons Protectorate having an area of some 500 hectares site and area whereof are shown on Von Besser's survey plan.

2.

The Purchaser shall defray the cost of the survey.

3.

The purchaser price is fixed at 5 marks per hectre. It shall be paid immediately on conclusion of the agreement, into the Legation Treasury of the Foreign Office.

4.

The Government will assist the purchaser to regulate the relations with the native villages situated within the property sold.

5.

The following conditions shall govern the cultivation and further disposal of the land named in 1.

- (a) The purchaser shall every year take 10 hectares of the acquired land into cultivation. Should more than 10 hectares be taken into cultivation in any one year they may be taken into account for the year following.
- (b) The land described in 1 may be disposed of only with the consent of the Government of Cameroons.

6.

Disregard of the conditions set forth in 5 shall entail the following lawful penalties:

- (a) In the case 5 section 1, the Imperial Government shall be entitled according to choice either to deprive the purchaser of a plot of land corresponding to the number of hectares in regard to which the obligation to cultivate has not been fulfilled or to demand payment for every hectre short-cultivated of a contractual penalty which is hereby fixed at 5 marks. This condition shall not be applied in the event of extraordinary accidents, disturbances, failure of crops and other cases of force majeure.

(b) In the

(b) In the case of 5 section 2 any disposal carried out without sanction shall be invalid and the land wrongfully sold shall revert to the Imperial Government.

7.

The purchaser shall place at the disposal of the Imperial Government on demand any land situated within the Territory described in 1 which may be required for railways or public roads for the price of 5 marks per hectre plus 5 percentum interest as from the conclusion of this present agreement.

Should land be demanded pursuant to this condition which has been declared cultivated, then the expenses incurred in clearing and cultivating the land demanded shall be refunded in addition to the price of 5 marks per hectre.

8.

The purchaser shall defray the cost of this agreement whereof each of the contracting parties shall receive an executed copy.

Cameroons, March 18th 1898

(Sgd) F. Heinrich Vieter

A. Pr.

(Sgd) Dr Seitz

L.S. for Imperial Governor

Perfect Appoltolic of the
Mission of the Pallotines.

/COPY

COPY

THE BAKWERI LAND COMMITTEE,
c/o The Native Administration Office,
BUEA, Cameroons Under British Mandate

17th November, 1947

The Rt. Hon. The Secretary of States
Colonial Office, Downing Street,
Whitehall, London

Thro' The District Officer, Victoria

Thro' The Resident Cameroons Province, Buea

Thro' The Chief Commissioner, E. P. Enugu

And thro' His Excellency the Governor of Nigeria.

LAGOS

The Bakweri lands under the crown, custodian and
Missionary bodies, situate in the Victoria Division
of the Cameroons under British Mandate - Claim of

Sir,

With reference to the reply sent to the Bakweri Land Committee regarding their petition dated on the 24th of August 1946, through the Nigerian Government; I am to state that after a composite Committee comprising the Land Committee and Clan Council in which the reply was discussed had sat, I am directed to state that they are very grateful for your most honoured consideration given to their humble petition.

That with regard to the establishment of the Cameroons Development Corporation, they observe that they could not but approve of its institution after all the relevant legislations for its birth had been enacted beforehand.

That they still wish that their case as already stated - point by point - should be dealt with in that light, and that while they cannot stand in way of the Senior District Officer sent to the Cameroons to investigate the shortage of land, I am to state that they beg to call attention to the fact that they are claiming exclusive ownership of all Plantation Lands in the Division, and not merely asking for additions to what lot is left to them now.

I am also to state that the above mentioned composite Committee therefore pray for a reconsideration of their petition, and go further to ask that it be forwarded to the Trusteeship Council.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant.

(signed) D. M. l'Endeley

Secretary Bakweri Land Committee.