

Research Article

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Party Politics and Conflicting Views of Politicians on British Southern Cameroons Independence, 1922 – 1961

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines party politics in British Southern Cameroons from inception in 1922 to reunification and independence in 1961. It focuses on the ideologies and strategies of politicians, chiefs, pressure groups and political parties, as well as the inescapable role of the British and the United Nations towards the plebiscite and eventual reunification with the independent Republic of Cameroon. The paper argues that, British Southern Cameroons politicians espoused conflicting views on the political future of their territory, initially fighting for the territory's independence as a separate political entity against association with Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon, before being compelled by the debates at the Mamfe Conference in August 1959 to bring to the forefront their conflicting opinions on secession, association and reunification. Paradoxically, the popular option of secession and independence as a separate political entity was rejected by the United

Nations. The paper concludes that despite British might and manoeuvres as a colonial master to yoke British Southern Cameroons to Nigeria, Southern Cameroonians overwhelmingly voted through a United Nations organised plebiscite on 11 February 1961 to gain independence by establishing a federation and reunifying with the then French-speaking Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961.

Keywords: *Southern Cameroons, Party Politics, Politicians, Conflicting Views, Independence*

1. Introduction

Studies on the decolonization of Cameroon focus mainly on European colonization of Cameroon peoples, whereas intra-Cameroon colonization, such as British Southern Cameroons' colonial occupation, is ignored. With a colonial situation much more finely nuanced, complex and ambiguous (Achankeng, 2021), there is little known about the unique history of British Southern Cameroons and divergent views of politicians towards its independence and reunification in 1961. Britain informally administered Southern Cameroons as an integral part of its Nigerian colony right from the aborted Condominium in 1916 through the Treaty of Versailles till when it had the process confirmed by the newly created League of Nations in 1922. It was administered as a British Mandate of the League of Nations and as an integral part of Southern Nigeria from 1922 to 1946, and later as a British Trust Territory of the United Nations from 1946 to 1961 (Ndi, 2016, p. 77).

By 1955, the nationalists in Southern Cameroons could be seen as having been divided into three major camps with conflicting and divergent views on the nature of Southern Cameroons independence. Besides the most popular camp, which sought an independent Southern Cameroons state but was constantly suppressed by the British, there were two others: J. N. Foncha and the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) stood for secession from Nigeria and ultimate reunification with French Cameroon. The political refugees from French Cameroon who arrived in

the Southern Cameroons in 1955 also advocated reunification with French Cameroon. The final camp was dominated by Dr. E. M. L Endeley and N. N. Mbile, leaders of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) and Kamerun Peoples' Party (KPP) respectively. They argued that the best option for the Southern Cameroons was to gain independence as an autonomous state within Nigeria. With this division, and after the failure of several attempts to reconcile the protagonists, the British, who favoured independence with Nigeria, manoeuvred the United Nations to organise a plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons in 1961 (Nfi, 2011, pp. 53 – 66). However, despite British might and manoeuvres as a colonial master to yoke British Southern Cameroons to Nigeria, irrespective of Nigerian attempts with British collusion to civilize, annex, colonize and *Nigerianise* Southern Cameroons, Southern Cameroonians overwhelmingly voted through a plebiscite on 11 February 1961 to gain independence by establishing a federation with the then French-speaking Republic of Cameroon.

This paper therefore presents the results of an investigation of the following questions: What was the nature of the political geography and historiography of British Southern Cameroons? What factors and circumstances orchestrated the making of British Southern Cameroons? Did these factors form the basis of party politics, and the emergence of futile opinions among Southern Cameroons Politicians and later decolonization of Southern Cameroons? What were the different conflicting views among Southern Cameroons Politicians towards the plebiscite, independence and reunification and how were these views welcomed by the British and later managed by the United Nations? In answering these questions, the author seeks to revisit the distorted history of Southern Cameroons and put the records straight concerning the intricacies surrounding party politics, political opinions, British and later United Nations propaganda and role towards the plebiscite, independence and reunification of British Southern Cameroons in 1961.

2. Methodology

This study made use of primary and secondary data obtained from different sources. The primary data was obtained through interviews with politicians, elites, traditional rulers, private and government authorities. Files were gleaned in the National Archives Buea (NAB), the National Archives Yaounde (NAY) and regional and divisional archives in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The secondary data was obtained through the review of books, journals, articles, reports, newspapers, and the internet. For the purpose of clarity in this study, major issues related to the history and opinions of politicians are critically highlighted and analyzed from a wide variety of sources.

3. Southern Cameroons: Political Geography and Historiography

The present North West and South West Regions which constitutes former Southern Cameroons has a surface area of 43,000 sq. km and a current population of about 6 million people. Located in the 'armpit' of Africa, it was sandwiched between Nigeria and former *La Republique du Cameroun* like a wedge between West Africa and what in effect is still French Equatorial Africa. It has frontiers to the west and north with Nigeria, to the east with *La Republique du Cameroun*, and to the south with the Equatorial Guinean Island of Bioko. The borders were well attested by international boundary treaties. The natural resources of the Southern Cameroons include oil, gas, timber, coffee, cocoa, tea, bananas, oil palm, rubber, wildlife, fish, medicinal plants, waterfalls and a wide variety of fruit and agricultural produce.

As already indicated British Southern Cameroons was the southern part of the British Mandate territory of British Cameroons in West Africa. When historically contextualized, with the North and South West Regions simply reduced to two of the ten Regions (former Provinces) that constitute the Republic of Cameroon, the product is something of a freak, a contradiction in terms. This, essentially, because prior to reunification in 1961, Southern Cameroons had already attained and enjoyed all the attributes and privileges of statehood stretching as far back as 26 October 1954, when as a State it was adequately defined with a specific geographical circumscription, a permanent demographic population with

its own legislative Assembly, independent judiciary and an executive; paraphernalia which qualified it for self-government. However, in matters of defence and international relations it depended on Great Britain, the administering authority (Ndi, 2013).

In essence, Southern Cameroons had all that it took to be identified on the basis of possessing: executive, legislative and judicial arms of government with its own territory and nationality laws. Thus placed, the Trust Territory was just one short step away from the final goal of independence, the obstacles to which paradoxically were masterminded by Britain to which it was trustee. Great Britain had solemnly, conventionally and legally by Article 76 (b) of the Charter of the United Nations undertaken to guide it towards that objective. This attitude by Britain clearly amounted to an act of great betrayal of trust. Above all, it largely accounts for the bulk of the woes that Southern Cameroonians continue to face and complain about till today.¹⁹

4. The Making of British Southern Cameroons

Before 1884, the region which later became the German Protectorate of Kamerun was scrambled for by Britain, France and Germany. Germany, of course, won the competition and annexed Cameroon in July 1884 (Fanso, 1989, p. 9). Between 1884 and early 1914, the Germans colonized and began to administer Kamerun as a single polity and thus laid the groundwork for a subsequent Kamerun identity and citizenship (Chem-Langhëë, 2002).

However, the outbreak of the First World War radically changed the situation. A German attempt to exempt European African colonies from the war failed (. On 27 September 1914 Britain and France jointly attacked Kamerun and the administration of the territory was disrupted: those areas still under German control were barely administered (Ngoh, 2002, p. 128). This period of hostilities in Kamerun was, at best, an interregnum and the situation only began to alter when the Germans were defeated

¹⁹ See the Legal Criteria for Statehood as defined by the 1932 Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States; Article 1(a, b, c & d).

and ousted from Kamerun in January 1916. General Dobell proclaimed the partition of the territory into British and French spheres on 17 March 1916.

Before the actual partition, the Anglo-French accord that was reached on 4 March 1916 and effected on 6 March 1916 to partition Cameroon between Britain and France was quite timely (Chem-Langhëë, 2002). The provisional boundary was fixed after conferences between General Dobell and General Aymerich in Douala. The boundary line was traced by the two Generals from Lake Chad to the Mungo River. The French received four-fifth, while the British received two disconnected pieces of territory along Nigeria's eastern frontier, estimated at only one-fifth of the original German territory. On 1 April 1916, officials and troops of each power withdrew to their own side of the frontier.

Following the defeat of the Germans in Cameroon, Germany ceded her interests in Cameroon to the principal Allied and Associated Powers under Article 119 of the Treaty of Versailles of 28 June 1919, and renounced all right thereto (Enonchong, 1967, p. 53). The Anglo-French Declaration, signed in Paris on 10 July 1919 by Viscount Milner and M. Simon legally sealed the delineation of the border dividing this former German protectorate into two parts.

On 20 July 1922, the British and French spheres of Cameroon were assigned to their respective administering powers as mandated territories of the League of Nations. As a result, and in conformity with Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the tutelage or guardianship of the people of Cameroon was entrusted to Britain and France. French Cameroon was administered as a single unit (Ibid., 54).

In the administration of British Cameroons, Britain adopted the administrative policy or system of Indirect Rule and for administrative convenience it divided its sphere of Cameroon into British Southern Cameroons that was administered as part of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria (later as part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria) and British Northern Cameroons which was administered as part of the Northern

Provinces of Nigeria - later as the Northern Region of Nigeria (Ngoh, 2011, p. 3).

The British decision to divide its sphere of former German Kamerun was masterminded by the following reasons: it comprised two disjointed strips of territory; and, the existence of geographical barriers compounded by the absence of an adequate transportation and communications network between the two disjointed strips of territory made it extremely difficult for the territory to be administered as a separate single unit from Nigeria (Ibid., p. 4).

In addition, the Second World War brought into existence the United Nations and the Trusteeship System in replacement of the defunct League of Nations and the Mandate System. The political dispensation with regard to the future of British Southern Cameroons, however, underwent a profound mutation after the Second World War as Article 76(b) of the United Nations Charter explicitly called on Britain and France to administer the inhabitants of their respective spheres of Cameroon towards independence or self-government (Fanso, 1989, p. 103). By that charter Britain as the administering authority was expected:

To promote the political, economic, and social and educational advancement of the advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement...Trusteeship agreement for the territory of the Cameroons under French administration. It applied to Southern Cameroons as well: Industry...was nonexistent and agriculture still very backward. There were no railways and the inadequacy of road network made certain areas inaccessible during the rainy season. The situation in the educational and medical fields particularly in the Northern Cameroons was far from being satisfactory. (UN, 1957)

In fact, in the circumstance it was ample evidence of British failure in executing their Trusteeship commitment to the United Nations

Trusteeship Council (UNTC) in British Southern Cameroons. Despite all these developments, British Southern Cameroons achieved independence following its reunification with the independent Republic of Cameroon. In fact, the entire history of British Southern Cameroons is exceptionally, the unfolding of the process that ended up in its reunification with the Republic of Cameroon on 1 October 1961.

After achieving independence on 1 October 1961, British Southern Cameroons metamorphosed into West Cameroon, an appellation by which it was known until 20 May 1972; a transient existence of barely a decade, and a period²⁰ far too transient for it to have proven itself either as a success or a failure, when juxtaposed with nations that have survived for centuries and even millennia and are still metamorphosing.²¹

5. Party Politics and the Emergence of Futile Opinions among Southern Cameroons Politicians

In British Southern Cameroons, political pressure groups and parties were allowed to flower and blossom unhindered. The subtle British policy that was geared towards the territory achieving independence in association with Nigeria cleared the political stage for the creation of political pressure groups and parties (Ngoh, 2011, p. 8). In fact, the trusteeship period witnessed a great deal of political activity and the formation of political parties in Southern Cameroons. But the emergence of real political parties with futile and confusing opinions did not begin until 1951, after the Macpherson Constitution had provided the representation of Southern Cameroons in both the Eastern House of

²⁰ There are current debates as to whether what took place as the “Peaceful Revolution” of 1972 could qualify for a valid referendum comparable to the 1961 plebiscite in Southern Cameroons; more especially as it violated Article 47(1) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

²¹ Britain is presently undergoing throes of devolution with Ireland, Scotland and Wales seeking autonomy after centuries of centralized administration from London.

Assembly at Enugu and the House of Representative in Lagos (Fanso, 1989, p. 129).

The first political pressure group was the Cameroon Welfare Union (CWU) formed in Victoria (now Limbe) by G. J. Mbene in 1939. It became active in 1940 with branches established in almost all the Divisions of Southern Cameroons and Lagos. During its short existence, the CWU petitioned and pressurized the British and Nigerian authorities for Cameroon to be represented in the Nigerian Legislative Council in Lagos. However, the opinions and proposals of the three candidates tabled were rejected in favour of Chief J. Manga William. Failure to replace him by members of the CWU led to its disintegration.

The second pressure group that came into existence in Lagos on 27 March 1940 following the demise of the CWU was the Cameroon Youth League (CYL). It was led by P. M. Kale as President, E. M. L. Endeley as Secretary and J. N. Foncha (Ibid.). Its main objective was to protect the distinctive Cameroonian identity in Nigeria. The CYL had branches all over Southern Cameroons, but its headquarter was at Lagos. It championed the case for the separate or autonomous legislative for the Southern Cameroons and in 1946 campaigned against the Richards Constitution which had completely annulled Cameroon representation in the Nigerian Legislative Council by urging home rule for Cameroon (Fanso, 1989, p. 130). The collapse of the CYL was precipitated by the fact that its members who were students had graduated from the colleges and were absorbed into the civil service.

The third political pressure group was the Cameroons Federal Union (CFU) formed in 1947 by E.M.L. Endeley. It was the first political pressure group in Southern Cameroons to formally advocate for the reunification of the British and French Cameroon. It further advocated for the teaching of both English and French in the two trust territories, the creation of a joint constitutional assembly and the establishment of a free trade between the British and French Cameroon. The CFU became defunct in 1949 (Fanso, 1989, p. 130).

The next was the Cameroons National Federation (CNF). It was created in May 1949 in Kumba. The leaders were E.M.L. Endeley, N.N. Mbile, S.T. Muna and Sampson A. George. In 1948, the organization submitted the first written petition for Cameroon reunification to the United Nations Visiting Mission to Cameroon. However, the members were divided. While some wanted to focus on the reunification of Cameroon, Endeley and others wanted the creation of an autonomous Cameroon Union to be the first priority (Ngoh, 2002, p. 187). Those who wanted reunification founded the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) in August 1951 under the leadership of R.J.K. Dibonge and N.N. Mbile. These unificationist leaders made several contacts with the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) in 1951 and 1952. However, in 1953, the KUNC combined with the Endeley-led CNF to form the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) (Nkwain, 2008, p. 28-30).

On 21 August 1944, Nnamdi Azikiwe created the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). P.M. Kale, E.M.L. Endeley, N.N. Mbile and others from Southern Cameroons participated in founding the NCNC. In 1951, the first general elections into the three Nigerian Regional Houses of Assembly (Eastern, Northern and Western) were held. Southern Cameroons was allocated thirteen of the eighty seats in the Eastern House of Assembly. Between May and June 1953, the nine members of the Cameroon Bloc of thirteen in the Enugu House of Assembly, together with the Endeley-led CNF and the Dibonge-led KUNC agreed to amalgamate into one political party called the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) – the first real political party in Southern Cameroons with R.J.K. Dibonge as President and E.M.L. Endeley as head of the parliamentary wing (Ndi, 2013, p. 49). The KNC continued to form the government of Southern Cameroons from 1954 to 1959.

In 1955, two prominent members of KNC, J.N. Foncha and A.N. Jua, resigned their membership because the KNC was no longer advocating secession from Nigeria and ultimate reunification with French Cameroon, and formed the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP). Following the implementation of a new Nigerian Constitution which accorded

Southern Cameroons a full regional status and enlarged the House of Assembly from 13 to 26 elected members, new elections were called for January 1959. The KNDP won 14 seats, the KNC 8 seats and the Kamerun People's Party (KPP) that emerged in June 1953 won 4 seats (Fanso, 1989, p. 133). The KNC-KPP alliance, which now formed the opposition, decided to merge into one party in May 1960 and thereafter became known as the Cameroons People's National Convention (CPNC).

Finally, there were three other political parties in British Southern Cameroons worth mentioning, that is, the UPC, the One Kamerun (OK) or OK Movement (Ngoh, 2002). and the Kamerun United Party (KUP). The UPC began to operate firmly in Southern Cameroons after it was banned by the French in their trust territory 1955. Also, in July 1957, the UPC was banned by the British and its leaders deported from Southern Cameroons. The OK was considered as the UPC in disguised. Its main objective was immediate independence and reunification without qualification (Fanso, 1989, pp. 133 - 134). The KUP was a minor party formed and led by P.M. Kale for the sole purpose of campaigning for independence as the third alternative in the February 1961 United Nations Plebiscite.

5. Conflicting Views of Politicians on British Southern Cameroons Independence

The main political pressure groups, parties and leaders in the British Southern Cameroons espoused conflicting views on the political future of the territory. These views were secession, association, integration, independence, reunification or unification. Although they initially stood for the territory's independence as a separate political entity against association with Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon, they were compelled by the debates at the Mamfe Conference in August 1959 to bring to the forefront their conflicting opinions on secession, association and reunification. However, the popular option of secession and independence as a separate political entity was rejected by the United Nations, with Southern Cameroons compelled to vote in favour of

reunion with the independent Republic of Cameroon or join the independent Federation of Nigeria.

The politicians in British Southern Cameroons were influenced by the views of UPC members. Earlier in 1951, the UPC had held its conference in Kumba in the Southern Cameroons and delegates came from several traditional and political groups in French Cameroon. The theme of the conference was "The Unification of the two Cameroons" and it was re-echoed at the Second UPC Congress which held at Eseka from 28 to 30 September 1952. At the Eseka Congress, Um Nyobe - UPC leader and anti-colonialist who used armed struggle to obtain independence from French colonial rule - forcefully declared that independence meant "government of Cameroon, by Kamerunians, for Kamerunians and for the benefit of Kamerunians" (Ngoh, 2011). It was, therefore, obvious why British colonial officials in the Southern Cameroons were uneasy with the activities of the UPC and especially its call for reunification that was later inherited and properly exploited by some political leaders in Southern Cameroons. This explains why after Endeley changed his mind in 1956 and went to the United Nations at New York to denounce secession from Nigeria and reunification of British and French Cameroon, and to request rapid constitutional advancement, Foncha and the KNDP rapidly countered Endeley's demands and joined hands with the UPC in championing the course of secession, reunification and independence (Fanso, 1989).

Later in 1953 and in January 1954, at the All-Nigerian Constitutional Conference, the British for the first time recognized the separate identity and political views of the Southern Cameroons. The Southern Cameroons became a Quasi-Region, separate from the Eastern Region. The new status was a landmark in the political history of the Southern Cameroons. Hence forth, the Southern Cameroons politicians, nationalists, and traditional authorities were to be faced with three options, namely "full autonomy as Region in the Nigerian Federation or integration into Nigeria; full separation and independence for British Cameroons or

secession from Nigeria; and secession from Nigeria and immediate reunification of the two Trust Territories" (Fanso, 1989, p. 146).

In 1955, the KNDP requested that, British Southern Cameroons should secede from the Federation of Nigeria because Southern Cameroons would be "in a position to negotiate terms for reunification with the government of any free section of Kamerun which desires it" (Ngoh, 2011, p. 17). In the opinion of the KNDP, reunification would "be accomplished by independent sections rather than dependent ones under British or French" (Ngoh, 2011, p. 11). In a confidential letter dated 30 October 1956, J. N. Foncha and the KNDP outlined its programme for the attainment of reunification in five stages:

Separation from Nigeria in order to have direct dealings with the British Government as the Administering Authority; Autonomous Legislative House for the Southern Cameroons; direct negotiations for reunification with the Administering Authority; unification; and independence. ... with Southern Cameroons achieving unification before independence (Kuoh, 1990, p. 124).

In May 1959, J.N. Foncha and his governing KNDP were offered unique opportunity to state clearly their position on the political future of the British Southern Cameroons during a meeting at Ikeja, Lagos, on 20 May 1959 with Lennox-Boyd. This offer was not exploited and Southern Cameroons politicians, fons, chiefs, Native Authorities and pressure groups converged at Mamfe in August 1959 to work out a political consensus (Ngoh, 2011, p. 19). British (colonial) bias in favour of the KNC – KPP Alliance was openly expressed by Malcolm Milne, Acting High Commissioner in his opening address when he reminded the delegates of the advice earlier given by Sir Alan Lennox Boyd, British Colonial Secretary at the London Constitutional Conference in 1957. He had remarked that "Many of the best friends of the Cameroons do not foresee a destiny more likely to promote her happiness and prosperity than continued association with Nigeria." This was a hackneyed statement that was to be repeated and nauseam by nearly all the British officials

who touched on this subject. It was obvious that Foncha and the KNDP were fighting a stiff battle on several fronts (Ndi, 2013, p. 106).

However, to facilitate discussions at the Conference, Sir Sydney Phillipson clarified and simplified the issues to be discussed. There were just two; who should vote and what questions should be asked the voters. Foncha agreed with Malcolm Milne, the Chairman and made the following appeal:

We are out to reach agreement on points on which political parties have disagreed. My delegation is therefore all out to be guided by those who have no party affiliation as such, but who nevertheless have kept the well-being of the Cameroons as a nation uppermost in their minds.... Here we have some of our aged rulers rubbing shoulders with the students not up to the age of their grandsons. These are men who have a high record as devoted rulers of their people. Humble in front of you, Mr. Chairman they are ready to pass on to the youths their long experience and wisdom in the service of this territory (Ndi, 2013, p. 106).

The debate that followed focused on three crucial areas: the nature and the status of a self-governing Southern Cameroons within an independent Federation of Nigeria; separation from Nigeria with a period under Trusteeship; and separation from Nigeria with the opening of early negotiations with French Cameroons for reunification on acceptable terms.

In fact, the debate at the Mamfe Conference in August 1959, once more brought to the forefront the various conflicting views of the KNDP and the KNC-KPP Alliance. The KNDP wanted the options to be secession or association; the KNC-KPP wanted reunification or association and not secession for it knew that secession was the most popular of the three options which it did not want (Ngoh, 2011).

The Chiefs took a similar stance with the sagacious Fon Achirimbi II reminding the delegates that at an earlier Conference in Bamenda they had “rejected Dr. Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If

Mr. Foncha tries to take us to French Cameroon, we shall also run away from him" (Chem-Langhee, 1975, pp. 118-119). In short, the Fons stood for the independence of Southern Cameroons or the 'Third Option', which the British resolutely blocked. As chairman of the Chief's Conference, Fon Achirimbi II had warned:

We believed on two points during a conference in Bamenda in which Dr. Endeley and Mr. Foncha were present. I was chairman of that conference. We rejected Dr. Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If Mr. Foncha tries to take us to the French Cameroons we shall also run away from him. To me, French Cameroons is 'fire' and Nigeria is 'water.' Sir, I support secession, without reunification (Chem-Langhee, 1975, pp. 118-119).

The delegate of the Kamerun Society who was sent to support reunification went and supported association or should achieve independence as a separate political entity while the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) wanted secession and ultimate reunification. The NUKS argued that the Southern Cameroons would not be a stable political territory, as a separate political state. The OK Party, on its part, stated that Southern Cameroonians should simply be asked if they wanted to reunify with French Cameroon. Unfortunately, the debate which revolved around secession, reunification and association did not resolve the problem. The KNC-KPP position was hardened essentially because Endeley was in possession of the KNDP's October 1956 confidential letter to Soppo Priso. What emerged from the debate was that the most popular wish was secession, followed by association, with the last popular being reunification.

6. The 1961 United Nations Plebiscite: Litmus Test to Independence and Reunification

Between 1956 and 1958 the gap between the political programmes advocated by the integrationists, secessionists and reunificationists widened. The idea of consulting the people to determine the future political status became obvious. It gained impetus from the British

suggestion to the United Nations in 1958 that the plebiscite be held in their sphere of Cameroon.

The 13th Session of the UN General Assembly as a first step settled on a plebiscite, but the questions were still not agreed upon. Foncha suggested it should be separation from Nigeria or Association with Nigeria; Reunification, he maintained could not be part of it because logically it could only come after separation from Nigeria must have been achieved. Endeley rejected this proposal and suggested that it should be reunification either with an independent French Cameroon or association with an independent Nigeria. To further expatiate and drive home the point, Foncha thought that it was “nothing short of treason that anyone for selfish motives should want his country to be engulfed by another.”²² On the other hand, Endeley:

Explained that he did not want Foncha and the KNDP, ‘to take the territory and its people on a joy ride to an unknown destination’ and because of that he ‘insisted on the second question ... to indicate somehow that reunification is the ultimate policy towards which ... Foncha’s government shall work after separation.’²³

After this, Endeley proposed the plebiscite questions to be:

1. Do you wish to continue as an autonomous or self-governing Region in an independent federation of Nigeria?
2. Do you wish to secede from Nigeria to effect reunification with the Cameroons republic (formerly under French administration)? (Ndi, 2013, p. 118).

Neither of the political leaders was ready to give in to the other. With the assistance of Angie Brooks the Liberian ambassador to the United

²² Press release no 485 of 29/09/59 “Plebiscite Questions- Premier and Opposition Leader Disagree at UN,” also, Article by Fon Christopher Achoabong, Department of Linguistics, UB.

²³ My emphasis See Dispatch No. 5, PRO COS54/2412 XC3343 of 12 October 1960

Nations, working with the African delegations, Foncha and Endeley, a resolution of the General Assembly was finally reached at the United Nations Trusteeship Council in October 1959 (Fanso, 1989, p. 153). The plebiscite was to hold not later than March 1961, while preparations were to begin on 30 September 1960. Following further arm-twisting and cajoling and pressure from the African delegations at the United Nations together with Mexico and the United Arab Republic it was agreed that the plebiscite questions should be:

1. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent federation of Nigeria?
2. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons? (Ndi, 2013, p. 118).

As can be seen, clearly, the questions actually approximated Endeley's version and dealt a devastating blow to Foncha, who had left Cameroons with the KNDP mandate for secession from Nigeria but not "reunification with French Cameroon" as the second option. A total number of 349 650 people registered to vote in the plebiscite in Southern Cameroons. Of these 331 312 people or 94 per cent cast valid votes. In all, 97 741 voted for integration with Nigeria and 233571 voted for reunification with the Cameroon Republic (Fanso, 1989, p. 153).

The results of the plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons solved all the doubts about reunification and independence. Following discussions in April 1961, a Constitutional Conference was held at Foumban from 17 to 21 July 1961 between representatives of the Southern Cameroons to resolve the differences between the Ahidjo and Foncha conceptions of the nature of the forthcoming federation. This conference was followed by the Yaounde Tripartite Conference of August 1961 (Ngoh, 2011). The outcome was a draft federal Constitution. It was soon approved by the legislatures in both territories, and 1 October 1961 saw the end of the Southern Cameroons trusteeship and the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Former Southern Cameroons gained its independence and reunified with the Republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of

Cameroon. British Southern Cameroons became the State of West Cameroon, while the former Republic of Cameroon became the State of East Cameroon.

7. Conclusion

This paper has argued from a historical stand point that leaders of political parties, pressure groups, fons and chiefs in British Southern Cameroons espoused conflicting views on the political future of the territory. The various political and conflicting views advanced by Southern Cameroonian leaders, persisted and gained more grounds following the Mamfe Conference of August 1959 and the advent of the plebiscite on 11 February 1961. Despite difficulties arriving at a consensus, the most popular opinion was independence as a separate political entity, the next being association with Nigeria and the least popular being reunification with French Cameroun. Paradoxically, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1352 (xiv) on the British Cameroons' Plebiscite of 1961, clearly ruled out the view on separate independence of Southern Cameroons, the most popular of the three options, in favour of the least popular which was reunification with French Cameroun. Evidence that the British covertly and overtly obstructed all attempts at secession from Nigeria, extended Trusteeship or much worse, independence for Southern Cameroons are examined. The study concludes that "We may yet fall back on the relevance of history to correct today's wrongs and fashion the tomorrow that we desperately hope to attain" (Eden Xtra Magazine, 2011, p. 5).

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