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21 DEC 1949

ADDENDUM TO PETITION FROM THE BAKWERI LAND
COMMITTEE CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS
UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

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Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 84 of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the Trusteeship Council a communication dated 3 November 1949 from the Bakweri people which forms a supplement to the petitions dated 24 August and 17 November 1947 of the Bakweri Land Committee, concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration. This communication was transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa.

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W E L C O M E A D D R E S S

T O T H E
U N I T E D N A T I O N S V I S I T I N G M I S S I O N T O T H E
T R U S T T E R R I T O R I E S I N W E S T A F R I C A

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BUEA, Trust Territory of
the Cameroons under British
Administration,
3rd November, 1949.

Gentlemen,

We, the representatives of the Bakweri Tribe assembled here today, beg leave to extend to you our most cordial and sincere welcome.

2. We are very grateful not only to the Trusteeship Council for the benevolent spirit which animated them to detail such eminent gentlemen like yourselves to probe into and solve the various problems confronting our beloved country (particularly our land problem), but also to you, Gentlemen, for your ready willingness to undertake such an arduous and hazardous journey for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories in West Africa.

Visits of this nature tend to compromise differences between the inhabitants of the Trust Territory and the Administering Authority, and we are looking forward to many such visits in the future.

3. We seize this opportunity of presenting to you another memorandum on the Bakweri Land Problem, in amplification of those already submitted to your Secretariat at Lake Success, New York.

4. We pray that Our Lord may in his infinite mercy grant you such wisdom as would stand you in good stead in the performance of your difficult talks. We hope you will have a happy stay amongst us and take home with you pleasant memories of your momentous visit to the Cameroons.

We are, Gentlemen,
Yours faithfully,

(Signed): D. M. Endeley
President.

..... (illegible)
Hon. Secretary.

For and on behalf of the Bakweri people

Received at United Nations Headquarters: 22 November 1949.

/Amplifying

Amplifying Memorandum on Bakweri Land Problem

From the date the first petition from the Bakweri Land Committee reached the Trusteeship Council of the United Nation Organisation, we have been following rather anxiously the debates relating to it, and we have been greatly encouraged both by the Seriousness with which the document is being handled, and the Trusteeship Council's gesture, in including in the terms of reference of its visiting mission to the Cameroons, the examination of certain facts contained in the documents forwarded by the Bakweri Land Committee -- document we further wish to clarify and emphasise by this memorandum.

2. To facilitate an objective study of our documents we have found it necessary to give an idea of the tenure of our land before it was acquired by the Germans, and also to educate you on the conditions under which our land was acquired by the Germans who seem to have been hiding their oppressive methods by formulating theories like those contained in the sections of the "All Highest Decree" quoted in the United Kingdom's observation on our petition.
3. Bakweri Land is, and has always been communal land with the only recognised boundaries being those separating villages. There has been no time when it has been lawful for an individual to dispose of land to aliens either on freehold or leasehold terms.
4. Within the Victoria Division, all land was so distributed between villages that there existed no portions of surplus land which could have been classified as "ownerless". This fact is substantiated by the living evidence that all estates which stand on what we claim to be our land go by names which are genuinely Bakweri, and which once belonged to flourishing villages.
5. At the time when our land was being acquired by the Germans, there was never an instance when the opinion of indigenous natives was consulted. The Germans took advantage of the scared state which their oppressive methods had thrown the Bakweris, and if an area intended for acquisition happened to be within a village or a group of villages a German administrative officer just had to order the natives out of the site, with the explanation that the land was demanded by the Government. Such orders were given in a most oppressive manner, there being no allowance for questioning -- not to talk of disobedience which was most ruthlessly and tyrannically punished. There was never an instance when a village so deprived of its site was compensated in any way, neither is there any time when such a village was shown to another site, good or bad. In fact a

village which was unfortunate to have been gifted with an "eye" for fertile land continued to be shifted until it had anchored along the arid barren slopes of the mountain.

6. After the 1914-18 war, we hailed in the victors on the confident understanding that theirs was a just government in which the rulers and the ruled lived in perfect freedom, the aboriginal natives being developed and offered all privileges of enjoying the riches of its God-given land. The British Government confirmed or sought to confirm our belief in these virtues attributed to it, by their repeated promises since, to make us once more, owners of our land. Sadly enough, we have been left to keep reminding and reminding, and had the British lived to be true to their luring theories and promises, the Bakweri would have been something other than what they are today -- a race living in the declining graph of the imminence of extermination, -- its only hope being the glory of its past.

7. About the year 1931, some bits of land were cut from plantation areas and added on to suffering villages. These bits were accepted very reluctantly, the Bakweris still maintaining that what they expected was all their land, with full recognition by the Government of their (the Bakweri's) rights of ownership.

8. Popular among the reasons for the demand for restoration of all, and nothing less than all our land was this that most villages wanted to be returned to their original sites -- within the sacred shrines of their forefathers.

9. There was never a time during the German administration when on frank admission of over-alienation, any attempt was made by the German Imperial Government to add any portions of alienated land to the suffering villages. In saying this we do not mean that if such an attempt was made and even implemented, it could have been appreciated, because from the outset, our main demand was restoration of all our land with full recognition of our right to own it.

10. With the above demand standing as our principal submission, one can see how unfruitful the British Government's attempt to effect a compromise by assigning what they consider a substantial acreage to an individual, has been.

11. If the British Government's justification in letting us have a bare arid 134 square miles (including swamps) of land out of a total of 634 square miles lies in the fact that our population in its fact decreasing rate has run down to only 20,000, then there is in us a fear that the Government is not in sympathy with our declining state since its continuance

will only strengthen their (the British Government's) justification for allotting to us there 134 square miles of unproductive land.

12. A proportion of the 134 square miles of land allotted to the Bakweri Tribe is included in the Native Reserves originally demarcated by the Imperial German Government on the barren lower slopes of the Cameroon Mountain. Obviously the Nigerian Government's policy is to perpetuate the late Imperial German Government practice of excluding us from the use of the upper slopes of the mountain for purposes of hunting, honey collecting and other silvan pursuits.

13. Even if the British had allowed more than 134 square miles of our land to us, we would still fail to see any justification in having the government rationing out our land for us, if we are considered participants of the security guaranteed by the basic rights of the United Nations Charter.

14. We have documents which show that as far back as 1909, a town like Buea had as many as 9000 people. Today, the indigenous population of Buea, the largest Bakweri town, is not up to 300 ! Buea's is by far the best case. There are villages like VESAU, WOKOKA, LIVANDA, WONYANGA, MOLIKO, WONYA-LIMALE, WONJAMBA, WOTUKE -- to mention but a few -- which are completely extinct.

15. Causes of this decline are all traceable to malnutrition and poverty resulting from acute land shortage, a deduction which does not only have many medical reports supporting it, but whose obvious natures has not failed to catch the "eye" of a disinterested investigator into the progressive history of our tribe -- such an investigator as Professor Robert Kuzinski who having been sent out by the London University, to make a demographic study of the Mandated Territories of the Cameroons and Togoland, reported in his "Cameroons and Togoland" (page 350) as follows:-

"To return to the Bakweri Tribe there is no doubt that their relegation to reserves has to a large extent made them lose interest in life Even if the lands allotted to them appear large enough for their needs it is invariably not fertile, for the best land has been apportioned for cultivation in a scientific manner and to such quick profit as it has been by European Capitalists; there is little doubt that they would have been healthier and happier if there had been no large alienation of land, but a policy of promoting production by the native himself on his own land as has been followed with such excellent result in the Gold Coast. The development would have been slower but it would have been surer, and it

/would

would have been possible to have maintained the framework of the native system of government, and preserved for the people racial pride, and self-respect which they have now to a large extent lost".

16. We have a very recent case less than two months old to show the acute shortage of land among the Bakweris in the example of a young man at Lysoke Village near Ekona Plantation, who anxious to expand on his father's land to cultivate oil palms, encroached on Cameroons Development Corporation property and was convicted for eighteen months for removing the boundary pillar. The distance of Corporation land which tempted this young man is less than one quarter of a mile from the village boundary.

17. This report speaks for itself and a thorough understanding of its moral implication when placed side by side with our petition will show that our demands are anything but exaggerated. For purpose of providing grounds for a more detailed study of our case we are stating hereunder some of our towns and villages whose original sites were seized and alienated for plantation purposes:

Name of Estate	Towns or Villages known to be original owners of land.
Idenau	
Bibundi	1. Isongo, 2. Mokundange, 3. Isobe, 4. Bibundi
Oechelhausen	1. Isongo, 2. Watoke, 3. Mbasse, 4. Etoma, 5. Wakingili.
<u>W.A.P.V., Victoria:</u>	
(a) Victoria Farm	1. Victoria, 2. Mokunda.
(b) Ngeme "	Ngeme.
(c) Wosumbu "	1. Wosumbu, 2. Wesao, 3. Wokoka, 4. Wonjava, 5. Wongala, 6. Liwanda.
(d) Ewongo ")	
(e) Wotutu ")	1. Wonyalikombo, 2. Masengi, 3. Wotutu,
(f) Boana ")	4. Boana, 5. Ewongo.
(g) Meveo (Sachsenhof)	1. Wokeli, 2. Likombe, 3. Sasse, 4. Ewassa.
(h) Tole	1. Soppo Woteke, 2. Soppo Wovila, 3. Meveo, 4. Bwiyuku, 5. Wolikawa, 6. Wonganjo.
(i) Molyko	1. Moliko, 2. Wonyanga, 3. Wonyawio, 4. Womaka, 5. Wonya Mokumba, 6. Wulu, 7. Wonjoku, 8. Bwitingi, 9. Muea, 10. Wolifamba.

Name of Estate	Towns or Villages known to be original owners of land.
(j) Lysoka) (k) Maumu)	1. Lysoka, 2. Maumu, 3. Wowilli, 4. Mosaka, 5. Bweondo, 6. Ekona Mbenge, 7. Moli, 8. Wokwei.
W.A.P.V., Bimbia	1. Bona-Ngombe, 2. Likolo, 3. Bona-Billa.
<u>Moliwe:</u>	
(a) Liwanda Farm	1. Liwanda, 2. Wokoka, 3. Wonya-Likombo.
(b) Isuke "	1. Kombo, 2. Wonjamba, 3. Wonya-Inali.
Bwenga (Famcl Estate U.A.C. Ltd.)	Bwenga.
Ombe (Rein and Wessel)	1. Meweo Kulu, 2. Meweo Wokombe.
Holtfoth	Tiko
Likomba	1. Wulu-Likomba, 2. Molyko-Likomba, 3. Inanga, 4. Wokwae-Likomba, 5. Wonganjo, 6. Mutengene.
African Fruit Company	1. Tiko, 2. Ewonji.
W.A.P.V., Missellele	1. Missellele, 2. Moko, 3. Modeka, 4. Mondoni, 5. Likoki.
<u>Ekona Group of plantations:</u>	
(a) Ekona)	1. Mpondo, 2. Meanja, 3. Moyuku, 4. Owe,
(b) Mpondo)	5. Matangu.
(c) Meanja)	
Buea Farms	1. Buea, 2. Soppo Mokongo, 3. Wonganga, 4. Woteke, 5. Wowilla, 6. Membea, 7. Likoko-Membea.

It will be noticed that in what is now referred to as the "West Coast Estates" there is little or no land left to the peasant native even for the cultivation of consumer crops for his subsistence. The result is obvious -- a death rate bordering on complete extinction !

18. Our petition dated August 24th, 1946, was forwarded to the Colonial Office, London, before the bills

- (i) Vesting on the Governor of Nigeria rights to purchase for the people of the Cameroons lands (which were theirs), from the Custodian of Enemy Property.

- (2) Legalising the establishment of the Cameroons Development Corporation, which bills were actually debated at the Legislative Council meeting of December, 1946, and passed into law in January, 1947.

The announcement regarding the establishment in the Cameroons Development Corporation was welcome not because we considered the formation of this body an answer to the principal demands of our petition but because we thought of it as an agency to help implement "a policy of promoting production by the native himself on his own land ..." -- to quote Mr. Kuezinski again. After the Government had also announced to us the fact that they had bought back our land for us -- which announcement was most welcome -- we naturally looked forward to being consulted as to how we could dispose of any spare portions of it so as to derive maximum benefit from the hiring plans associated with the functions of the Cameroons Development Corporation.

19. As owners of the land we have so far not received any direct compensation from the Government in the form of rents etc. which are now being paid yearly to the Nigerian Government by the Cameroons Development Corporation instead of the Bakweris who are known to have suffered most from the extensive acquisition of land in Victoria Division by the German Government and Missionary bodies.

These facts prove it beyond doubt that the acquisition of land by the Governor of Nigeria has not in any way altered or alleviated our position, as we even have no say in the present distribution of the plantations in connection with villages previously displaced by the German acquisition.

20. It is obvious that the missions hold more land at present than is needed by them for ecclesiastical and educational purposes vide report of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for 1948 page 78 paragraph 87. As a result, they are commercialising the land (e.g. Basel Mission to United Trading Company, Victoria; Roman Catholic Mission Plantations at Bonjongo; Roman Catholic Mission rents at Sasse), while the natives are in dire need of it. If Government was so good as to acquire plantation lands to relieve our present situation, we are demanding that surplus lands be also excised from the Mission lands and handed back to us for rehabilitation purposes.

21. Nearly in every case, land was given to the mission by the natives free of charge, as a security for the free education of their children, and land thus given was well demarcated by natural boundaries. The present attitude of the missions belies the terms of the verbal contracts they made with our forefathers, as they all appear to be competing to make high profit from these lands, instead of helping the educational progress and welfare of the natives. Some are so ungrateful as to demand rents from the Sons of their benefactors who have been forced by necessity to request favour for us of surplus mission lands.