

# **The United States Government Stand on Southern Cameroons Declassified**

**By Muluh Mbuh**

**\* Area still of Serious Concern to the United States**

The UN and affiliated bodies and most powerful hegemonic nations that defend freedoms for the sake of international peace and security can team up and change Ambazonia's (Southern Cameroons') tomorrow today too! This is true to a nation under voodoo and vampire rule by illegal Cameroun landlords! Back in 1959, decolonization of many countries was taking place. At the same time the Communist expansionist threat on the African continent was equally becoming as alarming as the Cold War fever gripped the victors of World War II. It was the dread of Communist domination (cautioned by the fact that the Communist Union du Populations Camerounaise (UPC) had infiltrated Southern Cameroons and was kowtowing with John Ngu Foncha) that led the West to produce the ludicrous

1. "The Two Alternatives,"
2. "Attaining Independence by Joining" either an independent Nigeria or an Independent Cameroun Republic.

The two (double tautology) premises were all in violation of the Trusteeship Agreement of 1946 by which Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons which made up British Cameroons were to be decolonized are just absurd. A country is independent when it is independent. A country cannot become independent by joining.

We now foray into the past to prove that the United States of America stood for and will stand for the self-government and independence of Ambazonia after push must have gone beyond shove.

**We publish the following American 1959 Declassified Document:**

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# Visit to the Southern Cameroons

## *SUMMARY*

*The Southern Cameroons is far more important in the context of fast-moving African events than its population of 750,000 and area of 16,581 square miles indicate. The state of uncertainty as to the territories political future, which will prevail until the plebiscite next year, acts as a break to progress, business and government. At the same time the uncertainty and the activities of the opposing political parties intensify the historical tensions, which have long existed among the territory's multifarious tribes and linguistic groups. Developments in the French Cameroun, particularly its achievement of independence on January 1, 1960, will produce very important political effects in the British Cameroons. The territory is a frontier, exposed as no region of Nigeria is exposed, to Communist-inspired influences, which can become a danger of serious magnitude. This reason, not to speak of its great potentialities, makes the Southern Cameroons an area of serious concern to the United States.*

Government in the Southern Cameroons at the present time is affected both in policy and daily operation by the uncertainty over the political future of the territory, which will necessarily prevail until the United Nations Plebiscite is held during the dry season next year, between January and April 1960.

Permanent Government Officials face a multitude of complex problems which cannot be resolved in the present limbo in which the territory's relationship to Nigeria is no longer certain and its future relationship, if any, to the French Cameroun, is a problem whose modus operandi and implications no one has yet thought through.

Government officials are irritated at the attitude of the Federal Government of Nigeria, which has made it be clearly known that the Southern Cameroons may expect short shrift from it in view of Foncha government's ungrateful desire for secession. These Officials believe a more tolerant attitude on the part of the Federal Government would be wise in the circumstances in not further alienating Cameroonians who have so far found no great attraction in Nigeria in any case.

The recent decision of the Federal Government to institute no new projects in the Southern Cameroons in addition to the natural and expected reluctance of outside agencies to commit themselves to loans and assistance emphasizes the unsatisfactory nature of the present situation. The present government, made up of almost totally inexperienced and naïve ex-primary school teachers with good intentions, is incapable of grappling with the tremendous problems which face it.

It takes no more than a few days in the Cameroons to impress one with the tribal and historical complexities of the area, which determine its future far more than the exercise of western forms

of parliamentary democracy. An Anthropologist is required to sort out the motivations, which will affect decisions of momentous importance to the country and to Africa. The divisions among the peoples are many.

There are 48 principal languages spoken in the territory, in addition to numerous minor linguistic groupings. Grassland people of the North are divided among forestland people of the South. Ancient tribal feuds persist; there are memories of past power and glory of the ancestors of the Sultan of Foumban, on the French side; the Banson people are proud that they stopped the Fulani invader. There religious divisions. Foncha's Party, the KNDP, is largely Roman Catholic; most leaders of the KNC are Protestants. A far more serious division results from hatred of the Ibo.

To many, Ibos and Nigerians are synonymous; union with Nigeria means Ibo domination. Ibos persist as successful traders; in many areas they suffer severe discrimination and restrictions. In other districts fear of the Ibo has been developed and magnified by politicians for their own purposes. Division among tribes, local enmities, individual rivalries, the power of local leaders, and the positions of the natural rulers (Fons and Chiefs) count far more in decisions to be made in elections or plebiscites than party platforms or real issues.

The basic issue on which the two political parties are diametrically opposed is the phrasing of the questions to be posed at the plebiscite. The party in power, the KNDP, wants a simple vote on secession from Nigeria: yes or no. The Opposition, the KNC-KPP, insist that the "two extremes" be put to vote; union with Nigeria or union with the French Cameroun. The reasons for each are clear. The KNDP, with considerable justification, believes that the vote for secession would be decisive. Foncha confidently states that 90 per cent of the people would favor secession and unification.

An American Missionary who has lived 25 years in the territory estimates that the plebiscite would show a majority of 60 per cent favoring secession from Nigeria. On the other hand, Dr. ENDELEY and his supporters believe that there is enough fear of domination by the French side that a choice between Nigeria and French Cameroun would go to the former. They admit that they will likely lose if the question is restricted to secession from Nigeria.

The position of the two opposing parties, on the basis of conversations with Premier Foncha and two of his ministers, Mr. MUNA and Mr. JUA, and with Dr. Endeley of KNC and Mr. Mbile of KPP, may be summarized as follows:

KNDP leaders list a number of reasons for secession from Nigeria. They recall their experience as part of Eastern Region where they could not make their voice heard and say they would be lost as a tiny minority in the Nigerian Federation. Mr. Muna expressed a lack of confidence in the future of Nigeria as a united Federation. He feared the Southern Cameroons could lose even its regional status in the Federation and be reduced to a "special area."

Eight seats in the Federal House of Representatives mean nothing. No Cameroonian could ever hope to be Prime Minister of the Federation. The Identity of Cameroonians would be lost. Only Premier Foncha described the pull of French Cameroun. He said Cameroonian ties, racial and tribal, were all with the French side. He said deliberately that the reason for secession was not so much that Nigeria had been unfair to the Southern Cameroons but that the unification was the desire of the people and a natural development.

The Premier and his associates are quick to point out that unification should not take place immediately. They envisage a period of Trusteeship under the United Kingdom and a subsequent Federal relationship with the French Cameroun. Premier Foncha said that Premier AHIDJO had agreed to the formation of a federation between the two territories; the French Cameroun could belong to the French Community while the British Cameroons retained membership in the British Commonwealth. Mr. Muna described the sequence in somewhat different words. He said that the plebiscite would decide secession from Nigeria. The Southern Cameroons would then be “independent” and could work out its relationship with French Cameroun at that time.

Neither Foncha nor Muna evinced much concern over threat of the UPC, its followers or Communism. Both denounced the UPC as an “extremist” group but were confident that Ahidjo would remain firm in his opposition to it and would succeed in controlling the situation after independence on January 1, 1960.

Dr. Endeley and Mr. Mbile Foncha were categorical in stating that they would never accept the formation of the plebiscite question as propose by the KNP: secession only. They argue that since the KNP wanted eventual unification, it was dishonest to mask this objective by omitting it from the question. They conceded that there is much sentiment for not associating with Nigeria but believed their party’s position has a good chance of winning if the alternative of joining the French side is pose to the plebiscite voters. Dr. Endeley lamented the lack of understanding of issues among the peoples and said that although the peoples of the Cameroons would not be prepare for at least five to ten years to decide the issue of their political future; such a period of education was essential. In the meantime the politicians are confusing the issues and making the situation more difficult. He described the “Ibo issue” as one exploited solely for political purposes and without substance.\*

Mbile discoursed at some length on his thesis that the British Cameroons must escape the threat posed both from the East and the West, namely from Nigeria and French Cameroun. Unless the territory joins Nigeria as a region, Mbile fears that the Nigerian Federation after independence will develop territorial ambitions and will invade and conquer the small, helpless territory of the Cameroons. In this day and age, according to Mbile, a tiny political unit cannot survive alone. As a region of Nigeria, the Southern Cameroons can work out its destiny. On the other hand, should it become part of the French Cameroun, it would be swallowed by the latter. Mbile’s idea, which appears

*\* The reporting officer was told by others that Dr. Endeley himself was originally responsible for introducing the "Ibo issue" in political campaigns.*

Highly unrealistic to say the least, is that the British Cameroons should become the fourth Region of Nigeria and the French Cameroun should then join the Federation as a fifth Region!

Both Dr. Endeley and Mr. Mbile stressed the communist danger. They described the alarming number of UPC or One Kamerun followers active on both sides of the boundary. They believed that with the certain return of Dr. MOUMIE and company to the French Cameroun after independence, Ahidjo's position would be seriously threatened and the fall of his government likely when new elections are held. This situation will seriously affect events on the British side.

Surprisingly, the Northern Cameroons entered rarely into conversations. A few KNDP supporters did, however, express the opinion that considerable sentiment existed there for unification in spite of the generally accepted view to the contrary. The reporting officer was told by a Cameroonian business man in Kumba, who has extensive land and commercial interests in both French Cameroun and the Southern Cameroons, that emissaries from the Northern Cameroons were coming to the South to discuss unification.

A dispatch in the Lagos Daily Times of May 5, 1959 reported the formation of a new political party, the Northern Cameroons Democratic Party, with the stated aim of fighting for the secession of the Northern Trust Territory from the Federation of Nigeria. The leader of the party, one Malam Ibrahim ABBA, is said to have told the Daily Times' Kaduna correspondence that the party was considering sending a delegation to Premier Foncha to consult on coordination and the formation of an alliance. This is probably the source of the report mentioned by the Kumba business man.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

One is hesitant to draw conclusions after a week's visit to a territory with as many complexities as the Southern Cameroons. Some impressions may be justified. Tensions already present in the territory are aggravated by the political struggle, which will continue to intensify until the plebiscite is held. Most observers feel that in spite of the small size of the majority obtained by the KNDP in the last elections, sentiment in the country is predominantly in favor of secession from Nigeria. The Commissioner, for example feels that even if the phrasing of the questions propose by the KNC-KPP is accepted, the chances of a vote in favor of joining the French Cameroun instead of Nigeria are good and that Dr. Endeley and his supporters might well be hoisted with their own petard. It is true that the motivation is more a negative one, against union with Nigeria and against Ibo domination, than a positive attraction for the French side. Nevertheless, the German period of a united Kamerun is not forgotten. A pamphlet supporting the unification cause points out that all Cameroonian political parties use the letter "K" for

Kamerun (KNDP, KNC, KPP, OK) which symbolizes unification an return to the days of a unified Kamerun.\*

Furthermore, contrasting visible signs of economic progress on the French side are not lost on Cameroonians. In the rainy season the only road communications between the Northern and the Southern parts of the territory are via the French side. To see a railway and a locomotive a Cameroonian must cross the French border. This feeling of economic inferiority applies also to Nigeria. The same pamphlet

\* *Aloys J. Tellen, "The Kamerunian's Bedside Catechism." October 3, 1958. Printed at the Starlight Press, P.O. Box 577, Ibadan.*

quote above states that each Region of Nigeria "seems to be ahead of the Cameroons by at least fifty years of concentrated development." A "Cameroonian," or "Kamerunian," strongly resents being called a "Nigerian." Certainly, the British and Nigerian governments have failed if they have tried to capture the loyalty of Cameroonians for Nigeria. There is resentment at being treated as a neglected step-child and a sense of individuality and independence.

In view of their present attitudes, it is hard to conceive of an agreement being reached by the parties on the phrasing of the questions to be posed at the plebiscite. This problem will face the United Nations General Assembly at its next session. Whether the result of the plebiscite is a simple decision not to join Nigeria or whether it is one to unify with the French Cameroun, the future of the British Trust Territory will still remain to be determined. A period of U.K. Trusteeship would provide time for negotiations between the two territories and perhaps a more leisurely arrival at some understanding. Such a period would probably not hasten economic development; the Colonial Secretary's words that the U.K. trusteeship would not mean the "Golden Key to the Bank of England" are recalled. In any case, much will depend upon the progress of events in the French Cameroun after the territory becomes independent on January 1, 1960. New elections and a change of government there would present the government of Mr. Foncha with a new situation. Negotiations with the newly independent Cameroun might break down for a variety of reasons. If this could occur, rather than continue indefinitely under an uneasy and grudging U.K. trusteeship, the Southern Cameroons might well seek independence and thus still another new African state would emerge.

The contemplation of these unfolding developments might be more than interesting political exercises were not the geography and the forces at work so significant. No part of Nigeria is in such a vulnerable position as the Southern Cameroons. No region is subject to the variety of tensions and outside influence, particularly communist, as is the Southern Cameroons. Moumie's recent association with Sekou Toure and N'KRUMAH in Guinea presage activities in the two Cameroons. Surely the communist forces awakened to the importance of Africa must eye the

area of the Cameroons with the same intense interest they have displayed in Guinea. No such opportunities exist in Nigeria now. They do in the Cameroons.

Leadership in the Southern Cameroons is inexperienced, untrained and naïve. Politicians are invariably school teachers but few have had secondary education themselves. Most of them are products of mission schools in the Cameroons; few have done more than make brief visits even to Great Britain. Except for Dr. Endeley and Premier Foncha, who have attended United Nations Sessions, no leading political figure is known to have traveled or studied in the United States. Compared to Nigerians, who themselves are lacking in experience an education in the world at large, the Cameroonians are far less advanced, to say the least.

The logical conclusion would seem to be that the Southern Cameroons, with its remoteness from Lagos, its complexities, and its vulnerability, deserves increase attention on the part of the United States. Recommendations will be the subject of separate dispatches.

Signed: John K. Emmerson American Consul General.

**Declassified Doc. 2.**

## **The United States of America Department of State**

*From:* American Consulate General, Lagos, Nigeria

*To:* Secretary of State

Nov. 2, 1959.

### **Info: London, Paris, Yaounde Ref: Gorigen Telegram 139**

We saw Southern Cameroons Premier John Foncha on his way back to Buea after the United Nations General Assembly debate on the Southern Cameroons.

Foncha, who seemed to be in good spirits, spoke readily of the discussions which led to the adoption of this "compromise" resolution on the Southern Cameroons by the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly. He noted somewhat wryly that while he and Opposition leader Dr. E.M.L. Endeley had agreed to postpone the plebiscite until 1962 this timing has been advanced by a year, under the combined pressure of the African and Latin America delegations, in order to uphold the principle of early termination of Trusteeships. In spite of this, Foncha felt he had

achieve a major gain in that the UN had made the decision to separate the Southern Cameroons from Nigeria. Since there is less than a year to go before the separation must become effective it will be necessary to start work now on arrangements for setting up separate Southern Cameroonian institutions. Similarly, discussions would have to be undertaken soon with Prime Minister Ahidjo of the French Cameroons about the terms of a union between the two countries. According to Foncha no difficulties are expected in this regard since earlier contacts with Ahidjo had revealed no basic disagreement. Foncha was confident that the tide is running against union with Nigeria but reiterated that the two main conditions for union with French Cameroons are the creation of a Federal relationship between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroons and no membership in the French Community by a united Cameroons. In the event these terms are not met, the only alternative would be independence. Throughout the discussions Foncha manifested no uncertainty that the UN resolution would be acceptable to his party or to the majority of the people in the Southern Cameroons.

Foncha dismissed as ridiculous the charge recently made in Lagos by Endeley that the UK sought to prolong the trusteeship because it intended to establish a military base in the Southern Cameroons to keep an eye on Nigeria and the French Cameroons. In his view this merely represented an attempt by Endeley to stir up bad feelings between the UK and Nigeria. He observed that he had just refuted the charge publicly.

Additional Comment:

Indications of the Southern Cameroons reaction to the UN Resolution have been contradictory and the situation there will not become clear until Foncha has had an opportunity to meet with KNDP leaders. We understand he is planning to spend two weeks in Buea before making a tour of the country. The absence, so far, of any public outburst against Foncha's acceptance of the UN Resolution suggests that his popularity remains high and that critics will find it difficult to unseat him.

As far as Endeley's prospects are concerned, observers believe he has missed the boat and is now rapidly losing ground. It seems clear that whatever support he had previously been given by the British in his efforts to bring the Southern Cameroons within the Federation of Nigeria, has now been withdrawn. His charge of ulterior UK military motives in the Southern Cameroons is interpreted here as an attempt to attract Nigerian sympathy by pinning the blame for the postponement of the plebiscite on the UK. We doubt, however, that this will help overcome Nigerian resentment at agitation for separation from Nigeria in the Southern Cameroons, or arouse Nigerian interest in the dwindling prospect of a plebiscite decision favorable to union with Nigeria in 1961.

Signed: EMMERSON.