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PETITION FROM THE BAKWERI MOLONGO CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER
UNITED KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85, paragraph 2, of the rules
of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

The Bakweri Molongo,
Buea,
Southern Cameroons.
17th February 1961

The Secretary General,
United Nations,
New York - U.S.A.

Sir,

The petition of the Bakweri Molongo, a cultural organisation which speaks for and represents the entire Bakweri tribe in the Victoria Division of the Southern Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship, showeth:

1. That the Bakweris are the indigenous owners of the Victoria Division of the Southern Cameroons which is about the only division in the territory which before the advent of Europeans to these shores was entirely occupied by people from a single tribal stock speaking the same language.

2. That soon after the establishment of the United Nations and its Trusteeship Council, the Bakweris started expressing fears of domination by the stranger population attracted to the division by the fertility of its lands and by the employment opportunities offered in the plantations. These fears were expressed to the United Nations through its Trusteeship Council by the Bakweri Land Committee and to Visiting Missions by individual petitions presented, both orally and written. Records now with the Trusteeship Council will show that petitions from Bakweris fully expressive of our fears for domination, and vocally outlining the basis of our apprehension for a developing plot by strangers to deprive us of our lands, started reaching there as early as 1946.

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3. That the fight by the Bakweris against the threat of almost utter extinction which faced them also had a strong local front. During the conferences that preceded the formulation of the Nigerian 1951 Constitutional Order in Council, we through our representatives at the Divisional, Provincial and Regional levels, were so successful in impressing other representatives with the genuineness of our case that a safeguard was written into the Constitution which provided that in the election of members to represent the Victoria division in the Eastern House of Assembly (the Southern Cameroons was then a part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria) at least one member of Parliament should be a native of the division. This safeguard was found necessary because population figures on analysis showed that the stranger population attracted to the division by the plantations etc. had more than doubled the indigenous population whose right to the ownership of the plantation lands in the Victoria division was not questioned.

4. That in 1959 the United Nations decided to let the people of the Southern Cameroons decide whether to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria (part of which we were until October 1st 1960) or by joining the independent Cameroun Republic (the former French Cameroun). The United Nations also stated that before the people went to vote, the Administering Authority was to place before them and explain to them the constitutional set up to which they would belong if they chose either way. That is to say, full constitutional proposals that made provisions for the Southern Cameroons were to be got from both Nigeria and the Cameroun Republic, placed before and explained to the people, before they set out to vote.

5. That to the best of our knowledge, nothing was known of what the Cameroun Republic had to offer constitutionally before we went to the polls on February 11th, 1961, thus justifying our contention that the majority of those who voted for the Cameroun Republic did so sentimentally, for tribal reasons, and in the Victoria division, to spite and over-run the Bakweris.

6. That before registration for the plebiscite started, complaints of infiltration from the Cameroun Republic, for the purposes of influencing the vote, were made by our representatives in the local Parliament, in the Press, to the Plebiscite Administrator and to the representatives of the Administering Authority. Unfortunately, the Government, who were no doubt a party to this foul arrangement, paid no heed to these complaints. The result was that the position of the Bakweris, which was already bad, was rendered worse by a noticeable and foul political design.

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7. That when the Plegiscite Register of voters was published, the figures showed very clearly that even though the franchise was restricted to exclude all Nigerians and French Cameroonians, except those born in the territory who had attained the age of twenty one, the number of voters was far in excess of those of the 1959 elections to our local Parliament where registration was no doubt heavily encouraged and both Nigerians and French Cameroonians registered. This is all the more significant when it is borne in mind that the Cameroons Development Corporation had considerably cut down its labour force. According to the Corporation's 1959 Annual Report "the numbers employed were the lowest for over ten years".

8. That a large number of objections was filed against citizens of the Cameroun Republic, who had infiltrated into this division, and who in our view did not satisfy the electoral regulations but the machinery for proving these objections was so ineffective that added to our inability to produce the prohibitive sums we were called upon to deposit before pursuing the objections, all had to be abandoned in despair.

9. That we went to the polls on February 11th and voted solidly for continued association with Nigeria as the attached analysis of the votes will show. That we voted this way because we see in the Nigerian Federation a constitutional set-up which provides the best safeguards for minority groups like the one we constitute.

10. That events that happened before and after the plebiscite, threats and provocative remarks made against us and are still being made, preparations for and perpetration of acts of violence directed against our tribe and political designs which aim at keeping us out of the local Parliament and out of our lands all go to justify our fears of domination.

11. That at the plebiscite held on February 11th, 1961, our fears became fully justified in that the threats to domination directed against us by strangers with an eye on landed interests in this division, manifested themselves in the pattern of voting. This pattern shows very clearly that this stranger element which completely excluded Nigerians but included a very large proportion of persons smuggled into the territory from the Cameroun Republic for the purposes of swelling the block vote against association with Nigeria (even though no constitution was offered from the Cameroun Republic) voted solidly for purposes other than those for which the plebiscite was required.

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12. That since the release of the voting results we have found enough reasons to believe that if we were not administered within a political unit as large and heterogenous as the Federation of Nigeria, and if we were not members of a political unit whose constitution is as generous in safeguards to minorities as the Nigerian constitution, we stand the chance of not only being wiped out in order that our lands may be left at the mercy of selfish and greedy political opportunists, but of even (before being wiped out) being deprived of those liberties which the United Nations avowedly stands to protect. There are plans (which are now being released to us without the slightest restraint of fear) to arrange a distribution of strangers within the territory with a view to settling as many in this division as will make it impossible for a true representative of the interests of our people to enter Parliament. Our men, women and children are being beaten up in the villages without the slightest regard for law and order; fences enclosing native villages are being cut down to provoke disturbances; arms are being accumulated to await the day we shall all be massacred; an illegal army is being set up by supporters of the governing political party within our division; our boys and girls in the civil service are being victimised and ill-treated.

13. That we do not want another Congo here, and that as a people, we request the United Nations to safeguard our right to live as free, unmolested, dignified individuals. We have always encouraged the settlement of strangers within our boundaries; we are not expansionist in our political outlook. Money from the plantations, which have left us with not even enough land to allow for subsistence farming is being used to develop the whole territory and we have not complained. Today, our lives and property are in danger and our children are facing the grimest future that free children in a peaceful community ever had to face.

14. That we know that by its charter, the United Nations stands for nothing that is infamous, oppressive or unjust nor for anything that is designed to deprive a people as such, of the right to human dignity.

15. That this petition is written in all solemnity and sincerity that the seriousness of the circumstances which have prompted it warrant.

Whereof your petitioners pray that in exercise of your good and respected offices the General Assembly should note:

(a) That the experiment to build a nation out of a part of the Trust Territory of the former German Kamerun (the Southern Cameroons) which began in 1954 with the creation of the Southern Cameroons as a separate region within the Federation of Nigeria, has failed since it is now clear that tribal feelings and loyalties are stronger than national feelings on which a nation can be built.

(b) That the tribal set-up in the Southern Cameroons is not homogenous; it will therefore be a dangerous thing to compel a minority tribe to be part of a political union which is predominated by a larger tribal group which is likely to oppress them.

Whereof your petitioners humbly request that in exercise of your good offices, the General Assembly should recommend:

(1) That the mass vote of the indigenous Bakweri people of the Victoria Division at the Plebiscite for continued association with Nigeria be respected.

(2) That the Victoria Division should accordingly be reunited with the Federation of Nigeria.

(3) That the Administering Authority be called upon to open discussions with the Federal Government of Nigeria to effect the desired union.

(4) That oral hearing be given us when the future of the Southern Cameroons is being debated to argue the petition.

We are,

Your humble petitioners,

..... (Illegible)

Elected Representative: Victoria North West Constituency.

..... (Illegible)

Elected Representative: Victoria South West Constituency.

..... (Illegible) (Illegible) (Illegible)

MRS. B.E. KUH

M.L. EFOIOD

Representatives: Buea Native Court Area.

/...

STEPHAN MOKI

MOKAKO MEKAKO

Representatives: Bonjongo Native Court Area.

J.M. GANJE

LIOTE EKAMBI

Representatives: Muea Native Court Area.

J.N. WONDONGO

MAHAS MONDE

J. KONDUNGA

Representatives: Lysong Native Court Area.

ABEL MOSESA

MANENE

LINHOA

MIDOKO

MOKA WOKNETO

Representatives: Victoria Native Court Area

..... (Illegible)

..... (Illegible)

A.K. RILUMBE

MONGON SEK EBIE

Representatives: Tiko Native Court Area.

..... (Illegible)

R.E. GOMBE

Representatives: Bakolle Native Court Area.

O.M. MESEUG

Representatives: Mungo Native Court Area.

PETER LYONGA: President
Bakweri Molonga

Copy to:

1. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Colonial Office, London.
2. The Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria, Lagos.
3. The High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Nigeria, Lagos.
4. The Commissioner of the Cameroons, Buea.
5. The United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner, Buea.
6. The United Kingdom Plebiscite Administrator, Buea.

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Appendix

Analysis of Votes cast at the Plebiscite in Victoria Division

A. Votes cast at Villages predominantly inhabited by Bakweris:

	<u>For Federation of Nigeria</u>	<u>For Cameroun Republic</u>
Bota	356	40
Batoke	279	121
Bakongili	109	45
Bamuso	310	10
Bovsa	656	17
Small Soppo	299	86
Great Soppo	453	150
Membea	655	11
Bonjongo	960	69
Bonamabio	165	9
Wokova	243	10
Ekona Lelu	163	1
Lysoka	483	53
Molyko 2	276	71
Muea 2	299	147

B. Votes cast at Bakweri Villages with large Stranger populations:

Buea	917	1,199
Victoria	1,245	1,654
Bonalikomba	198	453
Mutengene	394	1,313
Ikata	161	553
Owe	79	818
Tiko	852	1,349

Appendix (continued)

C. Votes cast in the Plantations peopled mainly by Strangers:

	<u>For Federation of Nigeria</u>	<u>For Cameroun Republic</u>
Moliwe	68	455
Ekona	194	1,370
Meanja	92	796
Bota C.D.C.	290	1,372
Tiko C.D.C.	565	1,996
Missellele C.D.C.	82	1,358
Likomba E. and F.	140	279
Tole Tea Estate	144	452
Mamu	313	1,308
