

Preludes to Violence

*A Comparative Look at the
Pre-Maquis Period and Contemporary
Cameroonian Society*

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ABSTRACT

The Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) changed roles from a peaceful political organization to an underground militant one in late April of 1955. This study examines the reasons for which this revolution occurred, attempting to find modern parallels, with the goal of discerning the possibility of a future revolution in Cameroon. Extensive primary sources from the period were consulted, in addition to interviews with historians and sociologists for historical background, while periodicals, official studies, political scientists and economists were consulted for contemporary issues. Several individuals who were alive during the *Maquis* period were also interviewed. The study found that while there are striking similarities between the present and the past, the causal conditions of the *Maquis* were initially nationalistic and philosophical, while revolutions in contemporary Cameroon would most likely be born from socio-economic frustration. Project limitations were time, travel limitations, and the population of sampling. Future studies in Douala, Mungo, and Sanaga Maritime are suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

When peaceful revolution becomes impossible, violent revolution becomes inevitable.

-John F. Kennedy

Revolution is never a boring subject. It has led to the birth of many nations as they exist today, and the death of some of the greatest leaders and tyrants in history. It continues to shape the world today, for better or for worse. In Walter Lefebvre's work, Inevitable Revolutions¹, the author uses the above quote as a paradigm for understanding the United States' involvement in Central America, and how the lack of peaceful alternatives in these countries often led to violent manifestations and civil war. Fraudulent elections, economic malaise, societal oppression and the failure of democratic institutions all seem to lead to a historical inevitability, both understandable and predictable.

And yet, revolution is often treated solely as a thing of the history books. All revolutions seem inevitable, because the author already knows that they will occur. For the people who live them, however, the possibility of a future revolution is something yet more difficult to predict, although infinitely more useful.

The events leading to banning of the UPC party in Cameroon, a previously non-violent political entity, were undoubtedly the most salient causes of the period of violent revolution that followed. These manifestations, collectively known as the *Maquis*, began in Douala and ravaged their way through the Cameroonian countryside, leaving many injured, without homes, or dead. Although the political climate of colonial Cameroon was the primary cause of this revolution, the severity of response cannot be solely attributed to the dissolution of one political party. The conditions motivating this response were unquestionably more intricate, facilitated by the social and economic realities of the period.

¹ Lefebvre, Walter, Inevitable Revolutions. United States of America: W. W. Norton & Company. 1993.

When studying this period, I could not help but notice many parallels with modern-day Cameroon. During the period directly preceding the *Maquis*, there were fraudulent elections, economic difficulties that resulted in, among other things, great unemployment, and manifestations of frustration in the form of strikes and demonstrations. One need not look far to see corresponding conditions today. Through my research, I wanted to understand the roles these conditions played in instigating the *Maquis*, and in so doing, understand if the conditions today are benignly similar, or if they are portents for a revolution to come.

Previous Research

Previous ISPs – To my knowledge there have been four Independent Study Projects concerning the *Maquis* prior to my own. The first project was completed in the fall of 1998 by Elizabeth McMahon and was entitled, “*Maquis* Motivations in the Dschang Subdivision”². The project considered the motivations of members of the *Maquis* from the Bamileke region of Cameroon, as well as the personal experiences of people affected by the events, particularly those from the Fonakeukeu Chefferie. The project also included relevant background information on the Bamileke *Maquisards*, and concluded that “though the *Maquis* was a movement born out of the UPC Party, it evolved independently”³.

The second project, “Mystery in Memories...”⁴ by Harmony O’Rourke (Fall 1999), dealt specifically with the Tombel Massacre of 1966, a conflict between Bakossi and Bamileke peoples. The project focused on personal accounts of the event, and attempted to piece together a coherent history of the event from both Bakossi and Bamileke accounts. The project encountered many contradictions between these accounts, but nevertheless provided vivid descriptions of the event.

² McMahon, Elizabeth, “*Maquis* Motivations in the Dschang Subdivision.” Fall 1998.

³ Ibid, p 21

⁴ O’Rourke, Harmony, “Mystery in Memories: The Tombel Massacre of 1996.” Fall 2000.

“The *Maquis* Rebellion..”⁵ was a project completed in the fall of 2000, by Anne Detwiler, and takes a broad look at the twenty-year period encompassing the formation of the UPC, and the *Maquis*. The project was heavily centered around personal accounts, but with the goal of understanding the entire period, rather than a specific event.

The most recent work specifically on the *Maquis* period was completed by Mary Graham in the fall of 2003 and is entitled “Living History...”⁶ The project deals specifically with a group of Bamileke men who fought against the *Maquis* called “The Civic Guard.” Much like O’Rourke’s work, the project focuses on the personal accounts of those involved, and tries to capture the sense of fear and confusion that accompanied these events.

Along with these four projects, I found two other projects helpful to my research, both completed in the fall of 2005. The first, “Remember Ruben?...”⁷ by Katelyn Knox, explored the current perceptions of important figures (notably Ruben Um Nyobe) as nationalists, and provided helpful background information on these figures. The other project, “Being Anglophone...”⁸ by Maggie Fick, (a fellow Pomona student) dealt specifically with the Anglophone issue in Cameroon, particularly in Bamenda, but provided me with helpful recent documents regarding election results and other current issues relating to Cameroonian political dissatisfaction.

In addition to the information provided here concerning previous ISPs, I have attached a list of sources that have been used in the aforementioned projects, along with some of my own recommendations (See Appendix E). I was not able to use all of these sources (as is evident in the bibliography). My hope is that students who do research in the future on the

⁵ Detwiler, Anne, “The *Macquis* Rebellion 1950-1970 (with a focus on Batsing’la).” Fall 2000.

⁶ Graham, Molly, “Living History: the History of the *Macquis* rebellion in Dschang through the eyes of the men of the Civic Guard.” Spring 2003.

⁷ Katelyn Knox, “Remember Ruben? L’histoire de Ruben Um Nyobe à travers la société camerounaise.” Fall 2005.

⁸ Fick, Maggie, “Being Anglophone, Feeling Cameroonian: The resurfacing of Anglophone identity and the question of national unity in Cameroon.” Fall 2005.

subject of the *Maquis* will be able to use this list of sources as a diving board, as one of my greatest difficulties with the project initially was knowing where to begin.

Other Research – Richard Joseph’s work, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun⁹ was of great use to me, and provides extensive information on “the historical, socio-economic, and political factors which contributed to the emergence of a violent confrontation in Cameroon between the government and the nationalist party”¹⁰. Gregoire Momo’s Terrorism en pays Bamileke...¹¹ is less exhaustive, but provides pertinent information on Bamileke struggles, particularly involving the *chefferie* system in the Bamileke region of Cameroon. Achille Mbembe’s The Maquis Rebellion 1920-1960¹², was also an extensive account of decolonization, but more specifically on the intellectual foundations of the Maquis, and his introduction to Ruben Um Nyobe’s Ecrits sous les Maquis¹³ was also very helpful in understanding UPC objectives during the *Maquis* period. Jean-Claude Tchouankap is in the process of defending a doctoral thesis on the formation of Cameroon and the UPC, but it has yet to be published at the time of writing.

Research Objectives

In contrast to previous research, my project does not seek to narrate personal experiences with the *Maquis*, nor does it seek to better clarify events that occurred in the past. The project is intended to use the events of the past as a template for the future, and ask the question: *could something like this happen again?* My goal is not to better understand the events themselves, but rather to understand what historical, political, and social conditions were paramount in creating them.

⁹ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986.

¹⁰ *Ibid* p345

¹¹ Momo, Gregoire Informations sur le Terrorisme en Pays Bamileke : ses causes et effets. 1986.

¹² Mbembe, J. Achille, La naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun : 1920-1960. Paris : Karthala Press. 1996.

¹³ Um Nyobe, Ruben, Ecrits sous Maquis. (Notes et introduction de J.A. Mbembe) Paris : L’Harmattan Press. 1989.

I knew that with my time constraints, I would only be able to study a limited period of Cameroonian history with any kind of depth. For this reason, I chose the period following World War II and ending with the events of April 22, 1955, which marked the beginning of the *Maquis* movement. In a similar vein, the contemporary issues I studied were likewise limited. As a result, I focused on issues of democracy and human rights, socio-economic conditions, and recent manifestations in the form of strikes and demonstrations.

Location of Study

Dschang – The decision to stay at Dschang was ultimately the result of two factors; access to resources and familiarity. In addition to the resources available to me through the SIT office, I also had the benefit of many University professors from the University of Dschang. Also, contacts I had made during the pre-ISP period of the program regarding the project were a major factor. Finally, the familiarity of informants with SIT students and my own familiarity with the area helped facilitate my interactions, and were strong factors in my decision to stay in Dschang.

Having said that, I still encountered many difficulties that resulted specifically from this decision. While the *Maquis* began in 1955 and quickly spread from Douala north to the West Province, the period in which they were most intense in Bamileke territory (like Dschang and its periphery) was well after the rebellion had begun (between 1958 and 1962). As a result, the information I received from personal accounts concerning this period was fascinating, but not very pertinent to my research. For an ISP that explores this very subject, I suggest Elizabeth McMahon's project, "*Maquis* motivations in the Dschang subdivision"¹⁴.

Definition of Terms

Although most of my terminology should be accessible to a general audience, I realize there are some terms that may be unclear.

¹⁴ Citation in text

Revolution – “a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system”¹⁵. Unless otherwise qualified, “revolution” in this paper refers to specifically violent revolution.

Maquis – A term given by the French to the violent nationalist movement beginning in 1955.

The word literally refers to the dense, bushy forest, in which the *Maquisards* would hide.

Maquis movement and *Maquis* period will be used interchangeably with *Maquis*.

Maquisards – The revolutionaries who performed the *Maquis*. “*Maquis* members” will also be used to refer to the *Maquisards*

Chefferie system – a traditional system of governance particularly strong in the Bamileke region of Cameroon. The head of a *chefferie* may be called a *chef*, a *fon*, or a sultan.

METHODOLOGY

Limitations

Transportation – Transportation was a major issue during my stay at Dschang. Although moto-taxis are nearly ubiquitous, the School of International Training forbids their use due to issues of safety and liability. As a result, it was not uncommon for me, in a day, to walk for more than 4 hours in order to meet my various appointments and access information. My home-stay house alone was an hour away from the SIT office (and the town), meaning a minimum 2-hour walk each day.

Power Outages – Power outages also provided a major obstacle to my research. In Dschang, power outages are very common, and difficult to ignore after sunset. In addition to delays encountered while trying to type the report on a computer, power outages often made work impossible after 6:00 p.m. Every night of my stay in Dschang there was a power outage, lasting from as short as a few seconds, to as long as 4 hours or more.

¹⁵ Compact Oxford English Dictionary, Definition: “Revolution”

Personal Health – For the third time during my time in Dschang, I became ill and had trouble working for about five days of the research period. I was able to make up the interviews I had missed, but for a project that only lasts 25 days total, I consider this a significant limitation.

Language – In addition to the physical aspects of working in Dschang, communication was sometimes inhibited by my ability to speak and understand French. Although these skills have progressed significantly over the course of the program, complicated questions, or questions requiring subtlety and finesse were extremely difficult for me to express, and sometimes left my subjects baffled. My ability to read French is also inhibited by my 2 years of experience, and so reading historical documents and literature in French often required much time, patience, and thumbing through my French-English Dictionary.

Area/Population of Sampling – While Dschang provided me with considerable access to resources and a rich intellectual community, my pool of subjects all live in the West province and the vast majority are middle-aged males. As a result, there are regional and gender-biases to my paper. In addition, the majority of my informants were PhD's, many of whom had previous experience working with American college students. This gives my paper an intellectual bias as well, but I must acknowledge that this is, to some extent, unavoidable.

Cameroonian's perception of me – In addition to my choice of informants, my personal identity undoubtedly affected my research as well. As a white, American male, some Cameroonians were very willing to help me, while others (most notably the *Maquisards*, themselves, whose rebellion was initially against white Frenchmen) were less willing to aid my research, or had difficulty trusting me with sensitive information. This bias was completely unavoidable, but hopefully moderated to an extent by cultural sensitivity and my connections with Cameroonians.

Data Collecting Techniques

The vast majority of my data came from four categories of sources – personal interviews, historical texts, periodicals, and official studies carried out by various reputable institutions.

Interviews – With the exception of my interviews with people who had lived through the period of the *Maquis*, I had no set of questions to ask each informant. Depending on their specialty, I would ask different questions, and usually allowed the informant to explore ideas as long as they didn't diverge too far from my research project. I taped the vast majority of my interviews, and revisited each taped interview in order to check the accuracy of my notes, and to write down relevant quotes and information that I may have missed during. Information from interviews was used both for the historical and for the contemporary sections of the paper.

Historical Documents – Much of my more specific historical information came from primary and secondary sources from the period. I did not use what I would consider history textbooks, as I believed their information to be incredibly filtered, and not worth reading other than for general background information on the period.

Journals and Periodicals – In addition to interviews, my knowledge of current events, particularly those listed under the “manifestations” section of the results, was derived from periodicals from the Post (Buea), the Cameroon Tribune (Yaounde), and BBC News (England). I generally consulted multiple articles on each topic, with the hope of eliminating some of the political bias of each newspaper.

Observations – The final source of information provided me much more with anecdotal information than what I would call “scholarly” information. Living in Dschang, the role of the informal sector and the effects of unemployment are inescapable. While there are

no significant portions of this report based solely on my observations, I will nevertheless admit their personal effect on the writing of this paper.

Project Evolution

Although I was able to determine rather early in the program that I wanted to do a project on the *Maquis* and revolution, the focus of the project has changed significantly. Originally, I had the intention of investigating a UPC incident in the West Province (in Dschang, or in Bafoussam) and comparing the conditions that produced that incident with modern day Cameroon. However, after becoming more familiar with the history of the *Maquis*, I realized that the most intense *Maquis* activity in the West province was between 1958 and 1962, well after the revolution had already begun. Because I wanted to parallel modern conditions with the past, studying a period in which the revolution had already begun would not provide me with an appropriate comparison. To draw any parallels, I would have to look at the conditions directly prior to the commencement of the *Maquis* period, and compare those conditions and causes to contemporary Cameroon.

RESULTS

“To aspire to last, and above all, to attain a legitimacy which limits the systematic recourse to violence [...] the power of the state must make itself capable of integrating its approaches to serious proceedings [...] by which groups and communities reinvent themselves, without losing their identities in the course of history”¹⁶.

Revolutions do not occur without cause. They are often a response by a frustrated population to economic difficulty or social oppression. Although some of these difficulties are historically inevitable, the quality of democratic institutions to address the concerns of their people is a major factor in determining whether these frustrations manifest themselves in cooperative solutions or violent demonstrations.

¹⁶ Um Nyobe, Ruben, *Ecrits sous Maquis*. (Notes et introduction de J.A. Mbembe) Paris : L’Harmattan Press. 1989. 37-38.

But simply having democratic institutions does not guarantee their legitimacy. Supposedly democratic societies can be, in reality, plutocratic, leading to government by a distinct and disinterested elite¹⁷. The interests of the masses, without a peaceful means of expression, will manifest in destructive behavior. In the words of Dr. Mathias Atsatito, a sociologist with the University of Dschang, “In a society that is closed, in a society that is not democratic [...] when people are poorly treated and don’t have a means to change things other than by a movement of mass [...] the movement is more numerous than in an open society”¹⁸. If institutions repress the possibility of democratic change, violent change is often the only remaining recourse.

Yesterday’s Revolution

In order to understand the events leading to the naissance of the *Maquis* movement in 1955, one has to consider the social and political difficulties created by colonization. The effects of European colonization had touched “not only [...] the physical space in which the native had evolved [...] (but) all the way to the very foundations of his imagination”¹⁹. Under the French system of the *indigénat*, Cameroonians were subject to forced labor on European-owned plantations. Due to the repulsive working conditions on white plantations, the French had discovered “that the only manner to perpetuate the white colonization in Cameroon would be to resort to forced labor”²⁰. While this system was banned shortly after the end of World War II, “the after-war reforms (abolition of the *indigénat*, union liberalization, formation of political parties) were, in effect, to accentuate the divide (between Europeans and

¹⁷ Nodem, Jean-Emet, PhD. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007.

¹⁸ Atsatito, Mathias, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

¹⁹ Mbembe, J. Achille, *La naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun : 1920-1960*. Paris : Karthala Press. 1996, 9.

²⁰ Joseph, Richard, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 139-140.

Cameroonians) and to crystallize the excited conflicts, for the most part, between the two wars”²¹.

The Birth of Nationalism and the UPC

Cameroonians had served in the French army during the Second World War, and “this participation of Africans and Asians in the War contributed to the birth of Nationalism after the war”²². The idea of fighting for personal rights and liberties that had motivated allied efforts against the fascist regimes could equally be applied to oppressive colonial regimes. Returning soldiers, “when they were in France during the War, fought for the liberty of people. When they returned, they found that the condition of their own people was the same (as it had been)”²³. In addition to the surrender of the French forces to Germany after less than one year of combat, returning soldiers had witnessed and participated the killing of Europeans. The reality of France’s vulnerability helped dispel illusions concerning the invincibility of their colonizers, and opened the door to new forms of resistance and confrontation.

This phenomenon was not limited to Cameroon; the war helped spur the nationalist movement all over the world. The strength of nationalism was that “it was an ideology capable of uniting an oppressed people, of drawing them together in an opposition to their common enemy, the imperialist oppressor”²⁴. Parties such as the RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) united the continent in the goals of independence and democracy. Born from this organization was the United Peoples of Cameroon party, or UPC. Although there had existed nationalist movements before the UPC in Cameroon, “what distinguished (the UPC) from its precursors of the proto-nationalist time is the fact that it transcended the

²¹ Mbembe, J. Achille, *La naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun* : 1920-1960. Paris : Karthala Press. 1996, 19.

²² Joseph, Richard, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 66.

²³ Punde, René. Personal Interview. 19 Nov. 2007.

²⁴ Isbister, John. *Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World*. 4th Ed., 106.

horizon of local politics”²⁵. In the party, “all the Cameroonian social classes were represented, [...] politicians, businessmen, government workers, peasants and manual workers, and ‘intellectuals’ of all levels”²⁶. By appealing to the philosophical ideals of human liberty and independence, “the UPC was attacking the intellectual postulates upon which the colonial project had founded its legitimacy and had obtained the submission of the natives”²⁷.

The State of Democracy

In addition to new political parties, new power structures were emerging in Cameroon. “There was a kind of generational conflict, a social revolution which was put in place by the colonial administration which had reversed the habitual aristocracy”²⁸. These new avenues of power – money, education, and foreign government, created a new class ready to embrace self-rule and democracy. Nevertheless discriminatory legislation that favored colonizers and the colonial structure systematically excluded Cameroonians from self-government, and limited their opportunities for advancement (See Appendix B).

In response to this new generation, the French created elections to choose the deputies for the French Constituent Assembly in 1945²⁹. Despite the semblance of democracy represented by the elections, “it was impossible for a candidate of the UPC to win, in reality, in an election during the colonial period after the war, for the simple reason that the French would not tolerate it”³⁰. The only Cameroonians elected “represented regions, often tribes or races, but there were not representatives of parties”³¹.

²⁵ Um Nyobe, Ruben, Ecrits sous Maquis. (Notes et introduction de J.A. Mbembe) Paris : L’Harmattan Press. 1989., 18

²⁶ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 255

²⁷ Mbembe, J. Achille, La naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroon : 1920-1960. Paris : Karthala Press. 1996, 20

²⁸ Dr Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

²⁹ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 194

³⁰ *ibid*, 196

³¹ UNTC, 2nd Session, 447th reunion, July 16, 1952, p.2 (from Joseph 198)

In 1951, Ruben Um Nyobe, the secretary general of UPC, ran for a position in this assembly. Despite his position and his party's popularity among diverse Cameroonian peoples (particularly strong in Douala, where he campaigned), Um was denied his position.

The Colonial Economy

In addition to the political difficulties of the period, Cameroonians also faced economic hardship. Under the colonial regime "all the agriculture was destined and produced for exportation [...]. farmers were nearly obligated to produce export or 'cash crops' like coffee, cocoa, and bananas"³². Under the guise of developing Cameroon, "an important accent was placed on the extension, the commercialization (of the export industry)," but in Cameroon as a whole "there was not a transformation"³³. Cameroon remained "an agrarian society with the rural people subordinated by requisitions, taxes, and diverse chores"³⁴.

This export economy was dependent upon rural production, and was greatly affected during the first five months of 1955, when "an economic malaise installed itself in all of Southern Cameroon"³⁵. Particularly affected were those in Douala, as problems in Douala were, "therefore, in part, issued from the rural malaise transferred to the city"³⁶. Heavily impacted by unemployment, "there was the development of an under-proletariat, essentially composed of immigrants who, without power to find work in the city, continued nevertheless to reside there." This "under-proletariat" would play an important role in the coming months as tensions with the French government began to rise³⁷.

Struggles resulting from this export economy were not isolated to the urban Bassa territories in littoral Cameroon, however. In the Bamileke region of the country, struggles with traditional and colonial power structures likewise bred conflict. "There was, between the

³² Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Mbembe, J. Achille, La naissance du Maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun : 1920-1960. Paris : Karthala Press. 1996, 28.

³⁵ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 264.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

leaders – the chefs and his notables, a fracture between these leaders and the population”³⁸, in the sense that “*Chefs* [...] and the government workers constituted a caste”³⁹. This relationship was necessary to ensure colonial dominance, and exploited the existing structure of *chefferies* in the West of Cameroon, as well as the *lamibés* in the North⁴⁰.

Political Factors

According to the rules of the *chefferie* system, the *chef* had the right to distribute land – not for personal reasons, but so that the members of community could live on the land⁴¹. However, many *chefs* “transformed the rules of normal (community) functioning to their selfish advantage” and “profited from their position by separating the land. [...] Like personal property, [...] they took community land to have their own coffee plantations”⁴². It must be noted, however, that not all *chefs* participated in such exploitation. “There were also some *chefs* who [...] officially affirmed their opposition to the colonial power”⁴³. As a result of their resistance, these *chefs* were exiled, banned from their property, or killed.

The Catholic Church also played a strong role in discouraging the UPC and affirming the current political structure. While the administration attempted to combat the UPC by appeasing malcontented workers, “the Catholic hierarchy ran a parallel campaign to encourage their faithful to separate themselves completely from the UPC”⁴⁴. In addition to the creation of an opposition party, the Bloc Démocratique du Cameroun (BDC), the Church issued several pastoral letters condemning the UPC movement, as found below:

We place Christians on guard against the current tendencies of the political party known under the name “Union of Cameroonian Peoples” (UPC) not for the cause of independence which they defend, but the spirit which animates it and that inspires their methods⁴⁵.

³⁸ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

³⁹ Momo, Gregoire, Informations sur le Terrorisme en pays Bamiléké : ses causes et effets. Oct. 1986., 5.

⁴⁰ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 196.

⁴¹ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 271.

⁴⁵ Pastoral Letter, reproduced by Information Service, Haut-Commissariat, n 91, April 30, 1955 (from Joseph, 273)

This “spirit” was communism, as the UPC was considered a Marxist-Leninist movement, and thus, inherently against the Church and religion. Although independence from the French Administration, and not necessarily the Catholic Church, was the target of the UPC movement, its characterization as a socialist movement is nevertheless accurate. The UPC was a member of the aforementioned RDA, which was affiliated with the French Socialist Party. Although the RDA would eventually distance itself from the Socialist Party, the UPC, nevertheless, remained a member organization. This association “reinforced the mistrust of the administration against the UPC and drove it to a hostility declared against the party”⁴⁶.

1955, and the Naissance of the Maquis

Despite France’s claim that the creation of infrastructure was for the benefit of Cameroonians and their development, the majority of investment in the nation was purely for economic exploitation. Public investments by the French were criticized by radicals, and private investments, for their European ownership, were criticized by elites and moderates⁴⁷. “The biggest part of their investments in infrastructure were not created to give Cameroon viable economic unity, but to construct installations serving to export raw materials and import industrial products”⁴⁸. One such example of this investment was the Bridge of Wouri, inaugurated in May 1955.

The bridge, in Douala, marked a major accomplishment in the development of Cameroon’s “fertile crescent” region, which consisted of “two curving points being; one, the region Yaounde to the east, and the other, the mountainous zone of the Bamileke country, (ending) at Foumban. The center of the crescent is Douala, and the two branches are

⁴⁶ Joseph, Richard, Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 187.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 132

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 126

separated by the river Wouri”⁴⁹. The motivation for the completion of the bridge can thus be seen as primarily economic, but it also allowed for greater mobilization of the French military, which was based in Douala.

Due to the rising popularity of the UPC nationalist movement, the French Administration began to take more aggressive measures to combat the organization. On February 19, 1955, administrators were given the right to use force to disperse UPC reunions⁵⁰. On May 20, 1955, the French Administration began monitoring all mail leaving the country⁵¹. With the recent completion of the bridge at Wouri, the French quickly began mobilizing against UPC regions in Douala and across the bridge to the Mungo region. In spite of the forces’ superior resources, their efforts were nevertheless met with substantial resistance:

During the afternoon of May 25, 1955 at Douala, two trucks of soldiers disembarked to the market; they shoved men and women, yelling that they were going to demolish the UPC’s national movement office. In that year, the African population [...] grouped itself around the headquarters of the UPC. The people did not want to see the colonialists destroy the building constructed by their very hands for the nationalist movement⁵².

Despite the UPC’s desire to maintain its identity as a non-violent political organization, the mobilization of French forces made this increasingly difficult. Violent manifestations began to break out all over Cameroon’s “fertile crescent” (See Appendix D). Although there was no official connection between many of these events and the UPC, the organization was blamed, nevertheless, by the administration and banned July 13, 1955⁵³. As a result, “the party found itself the more and more confronted not by the question of resisting

⁴⁹ *Climats*, number 2, July 1952, p 17 (from Joseph, 122)

⁵⁰ Joseph, Richard, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 190.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 292.

⁵² Momo, Gregoire, *Informations sur le Terrorisme en pays Bamiléké* : ses causes et effets. Oct. 1986, 11.

⁵³ Joseph, Richard, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*. Paris: Karthala Press. 1986, 296.

or not resisting the provocation, but rather by the choice between inexistence or battling to survive”⁵⁴.

Although they had lost their political avenue, the UPC nevertheless intended to retain its identity as a nationalist movement. Ruben Um Nyobe, the party’s secretary general, expressed this sentiment shortly after the party’s banning:

In despite of the repression and of the corruption, the UPC affirms and imposes itself as the sole dignified, national movement of this name in all Kamerun. So it’s the French government, after the setback in their tentative smothering of the Cameroonian problem before the United Nations, resolved to liquidate the Cameroonian nationalism by force, fomenting and driving the massacres of May 1955, and in banning, arbitrarily, the three popular movements⁵⁵.

And thus, the beginning of the *Maquis* movement was the immediate result of the interdiction of the UPC party, and the necessity of taking the organization underground to continue the fight. Violence became the sole means of continuing an ideological battle of anti-colonial nationalism.

Later Maquis Movements

If independence was the goal of the UPC’s *Maquis* movement, why then did these violent manifestations continue even after independence? Initially, “the formula was simple: we had to chase away the whites⁵⁶, so that the country returns to the population, to the blacks”⁵⁷. But after independence, the movement nevertheless continued. In the words of Pierre Sekoufack, “we have our prefects, who were black like us [...] magistrates, tribunals – we are free. We had independence in 1960, what are you still doing⁵⁸?”

For some who continued the movement, it was an issue of complete political and economic emancipation from France. “Nationalists [...] fought for total independence of

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Um Nyobe, Ruben. (from Joseph, 288)

⁵⁶ Whites during this period referred not only to European colonialists, but also to Cameroonians who associated with them – “it sufficed to be the cook of a white person...” according to Dr. Saha

⁵⁷ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

⁵⁸ Sekoufack, Pierre Madou. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007. Pierre Sekoufack worked with anti-*Maquis* forces in the Bamileke territory in the period immediately preceding and after independence.

Cameroon. France wanted to continue colonization in a different form”⁵⁹. This trend was not isolated to Cameroon, in fact “when the territories became independent in 1960, all but one, Guinea, chose to remain associated with their former colonialists, hoping to benefit from French aid and technology while becoming an equal member in the community of nations”⁶⁰. Many of the *Maquisards* who continued to fight after independence saw this new regime as a perpetuation of the old, and believed that only through severing all contacts with the former colonizer could the country ever succeed.

In addition to more subtle political motivations, there were personal motivations as well, particularly prominent in the Bamileke *Maquis* between 1958, and as late as 1970. Much of my research of this period revealed that the motivations for *Maquis* members were of a distinctly different character from the early nationalist movement, and often included personal ambition or petty revenge. Informants who had lived during that period did not even associate the UPC with the *Maquis* movement. According to René Tazo, who worked in the forestry service during the period, “when we talk about the UPC, it’s a revolutionary party. When we talk about the *Maquis* [...] they weren’t political – you could call them murderers”⁶¹. As a result, this movement, though technically associated with the *Maquis* of the UPC, is better characterized as a later, terrorist movement, and will not be further investigated in this paper.

Cameroon Today

Despite nearly fifty years of independence, Cameroon still has many of the same problems it faced before. “Independence was a precondition of economic prosperity, because it removed the imperialists from direct authority over the third world. By itself, however, it could not lead to significant economic improvement, since it changed none of the conditions

⁵⁹ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interviews. 15 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

⁶⁰ Isbister, John. *Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World*. 4th Ed., 142.

⁶¹ Tazo, René. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007.

that created the poverty”⁶². As a result, Cameroonians continue to face impediments to genuine democracy, economic hardship, and the violation of their personal liberties.

Democracy in Cameroon

Democracy in Cameroon is of a dualistic nature. In principle, there is universal suffrage for persons of twenty years of age and above, multiple political parties are allowed to exist, and there is a constitution that embodies the ideals of human liberty and democracy. Although democratic procedures and conditions are well defined, “it’s in the practice that one finds fault”⁶³.

The Cameroonian Constitution states: “The vote shall be equal and secret, and every citizen aged twenty years and above shall be entitled to vote”⁶⁴. By this statute, during the 2004 presidential election, approximately half of Cameroon’s population of 18,060,382 (CIA WFB) was of voting age and eligibility⁶⁵. Despite this fact, there were only 3,830,272 votes cast. This abstinence can be attributed to many factors, some of which include the boycotting of the election by several parties, and religions in Cameroon whose principle beliefs prevent them from voting⁶⁶.

What perhaps is even more dramatic is the voting participation among Cameroonian youths. According to Thomas Fomekong, who was in charge of a voting office during the 2007 legislative elections, “nobody voted who wasn’t at least 25 years old [...] the youth does not interest itself in politics, or even in elections”⁶⁷. Although there are numerous causes in Cameroon that contribute to low voting attendance, the overwhelming reality is that many

⁶² Isbister, John. Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World. 4th Ed., 162.

⁶³ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007.

⁶⁴ Cameroonian Constitution, 1996

⁶⁵ CIA World Factbook

⁶⁶ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007. Mr. Fomekong gave the example of Jehovah’s witnesses in Cameroon who are prohibited, by their religion, to vote.

⁶⁷ Citation in text

people don't believe that the institutions are truly democratic. Even though "Cameroonians are interested in politics, they just don't think it will change things"⁶⁸.

Some attribute this pessimism to a kind of fatalism. "People aren't interested in elections because they think that the results are known in advance [...] the administration does what it needs to do, so that the party in power wins"⁶⁹. The 2007 legislative elections for the general assembly would seem to support this conclusion. Despite the many opposition parties in Cameroon, only 23 seats were awarded to the opposition, while the RDPC (Assembly of the Democratic Peoples of Cameroon), the majority party, was awarded 140. In addition to these statistics, 17 seats were left vacant due to "electoral fraud"^{70 71}. Although, in principle, this would seem to correct electoral flaws, the contested claims are rarely in regions that support the majority party, and generally occur in hotbeds of the opposition⁷².

In addition to fatalism on the part of Cameroonians, there are blatant acts of fraud as well. According to an article in the Post (Buea), "even those who fight to have their names printed in the electoral register end up not having their voters' cards, while cards with fake names are given to kids as young as 12 years to vote for the CPDM"⁷³. Ndam Njoya the national chairman of the Cameroon Democratic Union, called the twin elections "a missed opportunity to advance the country's democratization process contrary to popular expectations. He said the elections were rather a threat on the democratization process"⁷⁴.

The government is likewise apathetic about genuine elections. According to Randy Joe Sa-ah's article "Cameroon's Reluctant Campaigner"⁷⁵, Paul Biya, "who is rarely seen in public [...] hardly ever meets his population," while opposition candidates "have gone round

⁶⁸ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*

⁷⁰ See Appendix A.

⁷¹ If a party believes that election were fraudulent, and has evidence, it can demand a constitutional judge. The judge has the power to annul the election results if their claim is founded.

⁷² Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

⁷³ Nsom. Kini. "Ndam Njoya Warns of Impending Civil War." The Post (Buea). 14 October 2007.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵ Sa-ah, Randy Joe "Cameroon's Reluctant Campaigner." BBC News. 9 Oct. 2004.

the country campaigning solidly since the election date was announced”⁷⁶. In addition to his reluctance to campaign, Mr. Biya “did not even convene a congress of his ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) to seek re-nomination”⁷⁷. The President, like a monarch, seems assured of his position for years to come.

Unfortunately, he may be right, as the multi-party system born in the 1990s has yet to be fully realized. When political parties were formed in the early 1990s in Cameroon, “they didn’t understand the meaning of a multi-party system”⁷⁸. Cameroonian political parties are more often composed of groups of people from the same region, rather than members of similar ideologies from diverse backgrounds⁷⁹.

In addition to the problems inherent within purely regional parties, the sheer number of opposition parties has likewise been an impediment. There are more than 100 opposition parties in Cameroon⁸⁰, and yet they were only able to win 23 of the 180 legislative seats⁸¹. Taunting this reality, Mr. Biya once said, “who are these magicians who want to make Cameroon a paradise with a magic wand? Let them get themselves united before dreaming of changing Cameroon”⁸².

Elections are the process by which democracy renews itself. As long as elections in Cameroon remain poorly attended and regulated, the vigor of Cameroon’s democratic institutions will continue to wane. Without the strength of these institutions, the idea of democracy and collective solutions to problems in Cameroon will become as frail and enfeebled as its aging leaders, mirroring a past of colonial political dominance that gave birth to the *Maquis*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸ Dougmo, Fouellgak, PhD. Personal Interview. 19 Nov. 2007.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

⁸⁰ CIA World Fact Book.

⁸¹ See Appendix A.

⁸² Sa-ah, Randy Joe “Cameroon’s Reluctant Campaigner.” *BBC News*. 9 Oct. 2004.

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The President of the Republic shall be elected for a term of office of seven years. He shall be eligible for re-election once⁸³.

The Cameroonian constitution designates the Presidential term to 7 years, and limits the candidate to be reelected only one time. This constitution was signed into action in 1996 by President Paul Biya himself. However, there are those now who wish to revise the constitution, most notably in order to extend the president's eligibility for reelection indefinitely.

This idea is not a new one to Central Africa. "It's a phenomenon that isn't limited to Cameroon. In all the countries of Central Africa: Gabon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have already modified their constitutions so that the president can sit for reelection eternally"⁸⁴. The constitution allows for its amendment in articles 62 and 63, but it also states very clearly "No procedure for the amendment of the Constitution affecting the republican form, unity and territorial integrity of the State and the democratic principles which govern the Republic shall be accepted"⁸⁵.

The proposed change has met strong opposition, as Mr. Biya's term, originally set to end in 2011, could yet be extended to the end of his life. The President has already served for 25 years. Dr. Tazoacha Asonganyi, in an editorial in Buea's Post, expressed adamant opposition to the idea, claiming "since members of a political party do not want any other person to take over the presidency of the country, they are inviting the incumbent to stay on for perpetuity, forgetting the weaknesses inherent in human nature and the arm they can wrought on society tomorrow, after their man had gone"⁸⁶!

⁸³ Cameroonian Constitution, 1996.

⁸⁴ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

⁸⁵ Cameroonian Constitution, 1996.

⁸⁶ Asonganyi, Tazoacha. "Cameroon: Constitutions and Intrigue." The Post (Buea). 19 Nov. 2007.

The rationale for this proposed change is varied, but many believe it is a ploy by the dominant political party to perpetuate its power. Members of the CPDM (the Cameroonian Peoples' Democratic Movement) claim that a term limit for the president is inherently undemocratic, and that the people have the right to choose their president⁸⁷. Although in principle, constitutional change is not inherently deleterious “our problem with the present motions is the selfishness [...] on which they are based. Constitutions should never depend on the whims and caprices of political parties”⁸⁸ Many government officials “have amassed a fortune [...] from public funds. They fear the departure of Paul Biya”⁸⁹. This fear stems from historical precedent, as Mr. Biya's tribe, the Beti have monopolized strategic government positions⁹⁰. In addition to the monopoly of power, some believe that the attempted *coup d'état* in 1982 was a ploy to get rid of members of the previous regime. The Beti fear that, given the chance, this could likewise happen to them⁹¹.

With the proposed amendment to the constitution, Cameroon faces the perpetuation of a plutocracy posing as a democracy, continuing a cycle of disempowerment for the majority of Cameroonians that has lasted since the colonial period. Without adequate democratic structures granting Cameroonians access to their government, Cameroonians must look elsewhere to address their concerns and make meaningful changes to their lives.

Living Conditions in Cameroon

Despite Cameroon's endowment of natural resources, it is still among the poorest countries in the world. Conditions during the 1980's in Cameroon, caused by what has come to be known as the “economic crisis,” resulted in widespread unemployment and poverty; the effects of which can still be felt today.

⁸⁷ Dipoko, Adolf Mongo. “Owana is Not Against Constitutional Amendment.” Eden. 5 Nov. 2007.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

⁹⁰ Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

⁹¹ *ibid*

The economic crisis was caused by many factors. After independence, Cameroon maintained a primarily agro-export economy, focusing on cash rather than sustenance crops. A sharp drop in world market prices for these export crops, caused by lower demand in importing countries lead to a significant reduction of foreign earnings, and began the cycle of debt accumulation that would later haunt the administration's fiscal policies. In addition to the drop in world prices, there was an increase in world supply of coffee and cocoa, as Malaysia and Indonesia began production. Although these unfavorable conditions would have been enough, alone, to drastically affect Cameroon's export economy, a concurrent hike in the price of oil, orchestrated by OPEC (Oil-Producing and Exporting Countries) led to increased input prices for Cameroonians, and the rampant inflation it caused in heavily oil-dependent developed countries were transferred to Cameroon. Also, a government policy of subsidizing fertilizer for cultivators was dismantled, driving input prices even higher for producers⁹².

As a result of these significant foreign debts, Cameroon began a process of structural adjustment, guided by IMF and World Bank policies, with the goal of eliminating government inefficiency, increasing business opportunities, and ultimately reducing Cameroon's foreign debt. These policies especially targeted the governmental bureaucracy, which was "the central source of political patronage and social welfare through the provision of public posts to loyal followers and deserving clients"⁹³. The civil service system was too large for two primary reasons, "firstly due to the over-development of public agencies and organizations charged with too broad and blurred responsibilities; secondly, many agencies employ too many workers vis-à-vis their needs"⁹⁴. This structure was both inefficient and costly, as "when (one is) recruited into the private sector, (his) salary is fixed, each month [...] if (he) work(s) a lot or a little, the salary is the same," eliminating government worker's incentives to

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ Bayie Kamanda, "Cameroon : The Retrenched Workers of the Civil Service and Parastatals. Assessing the Needs for the Reforms", *Le bulletin de l'APAD*, n° 18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

work more hours, or work more efficiently⁹⁵. Even after considerable adjustments to the structure of the government, “The public services could run with less than 1/3 of those who are there⁹⁶,” and the World Bank and IMF still suggest the downsizing of government positions.

In addition to the restructuring of government positions, government subsidies were significantly reduced, with the idea of eliminating the government protection of private industries that were, as a result of this protection, inefficient. Although many of these adjustment policies are often a topic of controversy, their necessity was evident, as:

For a few years, the third world debts were actually greater than the net worth of the lending banks. In other words, if the debtor countries had refused to honor their debts, the banks would have collapsed as business entities. The specter of the collapse of the world banking system was frightening, threatening another world depression that might have been worse than the one in the 1930s⁹⁷.

Today, Cameroon’s national debt composes 24.4 percent of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product).⁹⁸ Despite the fact that Cameroon’s economy has achieved a real growth rate of 3.9 percent per year, “if the standard of living of the majority of the people is stagnating or even deteriorating, it hardly matters to them if their country’s average income is growing⁹⁹. And this standard hasn’t grown, in fact “the average Cameroonian is worse off in terms of social services and purchasing power (today), than he was in 1960”¹⁰⁰.

When living conditions become unbearable, a population has little to lose by open rebellion. In the words of Gabriel Kwenthieu, an associate director with the United States Peace Corps, “people are hungry, they’re jobless, and they don’t know what to do. So they run in the streets and burn things down [...] A hungry man is an angry mind¹⁰¹.” If living

⁹⁵ Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ Isbister, John. Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World. 4th Ed., 183

⁹⁸ CIA World Factbook.

⁹⁹ Isbister, John. Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World. 4th Ed., 150

¹⁰⁰ Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

¹⁰¹ Gabriel, Kwenthieu. Personal Interview. 17 Oct. 2007

conditions do not improve, or continue to deteriorate in Cameroon, as they have for the last twenty years, the incentive of personal security will likewise deteriorate. Without strong disincentives to remain peaceful, violent revolution becomes a stronger possibility.

Unemployment, Underemployment and the Informal Sector

According to the Cameroonian constitution, “every person shall have the right and the obligation to work”¹⁰². Unfortunately, like many of the Constitution’s unfilled promises, the unemployment rate in Cameroon is estimated at 30 percent, with 48 percent of the population living below the poverty line¹⁰³. This phenomenon of unemployment in Cameroon is not new, “but it’s a matter of percentage”¹⁰⁴. This condition is primarily caused by an underdeveloped private sector, and “college graduates have been particularly touched by this phenomenon. In this economic environment, a degree does not necessarily facilitate professional insertion anymore, and thus the level of unemployment climbs with the level of education”¹⁰⁵. Thus, it is not a matter of a lacking workforce, but that there simply aren’t enough jobs for qualified applicants.

In response to this economy, “nearly 90 percent of workers in Cameroon work in the informal sector [...] (as) the informal sector is believed, more and more since the economic crisis, as a remedy to the problem of unemployment”¹⁰⁶. Unfortunately, this sector is generally not very lucrative, and is characterized by poor working conditions and precarious remunerations. Others have even resorted to banditry to cope with the economic difficulties¹⁰⁷.

However, according to Joseph Tedou, the Cameroonian director of statistics, unemployment is not even Cameroon’s greatest economic problem, but rather

¹⁰² Cameroonian Consitution, 1996.

¹⁰³ CIA World Factbook.

¹⁰⁴ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Simondet, Louise. “Première étude sur le marché de l’emploi au Cameroun” 19 Jun. 2006.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007

*underemployment*¹⁰⁸. Underemployed workers work fewer than 35 hours a week and constituted 75.8 percent of the working population in 2005, 69.3 percent of whom made less than the legal minimum annual salary of 23,400 CFA francs, which has been called “miserably insufficient to live and attend to their needs”¹⁰⁹. To compensate for insufficient salaries, extortion of public funds is a common phenomenon in Cameroon, and is practiced by both law enforcement agents and the government alike.

Some have blamed Cameroon’s lack of development on economic liberalism, and “neocolonial” economic policies put in place by developed countries with the hope of exploiting Cameroon’s rich natural resources¹¹⁰. According to Dr. Nodem, a sociologist with the University of Dschang, “France has not ceased to be here,” and many of the government officials instated by the French during decolonization are still in power¹¹¹. While, the French government is and has been politically distinct from Cameroon since independence, there are, nevertheless some disturbing trends in Cameroon’s economic character. Cameroon’s primary export commodities consist of crude oil and petroleum products, lumber, cocoa beans, aluminum, coffee, and cotton, while its primary import commodities are machinery, electrical equipment, transport equipment, fuel, and food. Cameroon’s exports are predominantly unprocessed, natural resources, while its imports are primarily produced by well developed industries. French imports constitute 23.6 percent of Cameroonian imports, while exports to France constitute 11.6 percent¹¹². In response to these policies, some have even characterized the Cameroonian government as “a marionette of the west”¹¹³.

While free trade policies have subjected Cameroon to external pressures, internal policies have impeded Cameroon’s economic development. Cameroon’s combination of high

¹⁰⁸ Simondet, Louise. “Première étude sur le marché de l’emploi au Cameroun” 19 Jun. 2006

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007.

¹¹¹ Nodem, Jean-Emet, PhD. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007.

¹¹² CIA World Fact Book.

¹¹³ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007

taxes on the public sector and lack of infrastructure has created an undesirable atmosphere for entrepreneurialism. According to Gabriel Kwenthiu, “you get out of school and you can’t get a job. You create a business. And you’re trying to succeed – they will come and kill your business by taxing, by high taxes”¹¹⁴. As for infrastructure, “fixed-line connections stand at less than 1 per 100 persons; equipment is old and outdated, and connections with many parts of the country are unreliable”¹¹⁵. In addition to problems with communication, power outages and poor road conditions continue to impede further development.

And this agricultural sector is arguably Cameroon’s most important, as “it is all but impossible to enjoy an urban economy with a high standard of living unless that economy is based on high-productivity agriculture [...] Nothing has been more harmful to the poor countries than the negligence of their agricultural sectors”¹¹⁶. As a result of its infrastructure, Cameroon’s “biggest difficulties are in the marketing, the commercialization [...] the roads are terrible”¹¹⁷. Isolated farmers in rural areas sell their products at low prices, and these same crops are sold in Douala and Yaoundé at very elevated prices. The demand is high for agricultural products, and yet “the producers do not benefit sufficiently from the fruit of their labor”¹¹⁸. Given Cameroon’s climatic diversity, Cameroon is capable of producing temperate crops that cannot be produced anywhere else in Africa, leading some economists to call the state of Cameroon’s economy “a scandal”¹¹⁹.

Despite an impressive endowment of natural resources, Cameroon remains impoverished, and in many ways, worse off than it was before independence. Rampant unemployment has once again produced the same class of “under-proletariats” that were

¹¹⁴ Gabriel, Kwenthiu. Personal Interview. 17 October 2007.

¹¹⁵ CIA World Fact Book.

¹¹⁶ Isbister, John. Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World. 4th Ed., 168

¹¹⁷ Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

integral to the Douala riots in 1955. This level of economic oppression in modern Cameroon can be only rivaled by the social oppression many Cameroonians face by the armed forces.

Human Rights in Cameroon

The Cameroonian Constitution includes the United Nations human rights declaration, and its penal code punishes both torture and unwarranted arrest¹²⁰. While “human rights exist in Cameroon, like in all countries, (as) there is that text that says so [...] it’s in the practice that we have a problem”¹²¹. According to Dr. Timtchueng, professor of Private Law at the University of Dschang, “there are historical contexts of repression that existed”¹²².

Before 1990, the Police and Gendarmerie were afforded a great deal of freedom in their exercise of power. “People with arms could do whatever they wanted,” and “there are people (today) who want that privilege to continue even now”¹²³. In addition to the power afforded to the Gendarmerie by force, they also have received financial leverage from the government. When civil servants across Cameroon saw their salaries cut in the 1990s, the salaries of the Gendarmerie were maintained. As a result, there is a rift between the Cameroonian people and the Cameroonian army.

However, this condition is not purely institutional; fear and ignorance play a role. Dr. Timtchueng states, “the majority of the population is unfamiliar with the law.” In addition to ignorance, “people are scared to stand up to people with arms”¹²⁴. Some trace this fear to the *Maquis* movement itself, continuing to fear the dress of soldiers as a reminder of the violent past. But human rights are not often granted to an apathetic population, “you have to grab it

¹²⁰ Timtchueng, Moïse PhD. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2007.

¹²¹ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

¹²² Timtchueng, Moïse PhD. Personal Interview. 22 Nov. 2007.

¹²³ *Ibid*

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

[...] it is not given to you”¹²⁵. Cameroonians themselves must be willing to stand for their rights if they ever hope to really gain them.

Manifestations

The freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, and of trade unionism, as well as the right to strike shall be guaranteed under the conditions fixed by law¹²⁶.

Manifestations of frustration with living standards in Cameroon, primarily in the form of strikes and demonstrations, have been occurring with increasing frequency in the past 15 years. Unpaid government workers, disgruntled college students, and harassed moto-taxi drivers are only a few of the many Cameroonians who seek attention for change through demonstrations. However, while many of these demonstrations are, themselves, peaceful, they are met with violent, even deadly response from law enforcement. As a result, these manifestations have been increasingly fervent, leading some to warn of a civil war¹²⁷.

University of Buea 2005

Two years ago, on April 28th, at the University of Buea, two boys, Embwam Aloysius and Gilbert Folem, were shot by the Buea police for their association with a demonstration that was being held that afternoon¹²⁸. The students, who had gone into the road to protest, were met with tear-gas, beatings, and live fire by police. Leaders of the demonstration were even dragged away and forced to lie on the ground, flat-bellied, while school-age Gendarmerie students marched on top of them. In addition, some students who fled the incident were tracked down to their rooms, attacked, and had valuables looted from their rooms¹²⁹.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ Cameroonian Constitution, 1996.

¹²⁷ Tamanjong, Elizabeth PhD. “SDF Press Release: University Of Buea: Strike, Repressions And Causalities” *The Post (Buea)*. 6 Dec. 2006.

¹²⁸ Manga, Pegue. “Breaking New: Police Kill Two in UB Strike.” *The Post (Buea)*. 18 Apr. 2005

¹²⁹ Chengjou, Léopold. “La police tue deux étudiants.” *Le Messager*. 19 Apr. 2005.

In response to this event, the SDF, the largest opposition party in Cameroon, issued this press statement:

Instead of taking all the necessary time to listen to the complaints, as it would have been the case elsewhere in the civilized world, the government, as usual, opted to provoke violence by using live bullets on the protesting students. It is pitiable that this nascent institute for health has to be inaugurated this way with blood and death¹³⁰.

Bamenda – October 16, 2007

In October 2007, there were violent manifestations of frustration in Bamenda that were likewise met with lethal violence by law enforcement authorities. After the severe beating of a comrade, who had refused to pay the bribe demanded of him at one of Cameroon's many security checkpoints, two moto-taxi drivers went to the police station for his release, but were chased away with tear gas. According to witnesses, the taxi driver had been "thoroughly beaten until he lost consciousness and one of his eyes"¹³¹. In response, "They then invaded the town, mounting roadblocks and blocking the traffic. When the security forces came out to lift the roadblocks, (the protestors) threw stones at them"¹³². Witnesses report that thousands joined the protests, tired of extortion from armed officials. Unfortunately, these demonstrations, too, were met with gunfire, leaving two moto-taxi drivers dead, and a pregnant woman injured.

Strike at National Laboratory, October 2007

Also in October, 2007, laboratory technicians at the "National Civic Genius Laboratory," in Yaounde, went on strike after not having received salaries for 26 months. One demonstrator asked, "nothing for 26 months [...] how will we feed our children¹³³?" The

¹³⁰ Tamanjong, Elizabeth PhD. "SDF Press Release: University Of Buea: Strike, Repressions And Causalities" *The Post (Buea)*. 6 Dec. 2006.

¹³¹ "Two shot' in Cameroon taxi riot." *BBC News*. 16 Oct. 2007

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Edzoa, Yvette Marcelle. "Cameroun: Labogénie - la grève persiste." *Cameroon Tribune*. 17 Oct. 2007.

demonstrators goals are not complicated, “we want our money” said one of the technicians, “our living conditions are very difficult”¹³⁴.

In addition to the unpaid salaries, laboratory workers are forced to endure unsafe working conditions, in which they lack sanitary protections to wear. Appolonie Amougou, an employee of the lab since 1976, stated: “we are tired of false promises, even if we are paid, we still want to know that our conditions are going to improve”¹³⁵.

Power Outages and Strikes in Kumba

After months of no electricity, residents of Kumba took to the streets in early November 2007 with placards demanding the restoration of electricity. Although power outages are common in many parts of Cameroon, the sheer duration of the power-outage began unbearable for those affected. Most of Cameroon’s electricity comes from hydroelectric power plants that were created during the reign of Amadou Ahidjo, Cameroon’s first President. The main source for Kumba is powered by the Sanaga river, with reserve barrages at Bamenjin. Although fluctuations in power output vary with water flow “during the rainy season, this becomes unexplainable!”¹³⁶

Kumba, which is a major Cocoa production center in Cameroon, was inundated with protests which halted the passage of cocoa transporting vehicles for half a week¹³⁷. However, their frustration was not only in response to the outages; “the incidence coincided with suffering people. You have to ask ‘What is their lifestyle?’¹³⁸” As has become usual, the government troops shot live ammunition into the crowd to disperse it, and in the process killed two students. About 25 people were arrested as well¹³⁹. Shortly after the demonstration, cocoa exportation resumed, and the power was returned.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007.

¹³⁷ “Cocoa Trade Resumes in Cameroon after Protests.” Dow Jones Newswires. 14 Nov. 2007.

¹³⁸ Nodem, Jean-Emet, PhD. Personal Interview. 20 Nov. 2007.

¹³⁹ “Cocoa Trade Resumes in Cameroon after Protests.” Dow Jones Newswires. 14 Nov. 2007.

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No single incident can epitomize all the manifestations of frustration in Cameroon, but through comparing these case studies, we are able to find a disturbing trend. To summarize in the words of Bongsha Steve, “Every now and then, when a citizen or citizens want to defend themselves or their rights, they either end up dead, wounded or being locked up by the police who have the arms.¹⁴⁰” Although the goals and outcomes of these demonstrations are diverse, their frequency and intensity suggests that there is a significant population of Cameroonians that are unsatisfied with their lifestyles, and are willing to risk death and injury in an attempt to change them.

If these demonstrations were dispersed peacefully, through cooperative solutions, they might represent an alternative means of democratic change to the government. However, their violent dispersal, and the refusal of authorities to consider their demands, suggests that strikes and demonstrations are not an effective means of change in Cameroon either. Frustrated with an unresponsive government, a stagnating economy, and lacking democratic means of peaceful demonstration, it is quite possible for many Cameroonians that violent revolution may be the only outlet for change.

Features of Cameroon Preventing Revolution

“More and more, I am skeptical of whether there will be a movement in Cameroon”¹⁴¹.

Despite these conditions, however, many Cameroonians with whom I spoke were skeptical if there ever would be such a revolution. Reasons for this include Cameroon’s history, pessimism, the possibility of individual solutions, Cameroon’s context in Central Africa, and recent improvements in democracy.

¹⁴⁰ Response to BBC Article: “‘Two shot’ in Cameroon taxi riot.” BBC News. 16 Oct. 2007

¹⁴¹ Atsatito, Mathias, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

According to Dr. Mathias Atsatito, a sociologist with the University of Dschang, “People look for the easiest solution [...] (they) want power, but adopt a strategy of facility”¹⁴². As violent revolutions are only born when peaceful ones are impossible, “collective movements are born only when individual strategies are not effective”¹⁴³. However, he believes that Cameroonians have found ways around their struggles, stating: “we have found other strategies to cope with bad economics to assure life [...] people find a way [...] individual strategies are still possible”¹⁴⁴.

One such strategy is to escape. According to Mr. Fomekong, “the grand majority of people dream of nothing more than to leave the country [...] It’s a form of resignation”¹⁴⁵. This resignation represents pessimism on the part of Cameroonians who would like to see change, but believe that it is effectively impossible. Their solution for them is simply to leave.

In addition, Cameroon remains a relatively stable nation in a region of Africa infamous for its political coups and armed rebellions. Surrounded by Chad, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and others, Cameroon has managed to maintain a level of peace, since its independence, which few other countries in the region have. Some attribute this peace to “the spirit of ‘the people’ of Cameroon and their outlook on life”¹⁴⁶. Others, to Cameroon’s diversity, as there are over 200 ethnic groups in Cameroon alone. If revolution were to ever arrive, it would be difficult to discern who was fighting against whom.

However, history undoubtedly plays a role as well. “In Cameroon today, there is a cleavage between those who lived the events and those who did not: between those who have direct experience of the period of anti-colonial battles, and the others, who don’t have any

¹⁴² Atsatito, Mathias, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁵ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007.

¹⁴⁶ Asonganyi, Tazoacha. “Cameroon: Constitutions and Intrigue.” *The Post* (Buea). 19 Nov. 2007.

memory but the post-colonial regime”¹⁴⁷. Many of the Cameroonians, still living, who experienced the violence of the *Maquis*, were traumatized by the events, as “it wasn’t only violence in the sense of combat; it was violence in the sense of premeditated murder ... of torture!”¹⁴⁸ Although this generation may be one of the greatest stabilizing forces in Cameroon today, it is important to note that “the young people don’t have the same mentality”¹⁴⁹.

Alternatives to Revolution

In addition to the factors that would prevent future violent revolutions, there are many alternatives that could address these problems. James Beighle, an associate director with the United States Peace Corps, believes “we could have a revolution in Cameroon, but all the hopes are that it is a peaceful revolution”¹⁵⁰. Due partly to the relative peace Cameroon has enjoyed, “that’s where Cameroon wants to see (change) come from, and people are being extremely patient so it does come from there”¹⁵¹. Some have even suggested that this revolution could be of a divine nature: “If there’s more of a push from the Church [...] they’re great at doing campaigns for all kinds of things [...] What happened in Ghana could happen here”¹⁵². Beighle, who was wary to suggest radical evangelism as an answer, nevertheless admitted its possibility.

Education may yet hold the solution to Cameroon’s problems, as “educational philosophies that were adopted from colonists are in some cases the last vestige of colonialism”¹⁵³. This system, not necessarily tailored to the specific needs of Cameroons, has continued to exist in Cameroon, and emphasizes a “classic” education above a more practical one. As Isbister explains:

¹⁴⁷ Um Nyobe, Ruben, *Ecrits sous Maquis*. (Notes et introduction de J.A. Mbembe) Paris : L’Harmattan Press. 1989., 36

¹⁴⁸ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

¹⁴⁹ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

¹⁵⁰ Fomekong, Thomas. Personal Interview. 15 Nov. 2007.

¹⁵¹ Beigle, James. Personal Interview. 17 October 2007.

¹⁵² *Ibid*

¹⁵³ Isbister, John. *Promises not Kept: The Betrayal of Social Change in the Third World*. 4th Ed., 177

The conviction frequently remains, however, that the best education is a general one, an education that deals with great ideas and significant literature, not one that immerses students in technical detail. As a consequence, higher educational systems in the third world often turn out a surplus of teachers and lawyers but leave their countries with a significant shortage of technically trained people: engineers, scientists, and economists¹⁵⁴.

Education in Cameroon more tightly integrated with the economic sector could arguably help place university graduates in the private sector jobs that exist, and help attract new industries. Focusing on building human capital, rather than perpetuating a defunct colonial system, includes “education in all its dimensions – from basic literacy through technical training and on-the-job skill enhancement to higher education”¹⁵⁵.

In the same manner, the focus of classic education on memorization and recitation does not lend itself to addressing the problems Cameroonians face daily. Although an abstract concept to implement, an education focused on critical thinking, rather than rote memorization, would be arguably more helpful. “People [...] go to school, they memorize things, they don’t learn how to do things on their own, they don’t think about what they’re doing”¹⁵⁶. This system could emphasize finding solutions to problems and battle the predominant pessimism epitomized in the phrase “On va faire comment?”¹⁵⁷. This would entail training Cameroonians with “an inquiring approach methodology,” in which, “they are to think about what they are doing. They take the reality in the community and bring that into the classroom”¹⁵⁸.

Education could likewise be used to reconcile the historical wounds that still affect Cameroonians today, as “one can learn a great deal about the conflicts of a society by looking

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 178

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 176

¹⁵⁶ Gabriel, Kwentheiu. Personal Interview. 17 October 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Roughly Translated: “But what are you going to do?” – A common Cameroonian fatalism that signifies an inability to change the world.

¹⁵⁸ Gabriel, Kwentheiu. Personal Interview. 17 October 2007.

at the manner in which it represents itself and its history”¹⁵⁹. Educators have only recently been able to even discuss the period of independence, other than to condemn the *Maquis* activities as terrorism. Some believe that this dialogue is paramount in keeping something like the *Maquis* from occurring again. “Everything [...] that can rehabilitate the memory of these people (the *Maquisards*) will be able to contribute to avoid a violent situation [...] it’s our past – our present identity has been built by the past [...] we cannot forget that legacy [...] it’s everyone’s responsibility”¹⁶⁰.

The government also has a significant role to play if peaceful change in Cameroon is to be maintained. One important task is the continued dismantling of defunct government structures that sap the economy of tax revenue and accomplish little. As a result of high taxes on the private sector, several large enterprises, originally local to Cameroon, have delocalized to Equatorial Guinea and Singapore in search of more favorable conditions¹⁶¹. The dismantling of these structures would allow for a reduction of taxes, seen as necessary by many economists to create business incentives. “If taxes are too high, people are not going to create enterprises [...] man does not work to pay taxes”¹⁶².

In the same vein, greater democracy would enable Cameroonians access to institutions of peaceful change. “Today, there is a deficit of political communication [...] of political participation. You need that advantage of social dialogue; a negotiation of the political plan [...] that will permit (democracy) and avoid a violent situation”¹⁶³. This democracy, however, will not be given to Cameroonians for nothing. If Cameroon is ever to realize a true democracy, Cameroonians must be willing to participate. Unfortunately, many “think that

¹⁵⁹ Um Nyobe, Ruben, *Ecrits sous Maquis*. (Notes et introduction de J.A. Mbembe) Paris : L’Harmattan Press. 1989, 21.

¹⁶⁰ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

¹⁶¹ Kamajou, François, PhD. Personal Interviews. 19 Nov. 2007, 20 Nov. 2007.

¹⁶² *Ibid*– referencing one of President Ronald Reagan’s prominent supply-side economists, Laffer.

¹⁶³ Saha, Zacharie, PhD. Personal Interview. 21 Nov. 2007.

democracy has not changed their living conditions. There is now more poverty than there was when there was only one party”¹⁶⁴.

Fairer elections are one place to start, as “without free and fair elections, we cannot have the ‘freely expressed will of the people’”¹⁶⁵. The government and the Cameroonian people can both improve this situation, through greater transparency and greater participation, respectively. The peace of Cameroon should not have to come from personal resignation, but from “the guarantee of trust, solidarity, and patriotism” as “a democratic society is only possible within a framework that is open to challenge and change”¹⁶⁶. It is not an easy change, but it very well may be a necessary one.

CONCLUSION

Before even beginning my research, I knew that I would come to one of three basic conclusions. The first conclusion was that the causal conditions of the *Maquis* revolution are not similar enough to draw a correlation to the present. The second possibility was that the causal conditions are indeed similar between the two periods, but there are other factors in the present that will most likely prevent a violent revolution from occurring. The final possibility was that the causal conditions are similar, and lead me to believe that a violent revolution in Cameroon’s future is imminent.

Although I do not believe that the causal conditions of the *Maquis* revolution still exist today, I do believe that there exist conditions today that could, nevertheless, lead to a rebellion. The actions of the UPC and the *Maquisards* themselves were a response to colonial oppression by a white, European administration, and were part of a greater continental struggle for decolonization. While there were significant social and economic pressures for

¹⁶⁴ Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007.

¹⁶⁵ Asonganyi, Tazoacha. “Cameroon: Constitutions and Intrigue.” *The Post* (Buea). 19 Nov. 2007.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*

Cameroonians during that period, the most forceful goals of the movement were political and philosophical.

By contrast, the state of Cameroon today is not one of foreign colonization; it is one of Cameroonians governing themselves. The level of poverty, unemployment, and general frustration among Cameroonians is clearly evident, and yet, there are often insufficient means to voice this frustration. Demonstrations are met with violence, sometimes lethal, and the democratic institutions created to protect the rights of citizens are often the greatest culprits of their violation. If there were a revolution in the near future, it would not be born out of nationalist principles¹⁶⁷, but out of socio-economic frustration.

And yet, Cameroon has made, and continues to make, progress. Although they have little power, there are more than 100 political parties. The press, although not completely free, has resources to question and criticize the administration. Likewise, educators now have more freedom to discuss the nationalist movement that gave birth to present day Cameroon, while in the past, even the mention of the name of Ruben Um Nyobe was illegal¹⁶⁸. If trends toward greater democratization and personal freedoms continue, Cameroon may well continue to be *l'arbre de paix*¹⁶⁹ in the hotbed of Central Africa.

Had I more time and freedom to complete this project, I would have traveled (additionally) to Mungo, Sanaga Maritime, and Douala in search of documentation and living members of the *Maquis*. Although I still believe that the resources available to me in Dschang made it the best location, I acknowledge that additional and more diverse regional information would have given my project more depth.

¹⁶⁷ By this comment, I do not mean to rule out the possibility of a nationalist movement from the Anglophone provinces in Cameroon, it is solely to say that the majority of manifestations in recent Cameroonian history are in response to economic difficulty and societal oppression.

¹⁶⁸ Dr. Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, PhD. Personal Interview. 24 Nov. 2007. See also Mbembe, Achille. *La naissance...* p16

¹⁶⁹ *l'Arbre de paix* – literally “tree of peace” and an important symbol in Bamileke iconography

Final Thoughts

In closing, I'd like to step back from the academic focus of the paper. I was eating dinner one night during the project and discussing my research with one of two Cameroonian friends. When I had finished describing my research, the other Cameroonian eating with us was noticeably affected, and proceeded to tell me the story of how his father was killed by the *Maquisards* before his very eyes when he was yet a boy. "I get so mad when I talk about the *Maquisards*," he said, "I could kill somebody"¹⁷⁰.

I hope that in my research and predictions, I never lose sight of the fact that history is more than a story, but the real lives of human beings. Although my research has found significant parallels between the present and the past, there is no guarantee that even with identical conditions, all people, or all Cameroonians for that matter, will behave in the same way. As a historian, I recognize my limits in predicting the future. My predictions are ultimately intellectual, and will only be tested with time. That being said, I hope that there will not be a violent revolution in Cameroon, ever, as violent revolutions have been the cause of some of the greatest suffering in human history. For the friends I've made during my stay, and as a human being, I hope that any revolution that occurs in Cameroon's future is both peaceful and beneficial for the people of Cameroon.

¹⁷⁰ Anonymous Personal Interview

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APPENDIX A
Cameroonian Election Results
(from: African Elections Database)

11 October 2004 Presidential Election

Registered Voters	4,657,748
Total Votes (Voter Turnout)	3,830,272 (82.2%)
Invalid/Blank Votes	72,051
Total Valid Votes	3,758,221

Party	Number of Seats (180)
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC)	140
Social Democratic Front (SDF)	14
Cameroon Democratic Union (UDC)	04
National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP)	04
Progressive Movement (MP)	01
Vacant*	17

**The Supreme Court nullified the results in five districts (affecting a total of 17 seats) on account of various irregularities. By-elections will be held at a later date to fill the vacant seats.*

APPENDIX B
Civil Service Positions in Colonial Government
(from: Joseph, Richard Le mouvement nationaliste... p168)

Tableau XIII

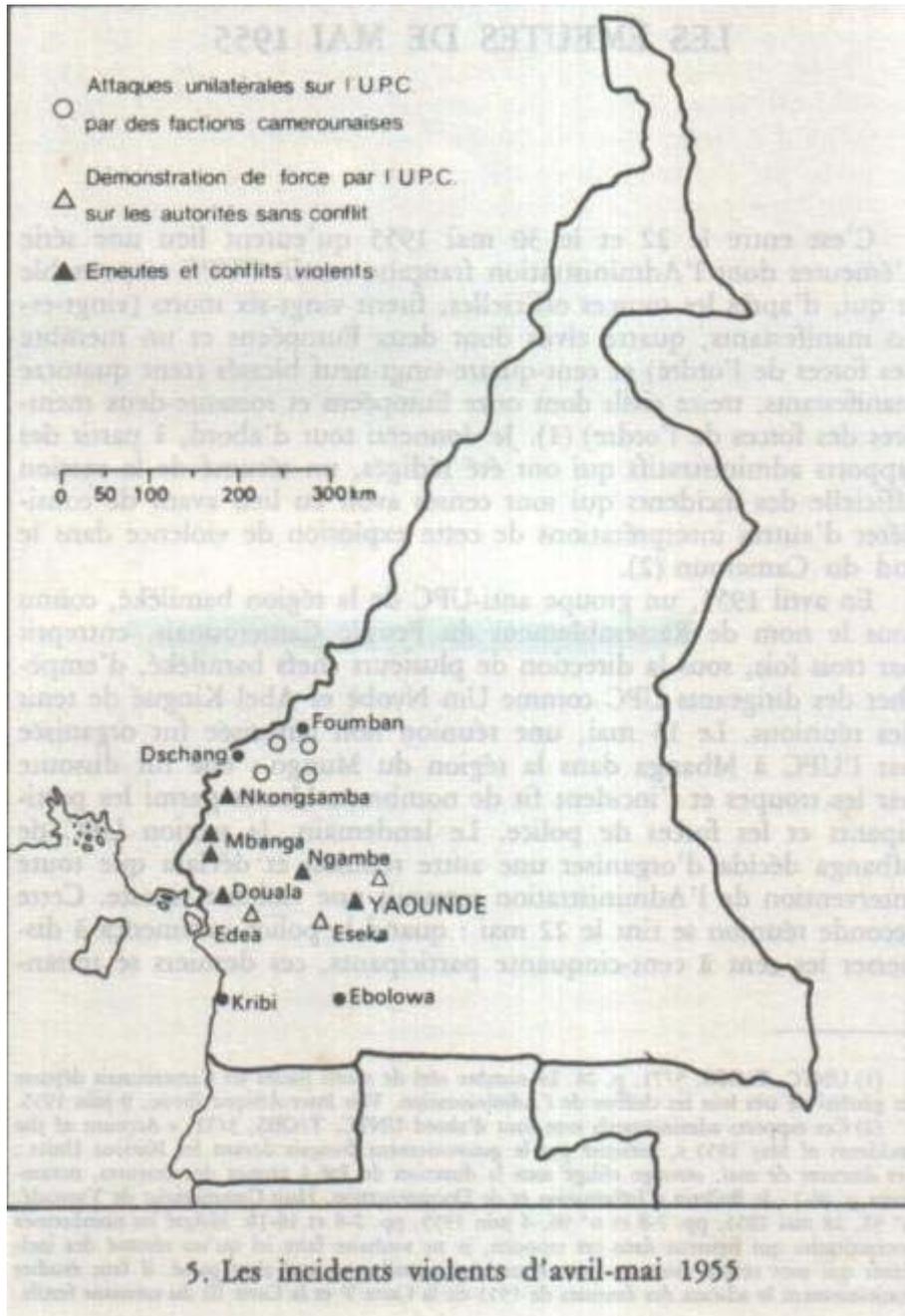
	1947	1954	1955
Européens	14.1 %	22.5 %	31.4 %
Africains	85.9 %	77.5 %	68.6 %

APPENDIX C
The Bridge at Wouri
(from : Joseph, Richard Le mouvement nationaliste... Picture #36)



APPENDIX D

Progression of Violent Incidents April-May 1955
(from : Joseph, Richard Le mouvement nationaliste... p280)



APPENDIX E

Sources for Future Research

People

Dr. Robert Fotsing, Academic Advisor
Christiane Magnido, Academic Director
Jean-Claude Tchouankap, Historian
Dr. Saha, Zacharie, Historian
Dr. Nodem, Jean-Emet, Sociologist
Dr. Atsatito, Mathias, Sociologist
Dr. Kamajou, François, Economist
Dr. Timtchueng, Moïse, Private Law
Dr. Dounkeng-Zele, Champlain, Public Law and Political Science
Dr. Fah, Taguem
Dr. Fotso

Thomas Fomekong
Rene Punde
Noupa
The Chef of Keleng
Maurice Silatsa
Boniface Ngoyondo
Boubakari

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