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CABINET

SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

MEMORANDUM BY THE LORD CHANCELLOR

When the Cabinet discussed the situation in the Southern Cameroons on 13th June (C.C. (61) 31st Conclusions, Minute 7) they agreed that the United Kingdom delegation to the talks to be held between Mr. Foncha and Mr. Ahidjo on 15th June should be given the following instructions:

- (a) They should conduct their discussions on the basis that we intended to withdraw the United Kingdom battalion after 1st October.
- (b) They should seek to ascertain what measures were contemplated by the Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons, Mr. Foncha and the Prime Minister of the Cameroun Republic, Mr. Ahidjo, for the maintenance of the administration and of internal security, and how far they were agreed about future arrangements for the Southern Cameroons and its associations with the Cameroun Republic.
- (c) They could indicate that we would be prepared to provide £1/2 million in assistance during the first year after independence, either to enable our expatriate officers to continue in the administration or, to support the budget.

The delegation have now returned and their report has been considered by the Africa Committee.

2. The delegation found that there were serious differences between Mr. Ahidjo and Mr. Foncha about the transfer of sovereignty on 1st October. Mr. Foncha insisted that transfer of sovereignty could be effected only to a Federation and that it was therefore necessary to establish Federal arrangements before 1st October. Mr. Ahidjo, on the other hand, insisted that, in accordance

with the United Nations resolution of 21st April, the Southern Cameroons must first join the Cameroun Republic and that the Federation could not be set up until after it had done so. Because of this fundamental disagreement, no progress could be made on discussions about the possibility of a Southern Cameroon security force being trained by forces of the Republic; the prospects of agreement on such an arrangement did not appear in any case to be great, since Mr. Ahidjo is clearly suspicious of any suggestion that Mr. Foncha should establish a private army.

3. The delegation announced our intention of withdrawing the United Kingdom force from the Southern Cameroons on 1st October. Mr. Foncha pressed strongly for its retention, but though Mr. Ahidjo associated himself with a formal request to this effect, it was clear; that his support was lukewarm and there have since been further indications that he is not in favour, of the proposal.

4. In the event our delegation did not put forward the offer of £1/2 million aid.

5. The delegation further reported that neither the Southern Cameroonians, nor the local British community, have so far taken literally the official announcements that the battalion will leave on 1st October. As soon as it became clear that it was to do so, officials, including expatriate police officers, whose contracts were due to expire would begin to leave and it was expected that most expatriate employees of British firms would follow suit. There could thus be no question of an Aid Mission and it was highly probable that the Southern Cameroons Government would collapse, opening the way for the establishment of a Communist regime. On the other hand, they reported that there would be grave implications if the battalion were to remain. It would almost certainly require reinforcement and might well become involved in the internal squabbles between two parts of the future Federation.

6. The delegation made four recommendations:

- (a) That military action should be taken before 1st October against one camp of 200 terrorists which has been located in an isolated area.
- (b) That a Consular post should be opened at Buea on 1st October.
- (c) That if the British battalion is to be withdrawn on 1st October an immediate announcement should be made so that those who wish to leave may have reasonable time in which to do so.
- (d) That an alternative to the withdrawing of the battalion might be to

confine it to the Victoria district (the coastal area) for a period of 12 months.

7. The Africa Committee have concluded that the first three of these recommendations should be accepted; they were advised that the risk that the limited anti-terrorist operation proposed might provoke a general outbreak of terrorism, which would require the reinforcement of our battalion, was small. They rejected the proposal to leave a battalion in the coastal area of the Southern Cameroons for a further 12 months. The Chiefs of Staff have reported that they see serious military objections to this course and, if it were adopted, the risk of involvement in the squabbles of Mr. Foncha and Mr. Ahidjo would remain.

8. The Afrtea Committee also concluded that we should remain prepared to offer £1/2 million aid to the Southern Cameroons and that we should proceed with transitional arrangements for the ending of Commonwealth Preferences after 1st October.

9. There is a possibility that Mr. Foncha, if he is unable to compose his differences with Mr. Ahidjo, may appeal to the United Nations to extend trusteeship beyond 1st October: if such an appeal were granted, our responsibility would of course remain. The suggestion has been made that it might be in our interests to encourage him to do so: on the one hand a further period in which to complete transitional arrangements might be instrumental in preventing conditions developing in a manner favourable for Communist exploitation; on the other hand, if the appeal were refused, we should perhaps have more justification for withdrawing the British battalion. Against the suggestion, it has been represented that there are in any case military and financial objections to leaving the battalion in the Southern Cameroons after 1st October, and that to raise the question in the Trusteeship Council would provide an opportunity for attacks on our policy.

10 I invite the Cabinet—

(a) To endorse the conclusions of the -Afriae Committee, that:

- (i) An official announcement should be made in Buea at an early date of our intention to withdraw the British force from the Southern Cameroons when our trusteeship ends on 1st October.
- (ii) A consular post should be opened in Buea on 1st October.
- (iii) Military action should be taken against a terrorist camp as proposed

by the delegation.

(iv) We should remain prepared to offer £1 million aid in the first year after the end of trusteeship,

(v) We should proceed with transitional arrangements for the ending of Commonwealth Preferences after 1st October.

(b) To consider whether Mr. Foncha should be encouraged to seek "an extension of the trusteeship status of the Southern Cameroons after 1st October.

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*Lord Chancellor's Department, S.W.I,
23rd June. 1961*