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GENERAL

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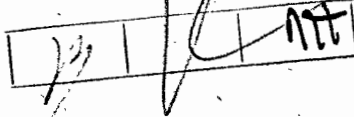
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Dual Distribution

Sixth Session
Item 5 of the Agenda

PETITION FROM THE CHIEF, ELDERS AND PEOPLE
OF BIAKPA (1)

Observations of the Administering Authority.

Note by the Secretariat: The following observations were communicated to the Secretariat on 27 February 1950 by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council.

1. The petitioners seek the closure of the Roman Catholic School in Biakpa, a village which is the headquarters of the Sub-Division of Biakpa in Awatime State in the Southern Section of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship.
2. There are two schools in Biakpa - the Ewe Presbyterian Infant/Junior School and the Roman Catholic Infant/Junior School. The Ewe Presbyterian School which was opened in 1912 had an enrolment of 26 in 1946, and 72 in 1949. The Roman Catholic School which was opened in 1941 had an enrolment of 32 in 1946 and 79 in 1949. The Ewe Presbyterian School had expanded to Standard 2 by 1949 but the Roman Catholic School in the same year extended its classes up to Standard 3.

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3. It is therefore clear that, despite the absence of competition, the Ewe Presbyterian School made very slow progress prior to the opening of the Roman Catholic School at Biakpa, and that the rate of growth of the Roman Catholic School has been relatively rapid.
4. In 1946 the future educational needs of Southern Togoland were estimated by an Education Department Survey Team which visited Biakpa and recommended that both schools should be extended to include junior classes, Standards 1 and 2.
5. Shortly after this Survey the Ewe Presbyterian School opened a Standard 1 class and was then 'designated'. The Biakpa Roman Catholic School is still 'undesigned' but no undue importance should be attached to this fact. 'Designation' may be defined as the selection of a school for improvement by the posting of trained staff to it when such staff becomes available. In selecting a school for 'designation' account must be taken of many factors one of the most potent of which would in this case be the fact that Biakpa Ewe Presbyterian School is used as a Practice School by the students of Amedzofe Teacher Training College.
6. Although the Census figures only show an increase from 409 to 467 inhabitants between 1931 and 1948 the steady increase in the enrolment of both schools does provide convincing proof that the Education Department Survey Team was justified in recommending in 1946 that both schools should include junior classes as these facilities are clearly necessary to cater for the eager demand for education which animates the people of the surrounding area.
7. The Ho/Kpandu District Education Committee received a request from the petitioners for the closure of the Biakpa Roman Catholic School and at its meeting in October 1948 "decided" that the school should be closed. It must be understood that the District Education Committee's functions are in fact purely advisory and that they have no power of decision.
8. Bishop Holland the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Lower Volta Vicariate, was unwilling to close the school and he subsequently declined to concur to the amalgamation of the two schools in Biakpa under a Joint Board of Management. Bishop Holland's attitude in this matter can readily be justified for, although

in numerous cases educational units have voluntarily closed schools which were very much weaker than other schools in the same town or village and had little chance of survival, the enrolment in the Biakpa schools is approximately the same and the Roman Catholic School (which petitioners erroneously consider to be the weaker) has had a much more vigorous rate of growth. As the Biakpa Roman Catholic School had been in existence for seven years before the Divisional Sub-Chief of Biakpa began to make official representations for its closure, his recent attitude is probably due to some disagreement between the Roman Catholic community and himself. In any case, in view of the Administering Authority's obligations under Article 12 of the Trusteeship Agreement, it is not the policy of the Gold Coast Government to close down schools to suit denominational convenience.

Detailed comments on the petition are as follows:

- Para. 1. The population of Biakpa according to the 1931 Census was 407, and according to the 1948 Census, 467.
- Para. 2. The people of Biakpa contributed voluntary labour towards the building of the Fume-Biakpa-Vane Road which is, however, now maintained by the Political Administration.
- Para. 3. No village is under any legal obligation to provide a school.
- Para. 4. The Biakpa Roman Catholic School was opened in 1941. The introduction of a second denomination may have caused inter-denominational strife but under Article 13 of the Trusteeship Agreement the Administering Authority is bound to ensure freedom of conscience.
- Paras. 5 & 6. It is contrary to policy and to Article 12 of the Trusteeship Agreement to close down schools except for the most cogent reasons.

APPENDIX - In 1949 enrolments were:-

Biakpa Ewe Presbyterian School	...	72
Biakpa Roman Catholic School	...	<u>79</u>
Total	...	<u>151</u>