



ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE NATIONALISMS IN CAMEROON

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The Anglo-French partition of the German protectorate of Cameroon in 1916 created separate nationalist aspirations and movements in the two territories, but with shared aims of ending partition and establishing a united independent Cameroon. But when these goals were achieved, it soon became obvious that the cultural, social and political divides between the two linguistic groups were more fundamental and more difficult to bridge than the initial aspirations of the nationalists. When representatives of the two territories met in 1961 to draft a constitution for the newly reunified state, the ambitions of Anglophones and Francophones for the Cameroon of the future were diametrically different. The two linguistic groups remain distinct and uncompromising, with the people of each community firmly attached to their culture. Francophones have used their numerical supremacy and political leadership since reunification to deny Anglophones openings to effective leadership of the country. In spite of this, Anglophone nationalists, old and young, have continued to come out with novel ideas that can bring the two communities closer together and save Cameroon from the brink of disintegration.

CAMEROON, LOCATED AT THE EASTWARD END of the West African coast—the ‘hinge of Africa’—where the coastline turns south, came to be well known in the 19th century, from 1827, as part of the informal British Empire, although ironically, it was annexed by the Germans in 1884. The German annexation was unexpected, not only because the Germans had never before shown any interest in colonial acquisitions, but also because of the numerous publicized appeals by the local chiefs, the British Consular officials, missionaries and traders that Britain should formally take over the territory.¹

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The German protectorate lasted only 30 years until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, but during those short years, the Germans: negotiated and established the country's international boundaries, set up the institutions of modern administration, and gave rise to the idea of belonging together or being a Cameroonian amongst the peoples of the various ethnic groups and traditional states of the territory. An attempt by the Germans in 1911 to enlarge their original territory of Cameroon by squeezing out of French hands large portions of their Equatorial African possessions was short-lived as the French re-annexed them to their original possessions in 1916.²

The allied victory in Cameroon and the expulsion of the Germans in 1916 was followed by the partition of the territory disproportionately between Britain and France on a one to four basis in favour of the latter. Any hopes the British had entertained during the occupation of annexing, rather incorporating, their portion of Cameroon into the neighbouring protectorate of Nigeria was shattered by the provisions of the treaty of Versailles which made former enemy territories mandates of the League of Nations. The period of the British and French mandate in the two Cameroons lasted from 1922 until 1945 when the League of Nations (and its Permanent Mandate Commission which supervised the administration of the mandated territories) was replaced by the United Nations and its Trusteeship scheme. The two territories became trust territories under the same administrative authorities.

By the terms of both the League of Nations and the United Nations, Britain and France had full powers to constitute their parts of Cameroon into a customs, fiscal, currency and administrative union or federation with adjacent territories, short of annexation, as already mentioned. It is for this reason that Francophone Cameroon belonged to the Federation of French Equatorial Africa, but as a separate administrative unit. The tiny and geographically disjointed Anglophone Cameroon³ was treated by the British for administrative purposes as an integral part of British Nigeria. The northern strip of the Anglophone territory was subdivided and fused with the administrations of three separate provinces of Northern Nigeria, while the southern part became one of the administrative provinces of Southern, later, Eastern Nigeria.

Francophone Cameroon became independent in January 1960 after a gruesome anticolonial struggle, although those who achieved or were accorded independence were not the central participants 'in the turbulent political conflicts and manoeuvres of the mid-1950s'.⁴ The peoples of Anglophone Cameroon, which at no time was treated as a single territory, had to decide their independence through UN-organized Plebiscites which were separate for the Northern and Southern Cameroons. The peoples of the Northern Cameroons voted to achieve independence as part of Nigeria and thereafter became part of Sardauna Province in Northern Nigeria. The inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons voted to attain independence by reunifying with Francophone Cameroon. After a Constitutional Conference in July 1961, the British and French Cameroons reunified on 1 October 1961 to form the two federated states of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, Anglophone Cameroon becoming West Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon becoming East Cameroon.

Since we are talking about nationalism, it is essential I say something about it which should be borne in mind as we go along. In doing so, I am aware of the

fact that I am skating on thin ice, and trespassing on the realm of political science, where profounder knowledge of the roots of nationalism exists.

It is difficult to give a precise all-inclusive academic definition of nationalism when discussing the struggle for independence in a country like Cameroon with all the peculiarities which were involved in its making. Cameroon has more than 240 traditional units (groups), some of which are quite large unified states such as the Grassfields kingdoms and Adamawa lamidates, while others are variously organized ethnic or cultural communities mostly in the formerly forested areas and along the coast; it has equal numbers of vernaculars; it has two distinct and, obviously, uncompromising Anglophone and Francophone communities or former states, with the people of each affectionately and arrogantly attached to their acquired culture. Cameroon has behind it three colonial experiences which came into play in the nationalist movements, namely German, British and French. It has a geographical ambiguity in that the Anglophones claim to belong to West Africa, where they were from 1916 during the British Administration, while the Francophones claim they belong to Equatorial Africa where they too have always been from 1916.

In summing up the concept of nation in the politics of Europe as it was analysed and formulated in relation to its function, its rights and duties and its connection with the state, Sir Reginald Coupland⁵ says that certain primary elements are to be found in the composition of most nations, such as a common homeland, a common stock and a common language. Coupland, however, concludes his summary by pointing out that above everything, nationalism has a spiritual character. In its essence, he writes:

nationhood is always a matter of spirit ... a nation is a 'spiritual principle', sustained by the continuing force of tradition from one generation to another and inspired by the memory of 'great things done together' and a desire to do more of them.

Few would fail to agree with its spiritual or ideological character. It is this 'spiritual character' that the West, for long, refused to grant to the struggle for independence in the emerging countries of Africa to include them and Europe in the same level of nationalism. Each African country contains large and small bodies of people with different cultures, organized into a new single state or nation. Each new state contains, therefore, smaller nations which have become subunits of the new state or nation. Thus, we have, for example, the Yoruba and Hausa in Nigeria and the Nso' (Nsaw, Bansa, Bansaw) and Bamum (Bamoun) in Cameroon as subnational units of their respective new states or countries. It is to these new national states that we think of nationalism in Africa.

Bearing this in mind, we can characterize nationalism generally, and in black Africa in particular, as: any movement or struggle by any people as groups, or as individuals to identify with their new states or countries and to secure their freedom from alien rule or domination and decide on a scheme for their own government. The territory with which such groups or individuals identify constitute their nation, whether or not it is conceived as a large community of people determined according to ethnographic principles speaking a single language or having a common political character or aspirations, as the encyclopaedia definition of *nation* suggests.⁶

Of course, there are many varieties of nationalism: political, linguistic, religious, racial and cultural. Here I am speaking generally, although leaning more towards the commonest in Africa, political nationalism. It is also important, from the outset, to distinguish nationalism from patriotism or its common entailment, xenophobia. Patriotism is affection for one's country, loyalty to its institutions and zeal for its defence. Xenophobia is dislike for the stranger, the outsider and the reluctance to admit him or her into one's group. Neither patriotism nor xenophobia

asserts a particular doctrine of the state or of the individual's relation to it. Nationalism does both; it is a comprehensive doctrine which leads to distinctive style of politics.⁷

Nationalism, Elie Kedourie concludes, albeit disapprovingly, is in the first place, a method of teaching people the right self-determination.

The unusual thing about Cameroon nationalism, unlike Nigeria's or Chad's, for example, is that the country or political structure with which the nationalists were identifying ceased to exist in 1916, only 30 years after it came into existence. As a consequence of the Anglo-French partition of the German protectorate, nationalist aspirations and movements in the two territories remained uncoordinated at the quasi-*national* level. Anglophone nationalism emerged separately from Francophone nationalism, although the two nationalisms were rooted in the memories of the country Cameroon and being a Cameroonian. Belonging to Cameroon and being a Cameroonian, together with the traditions of years of hardships under the Germans, took on a nationalist character in each territory during the periods of British and French administration. Proof of this attachment to Cameroon that was, in Anglophone Cameroon, for example, according to Bernard Fonlon, is that no Anglophone Cameroonian ever considered himself or herself to be a Nigerian despite 44 years of close political, administrative and cultural association with that country.⁸ Similarly, memories of the act of Anglo-French partition made many Cameroonians of both territories to develop a new national consciousness of the oneness of Cameroon. Proof of this is that petitions and demonstrations in favour of a united Kamerun (with a *K* and a *u*) were already in progress in Cameroon and abroad at the time of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹

But the struggle to undo the partition, to re-establish one Cameroon through reunification, to attain independence and to be directors of their own destiny—immediate objectives of nationalists across the intra-Cameroon boundary—progressed differently in the two Cameroons. Here, I will concentrate on the period during and after World War II when 'organized mass movements to exert effective pressure on the colonial powers and concerned bodies'¹⁰ came into existence, and leave out the period between the wars when nationalism was either ethnically based or the concern of a few individuals.

I will begin with the Anglophone Cameroon. The first factor that made for the anglophoneness of Anglophone nationalism was the Anglophone culture (language, education, political philosophy, freedom of speech, an unarmed police and other innumerable influences) to which anyone being brought up or living his or her first experience for long, in the (former) British-ruled territory

was naturally exposed or accustomed. The official language of Anglophone culture was English although the English-based pidgin became the domestic *lingua franca*, operating side by side with the different mother tongues of the Southern Cameroons. The culture provided a value system, often referred to as the *British ways*, to which Anglophones knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, became closely attached.

The second factor that made for the *anglophoneness* of Anglophone nationalism was the freedom enjoyed generally by nationalists and their movements in British Cameroon and Nigeria. Freedom of action on the part of nationalists and understanding and tolerance on the part of the colonial administration set the path to progress which led the Regions and Federation of Nigeria steadily towards the goals of self-government and independence. J. Brayne-Baker who served the colonial administration in various capacities in different parts of Nigeria and Cameroon for 28 years (from 1928 to 1956) says that they were sent not to exploit the people but 'to train them towards eventual independence and self-sufficiency', even at the time when independence seemed far away.¹¹

The third factor that shaped Anglophone nationalism in British Cameroon was the influence of nationalist developments in Nigeria. According to Paul M. Kale, himself a forerunner of Anglophone nationalism, the beginning of nationalist movements in the Southern Cameroons could not be separated from similar movements in Nigeria. 'Nigerian politics influenced the thinking of Cameroonians and broadened their outlook on life'. He goes on to say that Cameroonian civil servants serving with the Nigerian government in various parts of Nigeria and Cameroonian students in Nigerian colleges and institutions of higher learning in the 1930s and 1940s 'came directly under the influence of Nigerian politics and were almost invariably inspired by Nigerian political leaders'.¹²

The fourth factor that influenced Anglophone nationalism was the faith and confidence the nationalists had in their dreams. Again, according to Kale, Cameroonians who had always dreamed and spoken of the coming of the different parts of Cameroon into one unit were favourably impressed and found common ground with the Nigerian youths who had set as their number one priority to fight for the 'development of a united nation out of the conglomeration of peoples who inhabit Nigeria'.¹³

The goals of Anglophone nationalism were few and clear. Nationalists initially directed their struggle towards establishing a separate identity from that of Nigeria. Throughout the period of British rule from 1916 until 1954, the Southern Cameroons was administered as an integral part of Nigeria, first as a province of Southern Nigeria and, later, as a province in Eastern Nigeria. Nationalists wanted an autonomous region of their own. All the nationalists worked relentlessly for this goal, while at the same time earnestly petitioning the British Government to bring together the entire British Cameroon territory into one administrative fold. The quasi-regional status was accorded in 1954, but the British Northern and Southern Cameroons were never brought together into a single administrative unit.

The second goal was reunification of Cameroon as it was before the partition of 1916. Reunification, however, was to be preceded by the secession of British Cameroon from Nigeria. As we have heard from Kale, reunification was on the

minds and lips of every Cameroonian in Nigeria, but, as Richard Joseph points out, the idea of reunification was initially a tactical element for Anglophone nationalists to win the important concession of an autonomous region from Nigeria and the British government.¹⁴ This appears to be a fair assessment because by the time the *quasi-regional status* was acquired there were already signs of serious division over this objective. Henceforward, the nationalists were to be faced with three major political objectives, namely: full autonomy as a region of Nigeria or integration, full separation and independence for British Cameroon or secession, and secession and reunification with French Cameroon.¹⁵ These were real nationalist aspirations, not political slogans.

In 1959, the UN endorsed the notion of a plebiscite as the best way for British Cameroonians to determine their political future. In doing so the UN imposed only two options: independence through integration with Nigeria, or independence through reunification with French Cameroon. The popular option of independence without integration or reunification was not included, under the guise that the Anglophone state would not be viable.

When the plebiscite vote was counted in the Southern Cameroons, it was a landslide in favour of reunification. The inhabitants of the Northern Cameroons voted separately and massively in favour of the Nigerian option. One wonders if their first option for the continued trusteeship in 1959 got for them a lot of government concessions before the plebiscite of 1961.

The last objective of anglophone nationalists, namely being masters of their own destiny, was to be tackled in a constitutional conference by Anglophone and Francophone nationalists together. There is the need to remark here that Anglophone nationalists did not have as an objective the chasing away of the British from their territory; there were, in fact, no resident Britons to chase away. All the nationalists were even ready to concede to the idea of continued British trusteeship until independence for the territory, before a decision on the options of integration and reunification. Violence did not constitute part of the Anglophone nationalism—that is, seizing of independence by force.

The objectives of Francophone nationalists, although similar, were slightly different from those of the Anglophones. Francophone nationalists did not have to fight to assert the identity of their territory in French Equatorial Africa. In the first place, French Cameroon was never at any time a faceless appendage (nor an integral part) of a neighbouring colony, as was British Cameroon in Nigeria. Secondly, although the territory was initially administered as part of French Equatorial Africa and, later, as part of the French *Union*, it enjoyed as much autonomy as the other territories in the region and from 1946 was treated as an associate member, unlike full colonies which were full members or overseas *departments*, of the French Union.¹⁶ Finally, from the very beginning of the trusteeship period in 1946, French Cameroon acquired its own Representative Assembly, unlike the Southern Cameroons which was accorded a similar institution only after a hard struggle. So, Francophones had only France to deal with.

Another factor which possibly influenced the objectives of the Francophone nationalists is that the three main nationalist parties without ethnic affiliations (UPC, BDC, USC) were all in support of the principal goals of reunification and independence by the mid-1950s, although initially some dragged their feet

on reunification. These two objectives were also supported by the two leading traditional associations, namely the Ngondo of the Duala and the Kumze of the Bamileke, despite the administrative pressure to keep ethnic associations away from the UPC, and their estrangement from that party by 1950.¹⁷

The ideas of reunification and independence in the 1940s and 1950s, in fact until 1958, offended the French Government in Paris deeply. In his opening speech at the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, René Pleven, Commissioner for the Colonies under General de Gaulle, spoke bitterly about calls for independence:

We read from time to time that this must end with what is called an enfranchisement of colonial peoples. In colonial France, there are neither people to enfranchise, nor racial discrimination to abolish. There are people who feel themselves French and who wish to take and to whom France wishes to give, an increasingly larger role in the life of the democratic institutions of the French Community. These are the people who it is intended will move step by step towards the purest form of political enfranchisement. But it is not intended that they gain any form of independence other than French independence.¹⁸

The French then thought of nothing other than an indivisible *Greater France* with all its overseas appendages intact. When Sékou-Touré of Guinea opted for independence in 1958 before France could tolerate it, he was treated brutally. It caused even more offence when the nationalist group which advocated the goals of reunification and independence most strenuously was not only arrogant in doing so, but was also seen to be too close to the disloyal, irresponsible and vehemently detested French Communist Party and the communist Trades Union Federation. The French really hated the radicalism of the UPC.¹⁹

The UPC had, in fact, deceived the French local administration in Cameroon into giving it legal recognition when it was formed in 1948 by avoiding the inclusion in the Charter of the party, a statement of their real goals or indicating 'any allegations that their objectives conflicted with those of the administration in any way'. They had declared that they were neither in opposition to the French nation, the interests of the French Union, nor the existing French Constitution; they had even promised to work 'within the framework of the French Union'.²⁰ But the immediate unveiling of the real objectives and the relentless campaign to achieve their aims in the immediate future after their recognition were regarded by the French as a stab in the back.

The French administration decided immediately not to allow the UPC nationalists to succeed. They quickly encouraged the formation of other movements opposed to the principal objectives of the UPC and openly corrupted the electoral process making it impossible for any UPC candidate to ever win an election to the local assembly. They undertook a concerted campaign to silence the UPC after 1954 thereby forcing it to increase and intensify its anti-colonial agitation which became really violent from May 1955. The French administration finally banned the UPC and its subsidiary organizations in July 1955 and sought to arrest its leaders forcing many of them to either flee to Anglophone Cameroon or to go underground and organize guerrilla movements.²¹

In 1957 an anti-UPC and anti-nationalist, André-Marie Mbida was named

Prime Minister to head the first African government in French Cameroon. When Mbida woefully failed to impress many in the Legislative Assembly of Cameroon with his programme which rejected reunification and delayed independence for at least 10 years, his government fell. He was replaced by Ahmadou Ahidjo in February 1958. Ahidjo, who was lucky to come to power when the French were recognizing the inevitability of Francophone colonies moving towards independence, was able to present a programme which favoured national unity and reconciliation at home, independence and reunification (without offending France), and co-operation with France.²² It was barely over seven months after Ahidjo became Prime Minister, wearing the colours of a moderate nationalist, that the leading advocate of independence and reunification and leader of the UPC, Reuben Um Nyobe, who had decided to go underground rather than flee into exile, was killed by a government patrol in a hideout near his village.

The death of Um Nyobe and the absence of many of his leading hardline followers from the territory certainly brought some relief to the French who were able to mobilize international support at the UN for their neo-colonial solution in Cameroon. They were hopeful that the exiles and those still underground would soon give up, as had Theodore Mayi Matip who was with Um Nyobe at the time of his death but escaped detection, and as had more than 3000 guerrillas who soon turned themselves in to the authorities and accepted a government amnesty.²³

The UPC fought not only to end French rule, take control of the country and put their objectives into action. They were also fighting the more than 1700 French and other settlers, the *colons*, who were a very effective force in both the territory's politics and its economy. These settlers were everywhere. They were in both local and metropolitan assemblies²⁴ where they used their power to hinder the political evolution of the territory. They dominated the civil service; they controlled all levels of the economy, adopting policies which hindered future independent enterprise by Cameroonians. They effectively monopolized the industrial and commercial sectors and inflated their salaries but not the wages of the Africans.²⁵ The French settlers too had to be dislodged before they became a permanent community in Cameroon.

The French move at the UN cleared the way for Ahidjo to present his moderate nationalist programme which included reunification and independence (hitherto, Um Nyobe's programme), and to be accepted as spokesman and legitimate leader of Cameroon.²⁶

In 1959 the UN approved the French notification of French Cameroon's wish to become independent and the request that France's trusteeship be revoked to coincide with it. One would presume that Ahidjo must have impressed the French very favourably by his readiness to serve their interests in Cameroon when he discussed his programme with the government in Paris one month after he was named PM.

It is now known that departure from the French Union and the British Commonwealth was accompanied on the French side by a secret co-operation agreement with Ahidjo. This, of course, has not been published, but it has been admitted that a high proportion of Cameroon's defence and internal security costs were met by French aid, in addition to training.

On 1 January 1960 the French Government in the presence of the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, proclaimed the independence of French Cameroon, handing over the power that went with it on a plate to Ahmadou Adjido. The irony had taken place: those who had fought and shed blood for independence were out; those who least expected to be in power had achieved it and were in. Reunification would await the outcome of the plebiscite in Anglophone Cameroon. Henceforth, those who continued to fight the Government, as factions of the UPC did for many years, would be regarded and treated as terrorists and enemies of the country rather than as nationalists fighting for the liberation of their country.

The vote in favour of reunification called for a conference of Anglophone and Francophone leaders of nationalism to discuss the modalities of the new Cameroon and to draw up its constitution. This was absolutely a necessary step because, throughout the years of agitation for reunification in both Cameroons, the nationalists across the Mungo never really sat down to agree on a definite programme for the reunified state. Earlier attempts to do so which often brought together representatives of the UPC and other associations from French Cameroon and the nationalists of the Southern Cameroons, beginning in 1951, never ever came with concrete proposals which the one or other side could hang on to in the future.²⁷ The best opportunity for such a meeting was between 1955 and 1957 when the banned UPC leadership had sought refuge in the Southern Cameroons. Attempts at collaboration with the refugees never succeeded before the UPC was also banned in the Southern Cameroons as a party that was likely to try to achieve its political objectives by resorting to violence. 'By late 1956, everyone of the political factions of Southern Cameroons had come to consider the exiled UPC leadership as an unwanted, troublesome influence in the territory'.²⁸

When contacts were re-established in 1959, after Foncha became PM of the Southern Cameroons about a possible reunited Cameroon, it was with Ahmadou Ahidjo, the hand-picked PM of French Cameroon. Actually, only the two Prime Ministers—one a nationalist, the other a modest politician—began to hold meetings. Ahidjo had adopted the UPC programme of reunification not out of conviction, but to win the loyalty of the moderate nationalists in French Cameroon. Proof of this is that when Foncha asked him to assist in the campaign for reunification in the Southern Cameroons, he refused full stop.²⁹ In any event Foncha and Ahidjo had met twice before French Cameroon became independent in January 1960 and about five times before the plebiscite in the Southern Cameroons on 11 February 1961. At these meetings, especially those on 15 July and 9–14 August 1960, at which each PM was accompanied by his colleagues, the two leaders agreed on generalities and not on matters of substance except that the reunited state should be a federation outside both the British Commonwealth and the French Union. The powers of the Federal institutions as well as of the Federated states were to be elaborated after the plebiscite at a conference bringing together equal delegations from both Cameroons, as well as representatives of the UN and the UK.³⁰ When Foncha and Ahidjo met again after the plebiscite, they agreed a constitutional conference should be scheduled at Foumban from 17 to 21 July 1961.

It is important to note that the 1961 Foumban Conference was the very first

gathering of Anglophones and Francophones to seriously study and plan for the new Cameroon since the idea of reunification became a nationalist slogan in the 1940s. Coming from two disparate colonial cultures, the mode of thought and commitment of the two delegations were clearly demonstrated at Foumban.

The delegation from the Southern Cameroons numbered 25, and included members from all the known major political groups in the territory. The British, as the administering authority, were not there. The delegation from the Republic of Cameroon numbered 12, involving strictly people from Ahidjo's government and some French advisers. Foncha's delegation, which included people experienced in discussing constitutional matters from the Nigerian days, went to Foumban open minded, believing that issues to be included in the new constitution were to be raised and discussed on the spot by both delegations. For this reason, they went with loose proposals from the all-party conference in Bamenda³¹ which were far from even a skeletal constitution. (One understands that the British advisers were kept out of the Bamenda meeting and that any attempts to brief the PM were angrily rebuffed and regarded as *interference*. This may explain why the British were not at Foumban.) In contrast the Ahidjo delegation, also experienced in constitutional talks under the French, went to Foumban with a comprehensive set of proposals already set out in the form of a constitution. There was already no match; joint discussions were not possible. Anglophones were forced to spend the greater part of the conference time on their own studying and attempting to modify the Francophone text. This was a clear divergence in approach.

The Southern Cameroon's delegation went to Foumban to press for a very loose federation, almost a confederation, by reference to the pre-plebiscite Ahidjo-Foncha agreements, the promise to the electorate during the campaign, and the long-standing Anglophone thinking on the reunification. Ahidjo's delegation proposed a highly centralized federation, almost a non-federation, irrespective of earlier agreements with Foncha. In the end, agreement was reached on a federation that was in fact a unitary government for Anglophones and a unitary centralized government in the form of a federation for Francophones. Ahidjo had no tradition on reunification to respect.

Anglophones wanted a parliamentary system or, at least, a mixed parliamentary-presidential system—a bit of the British way—at the centre, as they would have had in Nigeria. Francophones wanted a strong president at the centre, as they already had, who would rule by decree, disallowing or vetoing any legislation he was against. In the end, it was as the Francophones wanted. Anglophones returned from Foumban with hardly a single achievement to boast about; their state was precluded from seeking its own grants and contracts; and there was the so-called Federal Inspectorate which even interfered in *delegated* functions. Virtually all the dreams of Anglophones were shattered in Foumban.

We may pause and ask: what went wrong; what caused the demise of Anglophones at Foumban? I will answer, *nothing*. It was just the fate of a minority; of an underdog. It would appear that Anglophones went to Foumban as a people abandoned to their fate—without the sympathy and expertise of the administering authority, the British, upon whom they still depended. This opinion holds strong, in spite of evidence showing that the debacle could have been avoided if the Foncha government had involved the British who were ever ready to lend a

hand in the negotiations. According to Malcolm Milne, Deputy Commissioner in the Southern Cameroons in the years before reunification:

the problems that would arise as a result of bringing together the British and French systems of government ... were clearly foreseen from the outset. When Foncha's new government sought our views in 1959 we all advised of the difficulties (which have become plain for all to appreciate in the intervening 36 years). Foncha—and one must assume his government—went into the Conference *knowing* of Ahidjo's views. The door was open to an extension of the British Trusteeship of the Southern Cameroons if Foncha and Ahidjo had been unable to agree to final terms of unification between 11 February and 1 October 1961 ... Such further Trusteeship was not requested.³²

One is surely tempted to conclude from this that Anglophones are solely to blame for what they got at Foumban. True enough the Foncha government failed to formally ask the British to do what they were supposed to do—to accompany the Anglophone delegation to Foumban. But would it not have been ironic for the British to be invited by the team they were coaching to accompany it to a crucial international negotiation before the end of their contract with that team? The British should have handled the affairs of Southern Cameroons exactly the way they handled those of Hong Kong recently.

Britain definitely abandoned the Southern Cameroons in that territory's hour of need. It is known that from the day the plebiscite vote went against the Nigerian option when the presence of the British advisers was much needed to boost the morale of Anglophones in the new uncertainty, many Britons left or were asked to leave the Southern Cameroons. Here is an eyewitness, Edwin Ardener, in this act of abandonment:

The removal of the British experts at this time appeared to many as a betrayal. There is no doubt that the career factor were overriding: many British advisers could have stayed if some clear guarantee could have been given concerning their position after independence ... Certain officials were, in addition, asked not to stay. The uncertainties concerning security added further confusion, but by October, many officials left with great reluctance ... In particular, the loss of British education officers was a blow.³³

Without support, Anglophones stood before their Francophone compatriots as midgets before a giant. Ahidjo realized all the anomalies and, taking advantage of the fact that his territory was already independent and was ten times in size and had four times the population of the Southern Cameroons, went to Foumban to absorb, not to pair up, the two territories. That was what had just happened to the Northern Cameroons which had voted to integrate with Nigeria—it was absorbed losing its identity completely.

Foumban presented a cultural problem as well—the language problem for example. It was not easy for the two delegations to engage in direct discussion without a competent verbatim translator. Fortunately Anglophones had in their delegation Dr Bernard Fonlon who was intimately familiar with both English and French to translate texts for them. The language problem may even have

been the basis of differences between Anglophone and Francophone nationalists. One wonders then if the nationalists in the two territories were expressing the same feelings and understanding and aspirations when they talked separately, or even together, about reunification and independence, for example, of the new Cameroon before the plebiscite. Could these two terms be understood as the same by Anglophones and *gallicized* nationalists?

Unfortunately the radical nationalists who would have provided the answer were absent from Foumban. Elie Kedourie says in his classic text on nationalism³⁴ that great harm can be done to a people's political and social life when foreign terms are introduced into their language, because those who speak the language are unsure of the exact connotations of the terms. I may add that even when they are sure of the exact connotations, the terms will hardly mean or carry the same implications and nuances in the two different languages. For example, in English parlance, an inspector has no executive functions except as laid down by law. No matter how multi-lingual an individual may be, only one of the languages may be firmly implanted in him or her and it is to that language that he/she belongs entirely. 'For every language is a particular mode of thought and what is cogitated in one language can never be repeated in the same way in another.'³⁵

The greatest unifying factor among any people engaged in whatever cause or endeavour is language:

Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself long before any human art begins; they belong together and are by nature one and inseparable whole ...³⁶

Could such a claim be made of Cameroon nationalists at any time from before 1961 until today, after more than 37 years of *togetherness*? Can it be justifiably said that Anglophones and Francophones have been joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, that they belong together and are by nature a one and inseparable whole?

Anyone who has read John W. Forje's *The One and Indivisible Cameroon*³⁷ published a year before Ahidjo stepped down in 1982, or who is a casual student of the integration process in Cameroon, might answer affirmatively that Anglophones and Francophones belong together and are now an inseparable whole. My 26 years' experience living in Yaounde and my knowledge of the situation leads me to say, not yet, far from it; Anglophones and Francophones are still strange bedfellows. There is enough evidence to prove what I am saying. There is no doubt that the long period of silence and recoil, from 1961 to 1990, on the part of the Anglophones, gave the false impression of the success of the integration process in Cameroon. When in October 1966, the West Cameroon State Prime Minister, Augustin Ngom Jua, said in reaction to a newspaper report, that an attempt to merge administrative regions of West and East Cameroon without the full knowledge and concurrence of Anglophones, would put the Federal agreement into disarray,³⁸ Ahidjo replied that Anglophones had massively voted for reunification and not for federation.³⁹

In 1967 Ahidjo as party leader in the East and the West, organized the first strange and undemocratic election into the West Cameroon House of Assembly.

All the candidates were put on a single list (no opposing list) as if they belonged to one constituency, for the electorate to endorse. Following this election, Ahidjo surprised every Anglophone by sacking the much loved and charismatic PM, Jua, replacing him with his collaborator, Solomon Tandjing Muna, who was not even a candidate on the list just endorsed for the House of Assembly.

In 1970 Ahidjo dumped Foncha, the architect of reunification, as Vice-President of the federation and, again, brought in Muna who, unconstitutionally was PM of West Cameroon and Vice-President of the Federation. Two years later, Ahidjo abolished the Federation without separately consulting the Anglophone State which alone had voted in the plebiscite to bring it about and without taking into account the Fouban Constitution which had envisaged the federal system as the best means of rejoining the two Cameroons. In 1979 Ahidjo modified the constitution removing the possibility of the Speaker of the National Assembly, number two in state protocol (then permanently an Anglophone) from being the constitutional successor to the President in the event of resignation, incapacitation or death of the incumbent. He designated his hand-picked PM (not elected) to be the successor to the office of Head of State and Government.

Suddenly all was changed when in 1982 Ahidjo resigned supposedly on health grounds and was succeeded by Paul Biya as the new President of the Republic. Paul Biyal continued, like Ahidjo, to disregard the wishes of Anglophones and to use the state powers to try and silence them. In 1984, he single-handedly, by decree, changed the name of the State from United Republic to simply Republic, the name of Francophone Cameroon before reunification in 1961. In 1990 his government unleashed the army to attack an Anglophone political rally which was being held legally to launch a new party, killing six and wounding many. In 1992, the government openly rigged the presidential election, which was really won by an Anglophone, against the outcry of international observers. On top of that a three-month state of emergency was slammed on the province of his adversary where there was much protest against the foul play. In January 1996 the government refused to accept candidates in more than 65 per cent of the number of councils the SDF, led by an Anglophone, had applied to contest in the municipal elections, and unashamedly voided the declared victory of that party in many council areas, especially the city of Yaounde. In May 1997 it openly and defiantly confiscated the SDF victory in the parliamentary election in the South West, Littoral and parts of the West and Centre provinces against an international outcry of foul play.

Can anyone say that these constitutional, political and administrative manoeuvres were nationalistically motivated? Was an all-Francophone nationalism, that is including the followers, involved? To me, scarcely—since quite considerable parts of the Francophone area had voted for SDF, the leading Opposition party in the 1992 presidential, the 1995 Municipal, and the 1997 parliamentary elections. Yet Francophone political leaders, including those of the old, most nationalist UPC, believe and say it loud and clear, that the goals of the nationalist movements have been achieved and that it is now time to eat and dine and make merry. They have, indeed, been playing the *politics of the belly* as Bayart rightly sub-titles his recent book.⁴⁰ Their nationalist struggles were

aspirations to wealth and dignity and their anti-colonial movements sheltered schemes for individual enrichment which anticipated the later pillage [of] the independent administration'.

But is individual enrichment, combined with some sharing of the loot with one's native village, all there is to it? French culture has captured hearts and minds in a sometimes ludicrous imitation of elegance and the France concerned is not the landscape of the pig farmer or industrial worker. It is chiefly that of Paris. A little enquiry would show that some are holding on to their French citizenship and spend their vacations at *home*, ie in France. Assimilation has captured quite a large fraction of the Francophone official classes, the *so-called* elite and has been grafted on to the policy of patronage. Anglophone Cameroonians have no second home though they, too, would stand up to defend their *British* ways, that is their *Anglophonie*. (There are quite a few Anglophone crooks too, as was too evident in the January 1996 and the May 1997 electoral campaigns of bribes.)

But what have Anglophone nationalists and some political leaders done, or been doing, to bring about both the realization of the state that was hoped for and satisfaction to the majority of its people? Anglophones can be credited for bringing back multi-partyism (which Ahidjo ended in 1966), as a way of giving everyone a voice in running their country and of checking the excesses and lack of transparency in the government of the day. Since the historic launching of the SDF party in Bamenda in 1990, there has been much more freedom of speech and the press, especially the private press, although futile attempts are still made at times to apply censorship. Anglophone political leaders have proposed a national conference as the only meaningful way of discussing without bitter recriminations, the ills of the country, reconciling the opposing aspirations of the two cultural communities and agreeing on political, economic and social programmes that can carry the country forward to real recovery and independence. The younger generation of Anglophone nationalists have proposed a new Federal Constitution for Cameroon that will give each cultural community the chance to take care of its own crucial internal matters, evolve in its own way and pace, and protect its local institutions and economy, while remaining an integral part of the union.

One other thing to add: most Anglophone nationalists who reached the upper echelon in government and administration in both the Southern Cameroons and reunified Cameroon, such as Endeley, Foncha, Jua, Muna, Kale, Lainjo, Mukete, Mbile, Fonlon and Fonka to name but a few, demonstrated clearly that their nationalism was not a sheltered scheme to wealth and individual enrichment, but a deep-seated concern for Cameroon and Cameroonians; they have shown they were not just playing the *politics of the belly*. Proof of this is that their personal homes and wealth remained modest and moderate as if they were never trustees of the national or state purse.

All proposals made by Anglophone nationalists have been rejected and their example of the management of the resources of the commonwealth has not been emulated. Where the Francophone leadership appears to accept what it could no longer prevent, like multi-partyism, it does not believe and only pays lip service to it. Is there any reason, then, to begin to wonder that some Anglophone nationalists of the old and new generations have been forced to start thinking of

a nation only in terms of their dear Southern Cameroonians and are already campaigning for that objective? Why, some are already asking, can Anglophones and Francophones not peacefully and constitutionally part company and remain friends and good neighbours, instead of sticking together and remaining enemies?

Needless to say that if the Francophones were the ones occupying the minority position of Anglophones in Cameroon, civil war would have long broken out in that country. If you doubt me, witness the case of Canada.

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- 19 Joseph, 1977, *ibid*, pp 1-2.
- 20 Johnson, *ibid*, p 136.
- 21 Joseph, 1977, *ibid*, pp 176-350 passim.
- 22 See Bayart, 1979, *ibid*, pp 46-60; Johnson, *ibid*, pp 139 and 236; and Joseph, 1977, *ibid*, p 343.
- 23 Joseph, 1977, *ibid*, p 344.
- 24 Elections were organised under the two-college system, where French nationals and a few Cameroonians who had acquired civil law status could vote and be voted for in the first college to Yaounde and Paris, while the rest of the indigenous Cameroonians who had only personal status voted only in the second college for the representatives (of the first college) to the local assembly in Yaounde.
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