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**FOURTH COMMITTEE, 886th
MEETING**

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Chairman: Mr. L. N. PALAR (Indonesia).

AGENDA ITEM 41

The future of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under
United Kingdom administration (A/C.4/412) (continued):

- (a) Organization of the plebiscite in the southern part of
the Territory: question of the two alternatives to be
put to the people and the qualifications for voting
(continued)

HEARING OF PETITIONERS (continued)

*At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Namaso N.
Mbile, representative of the Kamerun People's Party
and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Southern
Cameroons House of Assembly, took a place at the
Committee table.*

1. Mr. SPACIL (Czechoslovakia) asked the petitioner
whether, in view of the difference in status between the
Cameroons under United Kingdom administration,
which was a Trust Territory, and the Federation of
Nigeria, which was a Non-Self-Governing Territory,
the ties between the Southern Cameroons and Nigeria
were solely administrative.

2. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) replied
that, because the Southern Cameroons was adminis-
tered as part of the Federation of Nigeria, Camer-
oonians in practice regarded themselves as British
subjects under the jurisdiction of the Governor at
Lagos. From the standpoint of administration, edu-
cation, finance, etc., the Southern Cameroons was
administered as a province of Nigeria by a Resident
who was directly responsible to the Governor at Lagos.
That *de facto* situation had, in practice, an effect on the
people's thinking, way of living, conditions of employ-
ment, and working methods. In theory the Cameroons
was a Trust Territory, but in practice it was a part of
Nigeria.

3. Mr. SHARIF (Indonesia) wished to know why some
of the parties were asking for the Cameroons to be
separated from Nigeria and why the petitioner had
stated that the Cameroonian people were not at present
ready to take part in the plebiscite.

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4. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that all
the Cameroonian political parties were agreed that they
wanted the trusteeship to be terminated, provided that,
simultaneously, union with one of the two neighbouring
countries took place. His party, the Kamerun People's
Party, preferred union with the Federation of Nigeria.
Other parties, on the other hand, favoured union with
the Cameroons under French administration. But in
any event no one believed that the trusteeship should
continue.

5. If conditions had been normal, the population would
doubtless have been capable of making a political
choice; but that was not the case: the plebiscite was
taking place too soon after the last political elections,
and it would probably cause confusion in the people's
minds. The people might well make a decision which
was contrary to their interests.

6. Mr. SHARIF (Indonesia) asked whether, in those
circumstances, continued trusteeship would not be pre-
ferable.

7. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that, if
the only solution was continued trusteeship, his party
would insist on having a definite period for it pre-
scribed.

8. Mr. SHARIF (Indonesia) asked the petitioner
whether he knew of other parts of the world in which
a change in political status had led to a change in the
population's living conditions.

9. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said he was
of the opinion that any change in political conditions
gave rise to a change in social conditions. In the
Cameroons a political change would be a retrogressive
step: none of the governments which had administered
the Territory had had time to make plans for social
development; the Germans had stayed twenty-eight
years and had then been replaced by the British, whom
the Mandates System had prevented, owing to the un-
certainty which hung over the future of the Southern
Cameroons, from putting a long-term policy in hand;
when the mandate had been ended and replaced by
trusteeship, the future of the Territory had continued
to be just as uncertain. It was obvious that political
uncertainty was very prejudicial to the social and
political development of a territory, and that in those
conditions any political change was contrary to the
interests of the population.

10. Mr. SHARIF (Indonesia) asked the petitioner what
his party's attitude towards Cameroonian unification
was.

11. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that,
in the opinion of the Kamerun People's Party, the
Southern Cameroons should form a self-governing
Region of the Federation of Nigeria. Then, in 1960,
after both Nigeria and the Cameroons under French
administration had become independent, the question
of a union of those two countries might arise. Thus
closer links could be forged between the Cameroons

now under British administration and the Cameroons now under French administration. What was important was to ensure that the new African States should be strong and to achieve that strength not only should existing units be retained but larger units should be created.

12. Mr. SHARIF (Indonesia) asked what the qualifications for membership of a political party in the Southern Cameroons were.

13. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) explained that his party made no racial or tribal distinction between its members, whether they were Southern Cameroonians or Nigerians or came from the Cameroons under French administration.

14. Mr. DIALLO Telli (Guinea) asked the petitioner to give his own definition of a politician.

15. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) explained that a politician was an individual whose political opinions were deep-rooted and who sought to promote the welfare of his people. Some politicians, however, were not perhaps honest enough to reject an opinion or point of view which, although contrary to the interests of their people, was essential to the success of their own career.

16. Mr. DIALLO Telli (Guinea) asked whether, in the petitioner's view, material well-being was a prerequisite to independence or whether, on the contrary, independence produced material well-being.

17. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) replied that independence granted in poverty and insecurity would not really be independence, since the country's existence would be dependent upon the granting of foreign loans. The Southern Cameroons could choose total independence; in that case however, it would depend for its existence on the aid, inevitably accompanied by controls, which foreign countries would grant. But it could also choose independence in a union either with the Federation of Nigeria or with the Cameroons under French administration. Those were the only two solutions which could bring the country material well-being.

18. Mr. DIALLO Telli (Guinea) asked the petitioner whether he was really convinced that he represented his country's views.

19. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) recalled that since 1946 he had devoted all his energies, not as an individual but as a member of the new movement, to the struggle for independence; he had always believed that unity was an essential factor in independence. He also pointed out that he had been successful in many elections and that he was the only candidate for the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly who had been re-elected unopposed.

20. Mr. DIALLO Telli (Guinea) thanked the petitioner and asked the Committee not to create imaginary problems. Colonization and domination had not begun with the history of a people. It was impossible to maintain that a people could survive only under foreign domination. He urged the African peoples to go forward to independence and the development of Africa.

21. U TIN MAUNG (Burma), noted that in his letter to the Secretary-General requesting a hearing (A/C.4/408, sec.2) the petitioner had stated that a great deal of the present "battle" was really a struggle between the grassland tribes in Bamenda and the forest south-

ern coastal belt. U Tin Maung asked whether Mr. Mbile represented one of the parties engaged in the "battle".

22. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) explained that what appeared to be a battle between conflicting ideologies was really a struggle between the Bamenda grassland tribes and the tribes in the forest southern coastal belt. The Kamerun People's Party was influential principally in the latter zone whereas in Bamenda five out of the six seats in the Assembly had been captured by Mr. Foncha's supporters.

23. U TIN MAUNG (Burma), reverting to the petitioner's statement that it would be more advantageous for the Southern Cameroons to decide in favour of federation with Nigeria, asked him if he could make a short comparison between the two areas of the Southern Cameroons to which he had referred.

24. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) replied that the southern zone was a little more advanced than Bamenda since, unlike the latter, it was not under the influence of chiefs; moreover, it contained nearly all the plantations on which the Territory's economy was based. Obviously, therefore, there was a certain jealousy between the two parts of the Southern Cameroons.

25. U TIN MAUNG (Burma) asked the petitioner whether he could state how much money was spent on economic development in the various provinces of the Federation of Nigeria on the one hand and in the Southern Cameroons and the Northern Cameroons on the other.

26. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said he was sorry that he could not give exact figures, but he assured the Committee that the Southern Cameroons received a fair share of the sums which the Nigerian Government spent on the economic development of the various provinces; its share was in fact greater, proportionately, than that of the Northern Cameroons, although the latter was linked much more closely with Nigeria than was the Southern Cameroons. The Northern Cameroons was far less developed than was Bamenda, and without the grants received from Nigeria the Southern Cameroons would certainly not be more advanced than the Northern Cameroons.

27. U TIN MAUNG (Burma) noted that, of the qualifications for participation in the plebiscite, the residential qualification made a distinction between persons originating from Nigeria and those coming from the Cameroons under French administration. He felt that that state of affairs should be rectified, either by giving voting rights only to persons born in the Southern Cameroons or by standardizing the rules relating to residence. He would like to know what Mr. Mbile thought about it.

28. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) observed that the regulations for the plebiscite were the same as for the ordinary elections. He recalled that in the Northern Cameroons only British subjects took part in popular voting. The procedure followed in the Southern Cameroons was less strict, and persons coming from the Cameroons under French administration were permitted to vote if they had resided in the Territory for ten years. The same liberal arrangement would be in operation during the plebiscite. It was, however, normal to make some distinction between the Nigerians who came to settle permanently in the Southern Cameroons, which they looked upon as an integral part of their country, and persons coming

from the Cameroons under French administration, who retained their status of French citizens and who, as was inevitable, did not participate with the same sincerity and enthusiasm in the political life of the Territory. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that inhabitants of the Cameroons under French administration entered the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration freely, whereas inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons were permitted to enter French territory only if they carried a passport or a "laissez-passer". In those circumstances, it would not be fair to insist upon absolute equality.

29. U TIN MAUNG (Burma) recalled that the leaders of the Kamerun National Congress/Kamerun People's Party (KNC/KPP) Alliance had told the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa, 1958, that unification could be achieved only by evolutionary means—i.e. when an independent Cameroons (the former Cameroons under French administration) and an independent Federation of Nigeria, including the Southern Cameroons, would be in a position to explore the possibility of union as part of "the movement towards the creation of a United States of West Africa".^{1/} He asked whether Mr. Mbile still shared that view.

30. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) replied in the affirmative. The establishment of a Republic of the Cameroons and of an independent State of Nigeria of which the Southern Cameroons was an integral part would be the first step towards the establishment of a viable federation of African States. The main requirement was to consolidate existing ties rather than to split up the African continent still further.

31. Mr. THAPA (Nepal) noted that the petitioner, in his letter to the Secretary-General, attributed the insistence with which some people in the Southern Cameroons called for secession from Nigeria to the influence of certain politicians who were exploiting the ignorance of the masses by suggesting to them that a change of political status would provide the answer to their poverty and under-development. According to him, the Southern Cameroons should not give up the sure economic benefits which it derived from its relations with Nigeria; moreover, the management of a government with the Cameroons now under French administration would raise so many problems that the Southern Cameroons would be worse off than ever before. At the Fourth Committee's 885th meeting, however, Mr. Foncha had said that at the Southern Cameroons Plebiscite Conference the KNC/KPP Alliance had supported separation from Nigeria, to be followed by early negotiations with a view to unification with the future independent Republic of the Cameroons. Could Mr. Mbile explain this apparent divergence between his own position and that of the KNC/KPP Alliance to which he belonged?

32. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that the sole purpose of the Plebiscite Conference had been to decide what questions should be put to the electorate. The question corresponding to the position supported by the KNC/KPP Alliance had been: should the Southern Cameroons be a self-governing Region within an independent Federation of Nigeria? The framing of the question had occasioned no difficulty. That had not been the case with regard to the second question, concerning separation. Some participants in the Conference had wished to offer the people a choice between the main-

tenance of trusteeship under United Kingdom administration and reunification with the Cameroons under French administration. The KNC/KPP Alliance, which considered that the maintenance of trusteeship was incompatible with the idea of independence for the Southern Cameroons, had not wished to allow that possibility even to be considered. It believed that the objectives of the United Nations Charter could only be attained if the Southern Cameroons achieved self-government as a Region of Nigeria and independence with the rest of the Federation, or if it achieved independence with the Cameroons under French administration. The choice offered in the plebiscite should be limited to those possibilities.

33. Mr. RAHNEMA (Iran) said that, according to Mr. Mbile, the choice for the Southern Cameroons should be based on the benefits which the Territory might hope to derive from one or another solution. Mr. Mbile had emphasized that the Southern Cameroons derived economic benefits amounting to at least £500,000 a year from its relationship with Nigeria, and seemed to think that only Nigeria could give the Territory disinterested assistance. If the Southern Cameroons were assured of similar assistance from an independent Republic of the Cameroons, would the petitioner oppose a union with it?

34. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that he based his opinion on the actual situation. The Southern Cameroons had been administered by the United Kingdom for forty years in a union with Nigeria. That system had produced remarkable and lasting results. There were hundreds of schools and several colleges in the Territory, and English was spoken practically everywhere. Reunification with the Cameroons now under French administration might be just as advantageous, but it was better not to exchange a real advantage for a hypothetical one, especially as reunification with the Cameroons under French administration could not fail to create numerous and complex problems. To give only one example, the Cameroons under French administration was linked with the French Community and an independent Republic of the Cameroons might wish to maintain that link, whereas the Southern Cameroons might wish to remain in the Commonwealth.

35. There was no fundamental reason, ethnic or economic, for union with the Cameroons under French administration; the only thing which the two Territories had in common was that they had together constituted a German colony for twenty-eight years. The union with Nigeria had existed for forty years, and had left a much deeper mark. The Southern Cameroons was not made up of a single tribe or a single race: it included many ethnic groups, each with its own interests and views, and there were as many tribes having affinities with the inhabitants of Nigeria as there were tribes linked with those of the Cameroons under French administration. The frontier of 1885 had been as artificial as that of 1919: in both cases certain tribes had found themselves divided by the boundary. Political considerations should therefore be set aside, and a formula sought which would best guarantee the stability, progress and prosperity of the Territory; that was the only criterion on which the KNC/KPP Alliance based its choice.

36. Mr. RAHNEMA (Iran) asked whether, in view of Mr. Foncha's victory in the last elections, Mr. Mbile's opinions could be regarded as representative of a broad section of the population.

^{1/}See T/1426 and Add.1, annex II, A.

37. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that two main factors had accounted for Mr. Foncha's electoral victory. Firstly, there was a group of people in the Territory who were convinced that a change in its political status would enable all its social difficulties to be resolved. Secondly, many tribal chiefs who thought that Mr. Endeley and himself had usurped their powers had supported Mr. Foncha. The influence of the Chiefs' Conference had proved to be very powerful, especially in Bamenda, where the KNC/KPP Alliance had obtained only one seat out of six at the last parliamentary elections.

38. He was convinced that the supporters of separation knew in their hearts that the Southern Cameroons would be taking a leap in the dark if it left Nigeria. Mr. Foncha himself had ceased to advocate that solution, and now contemplated the maintenance of trusteeship—which showed that he was beginning to realize the difficulties with which he would be faced with if his standpoint prevailed.

39. Mr. VEISTRUP (Denmark) noted that the petitioner, in his letter to the Secretary-General, had stated his readiness to accept a solution which would allow each tribe or division to choose freely the country that it wished to join—Nigeria or the Cameroons now under French administration. Were the tribal areas delimited clearly enough for such a solution to be possible?

40. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) explained that he had suggested the solution in question only as a final compromise, if no other solution could be agreed upon.

41. Mr. LORINC (Hungary) asked the petitioner to explain the meaning of the statement, in his letter to the Secretary-General, that the surest means of creating a problem between Nigeria and the Cameroons now under French administration would be to make the Southern Cameroons a separate country. In particular, he wished to know how the presence of the United Kingdom would create additional complications.

42. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that there were at present in the Southern Cameroons about 50,000 Nigerians and 40,000 native-born French Cameroonians. In the event of the Southern Cameroons being detached from Nigeria and remaining under United Kingdom trusteeship, those Nigerians and Cameroonians would remain in the Trust Territory; but they would then be nationals of countries which had attained independence, viz. Nigeria and the former Cameroons under French administration, and they would not fail to demand the corresponding rights, which would inevitably create difficulties. Moreover, because of the establishment of an international frontier between Nigeria and the Southern Cameroons, the Nigerians residing in the Trust Territory would no longer be able to travel freely to Nigeria—a situation which might well create frontier incidents.

43. Mr. LORINC (Hungary) then asked whether Mr. Mbile believed in the existence of a Cameroonian nation and, if so, whether the population of the Southern Cameroons should be regarded as belonging to that nation.

44. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) replied in the negative. He attached no importance to the word "Cameroonian", which was, in any case, of foreign origin. In his view, the important requirement was to create strong African nations which would be independent in more than name.

45. Mr. Itaat HUSAIN (Pakistan) observed that Mr. Mbile had expressed doubts as to the value of the

outcome of a plebiscite and was contemplating a solution whereby each tribe could choose which country it wished to join. In those circumstances, what method would the petitioner advocate with a view to discovering the wishes of the population?

46. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) explained that he had contemplated a vote by tribes only as a last resort. There was much more dissension between the tribes concerning the future of the territory than was supposed. Some tribes knew that they had everything to lose by a separation between Nigeria and the Southern Cameroons; others thought that they would gain by it. As for the plebiscite envisaged, he did not think that it could produce satisfactory results in existing circumstances. The political atmosphere resulting from the last elections was at present such that the results of a plebiscite would inevitably be vitiated by partisan considerations. If the date of the plebiscite could not be postponed in order to allow feelings to subside, it would be better to hold a plebiscite on a tribal or divisional basis, so as to avoid a feeling on the part of certain groups of the population that a solution was being imposed upon them by other groups. Such a feeling, if allowed to arise, would involve grave dangers for the Territory's future.

47. Mr. EDMONDS (New Zealand) observed that Mr. Mbile did not favour the organization of a plebiscite forthwith; but that, if a plebiscite were held, he considered that the population should be called upon to choose between attachment to Nigeria and union with the former Cameroons under French administration. He asked what the basis of a reunification with the latter Territory would be and whether that could not, in Mr. Mbile's view, more advantageously be negotiated while the opinion of association with Nigeria was still open.

48. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that his party did not support union with the Cameroons under French administration, and that he himself could not see what advantages such a union might bring. If he had spoken of that solution in connexion with the plebiscite, it was because such a solution was in line with the wishes of a section of opinion in the Southern Cameroons and because, in any case, he considered it preferable to a continuation of trusteeship.

49. Mr. EDMONDS (New Zealand) asked whether, given the differences of opinion between the parties as to the qualifications which should be laid down for participation in the plebiscite, Mr. Mbile did not envisage the possibility of a compromise which would enable one set of qualifications to be applied equally to all the inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons.

50. Mr. MBILE (Kamerun People's Party) said that, particularly in the case of Nigerians living in the Southern Cameroons and claiming to have been born there, the adoption of the compromise formulae which had been considered would, in his opinion, provoke innumerable disputes which would jeopardize the preparation of the plebiscite. It therefore seemed preferable to adhere to the existing electoral provisions, which had never been contested. However, if it nevertheless became necessary to reach a compromise, it was his opinion that, in view of the plebiscite's importance, it would be better to broaden rather than restrict the qualifications entitling inhabitants of the Southern Cameroons to take part in it.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.