

**Book Review:**

***Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950 – 1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps, Volume One***

**Bamenda: Paul's Press, 2013**

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**Introduction**

I wish to sincerely thank Prof. Anthony Ndi, author of *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950 – 1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps, Volume One*, for the opportunity to review his mind-searching research work, being a major contribution towards reshaping knowledge on the history of Cameroon in general and the Southern/West Cameroons in particular. It was a challenging academic exercise! When Prof. Ndi contacted me to review his book, I was scared for some reasons. Firstly, because the book was written by an exemplary scholar, whose rank, status and experiences are far above mine. Secondly, because I was called to speak from the same podium with eminent Professors like Mathew Gwanfogbe and the prolific Prof. Tajoache Asonganyi; and of course it was particularly challenging because I had to speak after my master, Prof. Verkijika G. Fanso, on what he masters. Thirdly, I was scared because the title to be reviewed was/is on a very interestingly sensitive and controversial topic that has attracted many scholars and readers. Fourthly, I was most scared because the review had to be done in front of the very alert, critical and informed people of Bamenda. I dutifully accepted the challenge because as an exemplary teacher, Prof. Ndi has always wanted the younger generation to blossom in their academic pursuits. I am happy to be involved in this academic debate in search of reconstructing the hitherto blurred and distorted facts and figures in the historiography of Cameroon.

**The Book and its *raison d'être***

The book *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950 – 1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps, Volume One*,<sup>1</sup> is a 383-page volume excluding the front matter, in which Anthony Ndi revisits the history of the Southern West Cameroon from 1950–1972. The author vividly captures and unveils the traps therein, which affected the Southern Cameroons in general and John Ngu Foncha in particular, in their drive towards independence and reunification, first, between 1950 and 1961 under the British influence; and between 1961

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps, Volume I* (Bamenda: Paul's Press, 2013).

and 1972 under the administration of Ahmadou Ahidjo. The author re-narrates the History of a people, putting facts and figures straight, backed by rich collections of reliable sources and challenges both the old and young historians, politicians, researchers and lovers of fine knowledge to revisit facts, cross-check them before delving into any conclusions. As Verkijika G. Fanso puts it, History is based on “facts,” that is, what is known and accepted as having actually happened. Facts are different from inferences and opinions; and any serious Historian/researcher should make the difference in the information contained in their works.<sup>2</sup>

Why did the author write this Book? According to Anthony Ndi, the book is intended to immortalize the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Independence and Reunification of Cameroon by critically re-examining some of the crucial issues in the history of Southern Cameroons; it is a rejoinder to the **Summit Magazine’s** interview of Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh in its April-June, 2011 edition, strictly from a historical and intellectual perspective, with the intention to redress substantial areas of commission, omission or of default that were raised in the interview; and to make a contribution in revising the History of Cameroon based on new research, new findings, new ideas and new developments.<sup>3</sup>

### Methodology

Since many professors, teachers, students, journalists, intellectuals and even street vendors have consciously or unconsciously misrepresented, misunderstood or misinterpreted some “facts and figures” in the history of Cameroon, it will be incumbent to tackle the issues of distortions raised in a holistic manner without blame games and name-calling in order to discourage defensive listening/reading and encourage open-mindedness, where new knowledge can fertilise and blossom through renewed and revisited research for the sake of genuine intellectualism. I will refer to Professor Anthony Ndi as the author, Anthony Ndi or simply NDI. This should not be considered as a sign of disrespect of any sort. That is academics. I will also adopt a question and answer approach by posing and answering some questions for the sake of clarity.

### Explanation of terms

Let me first of all try to revisit and break down the title of this volume in order to better appreciate its contents.

**Southern West Cameroon** should be understood to mean the territory and peoples of Southern Cameroons from 1950-1961 under the British Trusteeship; and West Cameroon from 1961-1972 during the period of the Federation under Ahmadou Ahidjo, hence, Southern West Cameroon, 1950- 1972.

**Revisited 1950–1972:** should mean the history of the people and territory of Southern Cameroons visited more than once, for the sake of informed, well researched and improved knowledge.

**Unveiling** should mean “**to uncover**”; **Inescapable** should mean “**Unavoidable**”; while **traps** should be understood as intentionally laid hurdles or speed brakes.

In this volume therefore, Anthony Ndi attempts to uncover the unavoidable hurdles that Foncha and the people of Southern/West Cameroon encountered, first, under the British colonial authorities (1950-1961, and later, under Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1961-1972. This is crafted and bundled in ten solid mind-searching chapters excluding the Introduction, the Postscript, Epilogue and refreshing appendices.

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<sup>2</sup> Verkijika G. Fanso, “A Thank You and Valediction”, Yaoundé: The University of Yaoundé I, July 29, 2011, pp. 13-14. Also see V. G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Volume 1: From Prehistoric Times to The Nineteenth Century* (London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1989), pp. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p.13-14.

### The Inescapable traps under the British and Ahidjo Governments

In the introduction and Chapter one<sup>4</sup> of the volume, Anthony Ndi presents two important eye-openers on international conspiracy against the Foncha government and the proponents of reunification. This is clearly demonstrated through influences from the British authorities and the Ahidjo government from 1950-1972.

Explaining the British Conspiracy and double standards in British Southern Cameroons, Ndi intimates that between 1958–1961 the British colonial masters through intrigues organized by the Colonial Office and carefully executed by Mr. Johnson O. Field (Commissioner) and Malcolm Milne (Deputy Commissioner of Southern Cameroons), together with C.E. King (British Ambassador to Yaoundé) and in collusion with France and the UN put “insurmountable hurdles calculated to frustrate the quest for the Southern Cameroonian political leadership and people in their struggle towards autonomy”<sup>5</sup>. Ndi reveals how the British authorities were bitter against Foncha’s political stance of separation from Nigeria and did everything possible to discredit, destabilize, frustrate and isolate the Foncha regime; and, masterminded, coordinated and tactfully executed the plot of ensuring that Southern Cameroons was finally transferred not to Foncha or an agreed federal body as stipulated by the United Nations, but directly into the firm grips of the Ahidjo regime.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of preparing the territory towards ultimate independence as a Trusteeship authority, the British rather blocked the “Independence Option” for Southern Cameroons through Sir Sydney Phillipson’s Report that the territory was not economically viable to stand on its own as a separate political entity from Nigeria or French Cameroon, hence, the two plebiscite options. Ironically, Great Britain had solemnly and legally pledged by Article 76 (b) of the Charter of the United Nations to guide Southern Cameroons towards independence.<sup>7</sup> According to Ndi, this one act laid the foundation for the woes of Southern Cameroonians till date.

Southern/West Cameroon suffered from yet another inescapable trap as Foncha and his people were hurriedly transferred into the waiting hands of Ahmadou Ahidjo, who in turn laid traps “against the Southern Cameroon delegates to the historic Fouban Constitutional Conference”<sup>8</sup> and thereafter. To corroborate this, Ndi revisits the plight of the Anglophones as expressed by the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) and by J. N. Foncha and highlights the Anglophone/Francophone Dichotomy, fifty years after independence and reunification. Such dichotomy was characterized by supposed political, economic and socio-cultural domination of the Anglophones, who were supposed to be equal partners at reunification.<sup>9</sup>

The paradox is that the people of Anglophone Cameroon had enjoyed the privileges of statehood from 1954-1972, with a Quasi Federal Status, with Endeley as Leader of Government Business, with a specified geographic circumscription, a population, a Legislative Assembly, an independent judiciary, and an internal state government. But these people were later demoted, first, as one of the seven Provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon (1972-1984), and split into the North West and South West Provinces, and later, Regions since 1984, of the Republic of Cameroon.<sup>10</sup>

To Anthony Ndi, the Anglophones in Cameroon have been victims of international conspiracy between Britain and *La Republic du Cameroun* which had “a traumatizing experience, tantamount to the loss of self-

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp. 1-36.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. .22.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Willibroad Dze-Ngwa, “The Plight of Anglophones”, in *Newbroom Magazine Number 002* of November-December 2013 (Special Edition), pp. 26-33. Also see Chapter Three of Dze-Ngwa, “National Unity and National Integration in Cameroon, 1961-2000: Dreams and Realities” (Yaoundé: Unpublished PhD Thesis at University of Yaoundé I, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p. 23.

identity”.<sup>11</sup> Ndi’s arguments are based on information from actors at the time, Malcolm Milne (Deputy Commissioner of Southern Cameroons), and Mr. Emmanuel Njoya (Disional Officer of Foumban at the time of the Foumban Conference); and from reliable accounts from reports and correspondences in recently declassified British Secret papers.

### **On the *Summit Magazine* Interview and Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh’s claims**

In reaction to the revealing interview of Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh in the *Summit Magazine* of April-June 2011, Anthony Ndi claims to put straight, the distorted facts and figures against Foncha, the KNDP, its leadership, the Southern Cameroons political elite and people as a whole, as portrayed by Prof. Ngoh in his interview. Anthony Ndi himself is not all-assuming when he notes that his findings may not be absolute truth since History is an approximate science, therefore, a call for continuous research. History, based on authentic, reliable and verifiable facts can only fertilize the minds and pens of genuine intellectuals. Using, recently declassified material from the **British Secret Papers**, and information on Ahmadou Ahidjo, eye-witness accounts and confessions, Anthony Ndi tries to reconstruct the past for public consumption.

In Chapter Two of the volume (pp.37-66), Ndi tackles the plethora of indictments and controversial topics which the *Summit Magazine* handles, especially on reunification, about the political maturity of Southern Cameroonians, the identification of victims from predators and oppressors in Southern Cameroons history; the place of bad faith and lack of political will in the reunification story; and most importantly, the place of John Ngu Foncha in the history of Southern Cameroon, especially “since he is at the heart of the indictments in the discussion”<sup>12</sup>. Anthony Ndi also sets out to make clarifications on the “how, why, what and who” was responsible for all that happened at reunification and thereafter. This brings to light, the Anglophone Problem, which is the feeling of “discrimination and marginalization, assimilation and perceived annexationist tendencies, as well as questions of the citizenship status of former Southern Cameroonians within the state of the Republic of Cameroon”<sup>13</sup>.

In response to the views raised in the *Summit Magazine* interview, Anthony Ndi “highlights points of fact, logic and history that have seemingly or deliberately been ... ignored or distorted....[and adopts] a straight forward presentation of open facts backed by historical data available to all who can find the time to investigate”.<sup>14</sup> The *Summit Magazine* interview intimates that “on the day of election, most Southern Cameroon’s voters thought they were voting for Southern Cameroon as a separate state or that they had a five-year trial period.”<sup>15</sup> Anthony Ndi disagrees with the idea that “there was no overwhelming support for reunification per se” and that in the plebiscite of February 11, 1961, most voters in British Southern Cameroons did not understand what they were voting for. He considers it as a total misjudgment of facts, since reunification was well planned from the Plebiscite, through the Bamenda All-Party Conference to the Foumban Constitutional Conference. Ndi argues that reunification was a certainty and not a “Gamble” because it was the best decision, everything being equal. It needed only the political goodwill, transparency, honesty and the determination to make it succeed by those who held the realms of authority.<sup>16</sup> Ndi backs his arguments with declarations from even opponents of reunification like Dr. Endeley and N.N. Mbile of the CPNC party. Endeley later declared in Tabenken, Nkambe in April 1966 that: “...reunification was

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.p.38. Also See W. Dze-Ngwa, “The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon: A Historical Perspective, 1916-1995” (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Yaoundé 1, 1997) and *New Broom Magazine* No. 2: November-December, 2013, pp. 27-33.

<sup>14</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> *Summit Magazine* No. 016 of May 2011, pp.9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p. 46.

genuinely desired and accepted by the people”<sup>17</sup> of Southern Cameroons. To Foncha, a reunified “Cameroon can be transformed into a paradise in Africa”<sup>18</sup>. The issue of reunification was therefore not a “gamble”. It had been discussed and contemplated over and over in Southern Cameroon even during the formation of the first indigenous political parties in the territory in 1953/1954.

The book equally raises the popular claim that **Southern Cameroonian politicians were inexperienced**. Were they? They may not have been that inexperienced as claimed. Our argument is informed by the fact that the peaceful elections which took place in Southern Cameroons in 1951, 1953, 1957, 1959 and 1961 rendered Southern Cameroonian politicians to be politically more mature even than those from the Republic of Cameroon. This contradicts the view that Southern Cameroonian politicians went to Foumban as inexperienced politicians. In Chapter Three (pp. 67-100) of his volume Anthony Ndi recaptures, with nostalgia, how Southern Cameroons before up to 1965;

...had extensively developed an evolved, mature political culture...led by a range of: simple, visionary, austere, honest, peace-loving and realistic leaders, almost without exception –vintage products of their epoch. Distinguished by good governance; throughout it organized free, fair and transparent elections, peaceful handover of power and enjoyed free primary adult education. It was further with an ideal, efficient civil service, literally, corruption free.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, in referring to the Foncha cabinet, Malcolm Milne noted, “then I was dealing with individual Ministers, with Cabinet Committees or in the case of the Southern Cameroons with a small government. Almost without exception they were people of high intelligence who knew exactly what they wanted”.<sup>20</sup>

Many Historians, scholars and politicians have argued that Foncha and Muna were not well educated and hence could not make for any strong bargaining for the Southern Cameroons before, during and after the Foumban Constitutional Conference of 1961. This assertion gives the impression that Foncha and Muna were the only key figures who represented the Southern Cameroon’s delegation to Foumban. This is misleading because the Foncha-led delegation was made up of twenty-five members including Dr. E.M.L. Endeley and experienced journalists like Motomby-Woleta, N.N. Mbile to name but a few. The Southern Cameroons delegation to Foumban was competent and from the cumulative experience of having attended more sophisticated constitutional conferences in Nigeria, London and New York besides those in Southern Cameroons (Mamfe, Buea and Bamenda), knew exactly what they wanted. In fact, their Francophone counterparts did not have similar experiences. More so, the Cameroonian students in Nigeria, the UK and France provided a powerful intellectual background, forming a think tank to churn out political ideas for the KNDP, and clearly explained the different positions taken by the different political parties as to the fate of Southern Cameroons; in the debates at the UN and on the Plebiscite questions. Anthony Ndi makes nonsense of the relationship between academic qualifications and political leadership by comparing politicians of Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon and concluding that Ahidjo, who failed the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) in his first attempt; and was even one of the least educated, became the most successful politician. Ndi equally brings in the sagacity of Traditional Rulers, who were good administrators under the British policy of Indirect Rule, with little or no Western education.

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<sup>17</sup> Speech by EML Endeley cited in Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> cited in Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, p. 104.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Malcolm Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven: From Apex to Nadir- Colonial Service in Nigeria, Aden, the Cameroons and the Gold Coast, 1938-61* (Oxford: Meon Hill Press, 1999), p. 254.

### On the Plebiscite

And now, were the Plebiscite options “twisted to be a struggle between Grassfields (Foncha) and Forest (Endeley)” as many have been made to believe? Ndi calls this assertion as “radical allegations” and provides statistics of the voting patterns in favour of Secession from Nigeria and the plebiscite results to argue that the questions were not twisted to be between “the Bamenda man” and “the Bakweri man”. Following election statistics<sup>21</sup>, it is clear that the struggle was between two politicians who had supporters throughout the Southern Cameroons. Evidently, not all the 233,571 Southern Cameroon voters who voted for reunification came from the Grassland (Bamenda) and not all the 97, 916 who voted in favour of integration with Nigeria came from the Forest region (or were Bakwerians). To be clearer, the Victoria and Mamfe Divisions in the Forest region voted overwhelmingly for Foncha (reunification). In Victoria 22, 082 people voted for Foncha as against 11, 916 for Endeley. In Mamfe, 33,267 voted for Foncha as against 10,070 for Endeley. Victoria and Mamfe are not in Bamenda but voted for Foncha. In the same light, Nkambe in the Bamenda Grassland voted overwhelmingly for Endeley (Integration with Nigeria), and not for Foncha, the “Bamenda man”.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Endeley got most of his votes not from his Bakweri backyard, but from far away Nkambe and Kumba. Therefore, it is historically misleading and unrealistic to argue that the Plebiscite question was twisted between the “Bamenda man” versus the “Bakweri man”.

The interview of the *Summit Magazine* and many other write-ups allege that Foncha did not add legal experts in his team to Foumban and consequently had a “raw deal”. Such allegations too need to be revisited to put the facts of history straight. First of all, the Southern Cameroons Delegation to Foumban had legal minds like the British Attorney General, Mr. G. B. Smith in the territory that made substantial contributions. May be the argument is that there was no Southern Cameroonian legal mind in Foncha’s delegation. Even at that, Ndi argues that the Southern Cameroons Bar Association was formed on 6 June 1961 and was only authorized as the West Cameroon Bar Association in November 1963, and as such could not have rendered any legal advice before its authorization. Fon Angwafor III of Mankon,<sup>23</sup> the only living member of the Southern Cameroons delegation to Foumban (as of 2013) intimates that, “If there were no legal experts at the time, we couldn’t have had them. We went with our British legal minds who were boys at the legal department at the time”.<sup>24</sup>

### On the Distortions of History

In yet another distortion of facts, Tricia Efange Oben, in her book, *Women of the Reunification*, insinuates that the CPNC was absent in Foumban because “the winners of the 1961 plebiscite, the Foncha faction did not want any of the losers to go with them and the Endeleys were definitely in the opposite faction. *Not even one CPNC politician was invited to Foumban*”<sup>25</sup> A more careful research unveils that of the twenty-five man Southern Cameroons delegation to Foumban, “the KNDP and the CPNC each had four delegates and five others; the House of Chiefs had nine delegates, the One Kamerun party had two delegates, the Officials: The Attorney General, Mr. J. Dixon and Dr. Bernard N., Fonlon (the translator and official photographer). In addition the CPNC took along a press team with Mr. Wem Muambo in charge of

<sup>21</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, pp 114-135.

<sup>22</sup> V.G.Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods*, Limbe: Mavmillan Publishers Limited, 1989, pp.153-154. See, Victor Julius Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification: 1955-1961* (Limbe: Presprint Plc, 2011), pp. 38-40.

<sup>23</sup> Fon Angwafor III of Mankon by the time of the book review in December 2013 was the only surviving member of the Southern Cameroonian delegation to the Foumban Conference. He personally attended the book launch/review and confirmed much of what the author Prof. Anthony Ndi and the reviewer, Dr. Dze-Ngwa raised.

<sup>24</sup> Interview in the *Summit Magazine* of October-December, 2013, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Tricia Efange Oben, *Women of the Reunification*, Mumbia-India: New Media Communication Pvt Ltd, 2011, p.55.(Emphasis is mine).

the CPNC Mouthpiece, the *Champion Newspaper*.<sup>26</sup> Tricia Efange Oben's work adds to the Conspiracy Theories against Foncha and his ideologies. According to Ndi, such hasty allegations are some of the distortions of facts of history "that continue to be peddled, contaminate fertile minds and further polarize and deepen the gulf especially between the North and South West Regions of Cameroon."<sup>27</sup> The simple question is why all these distortions?

### Was the Fouban Conference a Raw Deal for Southern Cameroons?

Many are those who argue that the Southern Cameroons had a "raw deal" in Fouban. This issue is vividly handled in Chapter Six of Anthony Ndi's volume. The author unveils mind-searching communiqués from Ahidjo, Foncha and other personalities to the effect that Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon reunified as equal independent states.<sup>28</sup> N.N. Mbile, Emmanuel Tabi Egbe both attest to the fact that "if the Fouban Constitutional arrangement is under criticism today, it is precisely because bad faith has crept into the Francophone-Anglophone relationship".<sup>29</sup> I hold the view that the Federal Constitution was not a "Raw Deal". Simply put, the adopted constitution which had several provisions which protected the minority position of the Southern Cameroonians was not respected. May be a representative list of some of the provisions should mentioned here for clarity sake.

To begin with, Article 1 of the Federal Constitution read in part that:

The Federal Republic of Cameroon is formed, as from 1 October 1961, of the Territory of the Republic of Cameroon, henceforth called East Cameroon, and the Territory of Southern Cameroons formerly under United Kingdom administration henceforth called West Cameroon.

This article meant that reunification was based on parity between the two states of West and East Cameroon with some rights reserved for the federated states. Ahidjo later disregarded this provision by stating that negotiations for the reunification were between "the Cameroon Republic and territory under British trusteeship [which] constituted a single historic unit... But on the other hand, they were two distinct political entities: **on one side, an independent sovereign state possessing an international legal personality; on the other, a territory without a political international status**" (Emphasis is mind).

Article 9 (2) of the same constitution stated that: "**The President and Vice-President of the Federal Republic ... may not come from the same Federated State**" (Emphasis is mind). This provision too was disregarded between 1975 and 1992 as the Presidents and their Prime Ministers both came from Francophone Cameroon. With the current political dispensation since November 2013, the highest Anglophone in terms of state protocol comes in at the fourth position of Prime Minister after the President of the Republic, the President of the Senate and the President of the National Assembly who are all Francophones<sup>30</sup>.

Again, Article 18 of the Federal Constitution stated that:

Before a law is promulgated, the President of the Federal Republic may request second reading thereof, either of his own motion or at the request of either of the Prime Ministers of the Federated states. On second reading, the law shall be adopted only if the majority specific in the preceding article comprises a majority of the votes of the deputies of each of the Federated states. (Emphasis is mine).

At the time, West Cameroon had 10 out of 50 members of parliament in the Federal Assembly. Before any law could be adopted, it needed the approval of at least six members from West Cameroon and at least 21

<sup>26</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, pp. 145-147.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 158.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 176.

<sup>30</sup> *New Broom Magazine*, p.29.

members from East Cameroon. Consequently, if 5 members of parliament from West Cameroon opposed a bill it could not be adopted even if all the 40 members from East Cameroon voted in favour of it. Since the West Cameroonians were a permanent minority, the strategy of simple majority was gradually instituted and even if all the 10 parliamentarians of West Cameroon opposed a bill, it could still be adopted if 26 out of the 40 East Cameroon parliamentarians supported it.

Above all, Article 47 of the Federal Constitution ensured the inviolability of the Federation. This article read in part as follows:

No bill to amend the constitution may be introduced if it tends to impair the unity and integrity of the constitution. (Emphasis is mine).

The power to initiate the revision of the constitution shall belong equally to the President of the Federal Republic, after consultation with the Prime Ministers of the Federal states, and the deputies of the Federal Assembly.

Any proposal for revision submitted by the Deputies must be signed by at least one-third of the members of the Federal Assembly.

Proposal for revision shall be adopted by simple majority vote of the members of the Federal Assembly *provided that such majority includes a majority of the representatives of the Federated states* (Emphasis is mine).

After 1972, the whole Federal Constitution was dumped in favour of unitary state constitution. By Law N° 84/1 of February 4, 1984 the name of the country was changed from the “United Republic” to the “Republic of Cameroon,” the name adopted by French-administered Cameroon at independence on January 1, 1960.

With the above, it is clear that the Federal Constitution was not a “raw deal”. It was rather the manner in which the Constitution unfolded that was “Raw”. Even Dr. E. M. L. Endeley himself did not see a “raw deal” in the constitution they came out with when he noted that “...let us not quarrel about the constitution, let us quarrel over the spirit with which we shall make this constitution work.”<sup>31</sup> Immediately after reunification, Albert Mukong, Bernard Fonlon and even Foncha protested against the manner in which the Federal Constitution was being implemented. Foncha and his peers, therefore, got the best they could for their people, so the blame on the present plight of the Anglophones lies elsewhere. This view is strengthened by the fact that during the Anglophone Conferences in Buea (1993) and Bamenda (1994), and during the subsequent pleas from the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), there was a popular call among Anglophones including intellectuals and legal luminaries Prof. Carlson Anyangwe, Dr. Simon Munzu, Dr. Yongmbang, Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad, Benjamin Itoe, for a return to the Federal status quo of 1961-1971, as the best option to guarantee internal cohesion Cameroon.

### **On Secret Deals**

In another popular allegation and as contained in the *Summit Magazine*'s interview of April-May 2011, Foncha made “secret deals” and hid the constitutional draft proposals from his peers prior to the Fouban conference. Was there actually a secret deal? In Chapter Seven (pp.197-222) of his book, Dr. Ndi raises the issue and argues that the issue of a “Secret deal” was made-up by Commissioner J.O Fields and “blown out of proportion by Malcolm Milne” with the intention to sanction Foncha for his stubbornness against association with Nigeria. With clear documented sources, Anthony Ndi demonstrates that there were no “secret deals” between Ahidjo and Foncha”. Ndi intimates that the so-called draft document was actually and officially received, discussed, considered but rejected in May 1961 by the entire Foncha cabinet in the

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<sup>31</sup> Cited in Ngho, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification*, p. 77.

presence and with the advice of Mr. BG Smith, the Attorney General of Southern Cameroons. How could a rejected document be tabled again at the Bamenda All Party Conference in June 1961?

Moreover, if there was a hidden Constitution, in what language was it written? Certainly in French! The question is, could Foncha read and understand French by 1961? Certainly not! Such a document would have required a translation and the only translator at the time was Dr. Bernard Fonlon. Researchers are still to establish whether or not the venerated Bernard Fonlon connived with Foncha to hide the constitutional proposal. Granted that there was a hidden document, how was it transmitted to Foncha? Any such transactions should have had official dispatching and receiving notes. There are no such documents.

One of the many allegations against Foncha is that he had secret deals with Ahidjo to be appointed Vice President of the new federation of Cameroon. At least every history document holds true that prior to the effective reunification of the two Cameroons on October 1, 1961, Foncha was the undisputed democratically elected Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons from January 1959. He was the principal victor at the UN organized plebiscite of February 11, 1961 and the architect of “inclusive reunification” with French Cameroon. Based on these realities, did Foncha really need any negotiation to be Vice President? Could that position have logically gone to E.M.L. Endeley? Certainly not! To N. N. Mbile? I doubt! To S. T. Muna? Perhaps! Certainly, not to Ndeh Ntumazah, Albert Mukong, A.N. Jua or Motomby-Woleta. John Ngu Foncha at that particular historical moment was more than the right person to assume that position, so any allegations that Foncha negotiated the vice presidency of the new federation remains wanting in both science and logic. Unfortunately, this projection of Foncha has been adopted and spread by some contemporary politicians, journalists, teachers and students of History without adequate cross-examination of facts and figures. Ndi summarizes these accusations as “Smear Campaigns and Conspiracy Theories”<sup>32</sup> which need to be re-examined and corrected through more rigorous research.

Still pursuing the “blame game,” Foncha and the entire Southern Cameroonian political elite have been blamed and tagged as selfish politicians for not securing the “Third Option” which was projected and defended by P.M. Kale and the traditional authorities in the territory. This option required the territory to achieve independence as a separate political entity from both French Cameroon and Nigeria. Why was the “Third Option” not given Southern Cameroonians? In Chapter Eight of his book Ndi continues to expose the different forms and strategies of conspiracy against Foncha and his cabinet; and the determination of Britain to prevent Southern Cameroon’s independence. He reveals, among other things, that the Afro-Asian Bloc was against Southern Cameroon standing alone as a separate political entity; that the British took sides with Endeley and pressurized Foncha to abandon reunification and embrace association with Nigeria; that America feared that by standing alone, Foncha will be influenced by the pro-communist forces of the UPC, Kwame Nkrumah and Patrice Lumumba.<sup>33</sup> Foncha had no great choice as the plebiscite questions were simply imposed by Britain and her friends. Understandably, this was within the context of the “Cold War”.

These conspiracies against the Southern Cameroons notwithstanding, Ndi’s Chapters Nine (pp. 259-290) and Ten (pp-291-320) present revelations from the Declassified “British Secret Papers” against some indictments on Foncha, which he calls “brash unsubstantiated accusations against Foncha.”<sup>34</sup> To corroborate his arguments Ndi unveils Malcolm Milne’s apologies, confessions, disclosures, fears and regrets, about the British dealings and manipulations in Southern Cameroons as confirmed in the British Secret Papers. In his

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<sup>32</sup> Ndi, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 223-258.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 259-267.

apologies Malcolm Milne posits “that the British owe an obligation to right the wrongs done these gentle people” of Southern Cameroon<sup>35</sup>.

Anthony Ndi reminds us what History should be and his book is a major contribution to the debates on the historiography of Cameroon. It gives an open-ended zeal for more effective research in order to reconstruct the verifiable and near true history of Cameroon. This is a great challenge for researchers to enrich the history and intellectual growth of Cameroon.

### **A critic of the book**

The author’s brilliant work notwithstanding, like any scientific work, has a few points to be reconsidered. First of all, in my humble opinion, part of the title: *Southern West Cameroon* should have been explained to clarify its meaning as used in this volume since there was never any Southern West Cameroon as such. We understand the author is writing about the “Southern Cameroons” up to 1961 and “West Cameroon” from 1961 to 1972. May be a simple slash (/) between “Southern” and “West” (Southern/West Cameroon) should have been self explicit. Secondly, there is an interesting sub-title in all the even-numbered pages of the book which reads: *A Tale of International Conspiracy and Treachery*. My opinion is that this should have been part of the title of the book before appearing as such; otherwise it should not appear at all. Thirdly, there is a slight problem of punctuation in the title. For clarity sake, I thought there should be a **comma** after the word “Revisited” and then a **column** after 1972. Therefore, Instead of *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950 – 1972 Unveiling Inescapable Traps*, it should be *Southern/West Cameroon Revisited, 1950 – 1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps*. Fifthly, to my mind, Anthony Ndi’s book should have been reduced to just about 6 Chapters if all the repetitions were avoided. However, the author notes that the repetitions are simply for the sake of emphases. Lastly, the book is so interesting that the language should have been milder for everyone to be able to read and understand the content clearly. This is not the case. Lastly, Anthony Ndi’s book does not raise sufficient concrete critique on some of the inabilities and shortcomings in the way Foncha handled some of the issues before, during and after the reunification process. Evidently, Foncha was not a saint in politics. Understandably, Dr. Ndi did not set this as one of the objectives of his book. These opinions do not in any way reduce the beauty of the book.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is worth stating that Anthony Ndi’s book, *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950 – 1972: Unveiling Inescapable Traps* is a well-researched, beautifully crafted and revealing document on the historiography of Cameroon. The importance of the content of the book cuts across all classes of the Cameroonian society and as such is destined to every researcher, teacher, student, politician and patriotic Cameroonian, eager to move Cameroon forward in concord and harmony so that we may together right the wrongs of the past and avoid “inescapable traps” today for the sake of a better tomorrow. It should be an anniversary present for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the independence of Southern Cameroons and the reunification of the Cameroons as we start preparing the anniversary of the next fifty years. Most importantly, some of the points raised in this book still require more engaged research as indicated by the author.

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<sup>35</sup> Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven*, pp. 446-8.

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