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PETITION FROM MR. ETIENNE M'BIDA ON BEHALF OF
THE "RADICAUX MODES CAMEROUNAIS" CONCERNING THE
CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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

M'balmayo, 3 September 1953

M'bida Etienne
Founder of the Radicaux Modés Camerounais Party
Nseng-Nlongi, M'balmayo, Cameroons

To: The President of the Trusteeship Council, c/o Secretary-General of the
United Nations

Sir,

I have the honour to send you this memorandum on behalf of the RMC.

My letter will undoubtedly reach you rather late, since you will be opening
the United Nations General Assembly meetings in a few days. I am sending it to
you in accordance with your desire to see the citizens of the territories under
international trusteeship interested in the future of their country and
expediting its political evolution in order to give it a certain degree of
political self-government.

This desire expressed to some of us by you was realized in a recent decree
of the Trusteeship Council allowing the citizens of the Trust Territories, by
five votes to two and two abstentions, to take part in the government of their
country. We hailed this decision, since it already satisfied our claims to some
extent.

However, this gain has not yet been put into effect, and the international
situation and the political disequilibrium of the two zones of a single territory

prompt us again to bring forward the matters already debated during the last meeting of the United Nations General Assembly: the unification of the Cameroons, and the setting up of an autonomous government in that country.

If the clauses by which we are governed are carefully examined, it is easy to see that the United Nations has placed us in an impossible position. A country over which no one exercises sovereignty is necessarily up against unheard of difficulties with an administration pursuing an assimilation policy, intending to apply it unilaterally in all the territories under its jurisdiction and not hesitating to use cold war in order to reach its objectives. Furthermore, the state of international affairs, particularly the present European policy and the German question, the development of which is necessarily directly related to our own, are far from guaranteeing the security of our territory. Therefore, on behalf of the RMC, representing an important section of the country, I come to you to set out, with all the clarity which the solution of such important problems demands, our views on the unification of the Cameroons and the preparation of a Cameroons constitution, such as have the neighbouring British territories, Nigeria for example, and such as our neighbours in the British zone claim.

The United Nations reply on the unification of the Cameroons, denying its urgency, seems rather incomprehensible. I have already spoken to you, and you are in any case aware, of the foreign policy of the trustee countries, especially our own.

The English have a colonial policy characterized by liberalism. Under it there is no difficulty in granting self-government gradually to the territories concerned as they approach maturity. In their zone, portfolios have already been granted to some of our compatriots in the Nigerian Government.

Thus it only remains to apply the same policy throughout the territory. Europe is being unified, a matter of great concern to us who are governed by clauses of not very re-assuring elasticity which darken the horizon of our dear fatherland. Sovereignty, the basis of all security, does not belong, in the terms of the United Nations Charter, to any mandatory Power. Nor does it revert to the indigenous inhabitants who do not hold the key to any power. The European Defence

Community consists of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland. Their interests in the Trust Territories are conflicting and do not allow us to hope to achieve freedom one day. Are we not on the point of being betrayed by our trustees? Most of the great Powers, for example, America and the USSR have held the same opinion as we on this question. How can other countries unite with Germany without agreeing to return its colonies when it demands them? You will appreciate that that is extremely dangerous. Ipsa facto we run the risk of falling into the bottomless depths of eternal slavery.

Let us even suppose that the Cameroons are not ceded to the Germans. The prospects of a future claim on the Cameroons by the Teutons of the present day, at a time when they are in the process of recovering both the integrity of their soil and their independence, cannot fail to arouse our vigilance. Therefore we ask you urgently to take favourable action on our petitions. Having arrived at this stage of development, we should not like to be subjected, when Germany has recovered its independence, to the anguish of seeing our country once again on the point of passing under the German yoke. If your diplomatic action succeeds in putting us on the same footing of equality as other nations, we shall proceed to co-operate with them for the maintenance of the peace of the free world. In that case, we shall no longer run the risk of seeing our heritage pass into other hands.

The need for the unification of the Cameroons and for the formation of an autonomous government thus being demonstrated, we must pass to the necessary solutions.

The working out of a constitution solves the unification question. Here is, in outline, how I conceive this future constitution: France and England, at the end of the 1914-1918 World War, were unable to agree on the formation of a Franco-British condominium in the Cameroons. Today they cannot accept a reopening of this question. We must therefore approach another solution, or better still, resort to a compromise. In my opinion the Cameroons should be administered by a tripartite government, i.e. an autonomous government assisted by two commissions, a United Nations commission and a Franco-British commission.

The government should consist of a Cameroons cabinet and national assembly (senators and deputies). In accordance with the spirit of the United Nations Charter, the permanent United Nations committee would consist of one representative from each of the following: the USSR, the United States of America, Europe, Asia and Australia. Its purpose would be to settle any disputes which might arise between the young government and the Franco-British commission. The latter would consist of the High Commissioners for each of the regions. It would guide the new government in the administration of the country. Thus the influence of each of the Trustees in their sector would be preserved. The government would sit at Yaoundé, which would assume the name of federal capital. The capital of the region under French Trusteeship would be moved to Douala. It is our desire that general elections for the whole territory should take place next December.

Further, we would ask you urgently to arrange for us to take part in the work of the United Nations this year so that we may develop our arguments, and be in a position to reply to any objections which might be raised. The Territory's budget would not be very much reduced thereby.

We trust that our wishes, on the eve of the opening of this general session of the United Nations, called upon to pronounce on the grave problems which are of sovereign interest to us, will evoke a favourable response in your circles and be put into effect for the greater good of our countries, the metropolitan countries and that august Assembly, the guardian of world peace.

I have the honour to be etc.

Leader of the RMC
(Signed) M'bida Etienne
