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***THE PARADOX OF THE PARTI UNIFIÉ WITHIN THE MENCHUM  
SECTION OF THE CNU IN THE CAMEROON FEDERATION***

***Paradoxul Partidului Unificat (Parti Unifié) în cadrul diviziunii Menchum a  
Uniunii Naționale Cameruneze***

*Abstract:* Cameroon gained independence in 1960 and later reunification in 1961 as a multi-party practicing state. The different political parties in both states of East and West Cameroon maintained the traditional antagonism that existed among the various parties prior to independence and reunification of the territory. This party division was interpreted by the nation's leadership as detrimental to national integration and unity. Consequently, the need for a one party system that would guarantee such a union and fulfill the "greater political desires" of Cameroonians (national unity and integration) emerged. The need to attain this was expressed in the call for and putting in place of a one party system which was styled *parti unifié* and named the Cameroon National Union (CNU). This paper argues that the existing inter and intra party fragments that existed in multi-party Cameroon, with particular reference to Menchum Section, were inherited by the *parti unifié* and consequently national unity and integration remained threatened. It asserts that the existence of intra as well as inter party differences in the multi-party setting were rather an opportunity for the country's leadership to ensure a one party dominance in Cameroon and that for this reason the developmental propaganda of the party was not attained to an appreciable extent (at least in the Menchum Section of the party).

*Keywords:* alignment, competition, division, power, Cameroon, Cameroon National Union, Menchum, *parti unifié*, multi-party.

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The independence of most African countries was achieved under multi-party political systems. Considering that these regimes were experimenting party politics, they simply tried in the first instance to emulate what had been inherited from the colonial regimes. Hence, politically speaking, the new Africa was simply a roll back of the colonial regime. This situation was worsened by the fact that

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African boundaries were totally artificial. They had been created at the whims of European politicians with little or no regard for Africa's multitude of pre-colonial nation states and village communities<sup>1</sup>. This had been achieved through recognition of artificial rulers in Africa in general and in Menchum Division in particular, thereby creating a multiplicity of local boundaries which caused serious problems of national unity after independence. In the Nigerian Federation, for instance, the citizens of these British-created states were in their minds primarily Yuroba, Igbo, Hausa, etc rather than Nigerians<sup>2</sup> - a situation that was very instrumental in causing the Biafra War of 1967. In Cameroon, there was the primacy of English and French culture (territorially defined as the states of East and West Cameroon) over nationhood. Party identities were yet another dividing force, characterized by inter and intra party disharmony. These divisions thus established the bases for the struggle toward national integrity throughout the continent. In view of the fact that the power strata was predominantly in the hands of politicians, they saw need for the establishment of single political parties to ensure a greater degree of national integration and unity. These efforts brought together people of diverse political affiliations, interests and ideologies, making the parties fragile and subject to disintegration.

In Cameroon, the move toward a one party political order was initiated by President Ahmadou Ahidjo, beginning from September 1960 when he called for the creation of a "Great National Party" during a *Union Camerounaise* (UC) Congress in Maroua<sup>3</sup>. In a press conference, Ahidjo justified the call for the formation of a Great National Party in the following words:

*"We are faced by the unfortunate fact (...) that National Unity has not been achieved (...) and African leaders think that by establishing a Great National Party-I prefer to call it a Unified rather than a single party, they will create this national unity...These leaders have feared the existence of several different parties, which unfortunately spring very often in Africa from tribal sources...Therefore a policy which would encourage the creation of many different parties would run counter to the objectives of national unity."*<sup>4</sup>

This implies that the quest for national unity stood at the center of the formation of a single party government in Cameroon. As such, different political opinions were to sink for the birth of the "great national unified party" with Ahmadou Ahidjo at the helm. To attain this goal, all political parties in East

1 K. Shellington, *History of Africa*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1989, p. 408.

2 *Ibidem*.

3 E. N. Tiembukong, *The One Party Political System in Cameroon, 1966 to 1990: How it Functioned and Why it Collapsed*, Maitrise Dissertation, Yaounde I, 1993, p. 12.

4 The Political Bureau of the Cameroon National Union, *The Political Philosophy of Ahmadou Ahidjo*, Paul Bory Publishing Company, Monte Carlo, 1968, p. 56.

Cameroon merged into the UC prior to the 1965 elections<sup>5</sup>. The UC, Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), Cameroon Peoples National Convention (CPNC) and the Cameroun United Convention (CUC) finally merged to become the Cameroon National Union (CNU) on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1966.<sup>6</sup> This merger created lapses as militants primarily identified themselves as former KNDP, CPNC and CUC as was the case in West Cameroon, Menchum Division inclusive, before identifying themselves as members of the unifying CNU. Hence the degree of unity brought about by the CNU depended on the ability of these former militants to neglect their old party allegiance. With this old leanings serving as points of convergence for competition, such existing lines were maintained and the CNU thus remained a unifying party in theory, at least to the best wishes of its propagators.

Thus, there is the glaring fact that the CNU was nothing but a mere merger of political parties considering that some political actors in East Cameroon accepted the idea of a one party system for their safety<sup>7</sup>.

As a result, within the CNU - which was aimed at ensuring national unity with the hope of putting an end to all political struggles in order to realize a common concerted action towards the economic and social development of the Cameroons<sup>8</sup> - political actors were bundled up in divisions along old party lines, heightened by Christian denominational differences and sectional traditional political unit division. As this drew towards the national bureau, the lines of division were heightened by the centralist versus federalist divide.

The different political party identities that merged to form the CNU remained in existence within the new party system. In Menchum, two identities developed, characterized by the KNDP/CPNC split: there was a group headed by A.N. Jua of the former KNDP with Patrick Mua, Hon. Mendi, Chief Ngha of Magha, Pius Kidze, Cyril Munteh against that of Joseph Che Kangkolo heading a group of mixed former CUC and CPNC and drawing support from the Fon of Bum, Fon Nsom Ngwe of Kom, Chief Wallang Mbong of Aghem, Joseph Kum, Elias Chia, Solomon Wainfoin and S.N. Nji.<sup>9</sup> These factions guided the events of political power competition in the division. Such political twiddling was because the political

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<sup>5</sup> Tiembukong, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> V.G. Fanzo, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2 the Colonial and Post Colonial Periods*, Macmillan, London, 1989, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> V.J. Ngoh, *Cameroon 1885-1985: A Hundred Years of History*, Navi-Group Publication, Limbe, 1988, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> P.W. Tengen, *West Cameroon Political Institutions since Internal Self Government*, B. A. Dissertation in History, Yaounde, 1969, pp. 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> Cameroon National Union (CNU), DAW, C.56, 1967, p. 89. Sources reveal that, though S.N. Nji was now of the CPNC faction, the members of this political camp were very sceptic of him considering that he was formerly of the KNDP.

elite wanted to win votes in order to eliminate their opponents and maintain their stay in office. Consequently, both groups struggled to secure leadership positions for their followers during party organization and reorganization and in this way heightened tension within the party. In this process, the senior politicians introduced their cronies (militants of their former parties and/or members of their respective Christian denomination) to occupy executive positions in the basic organs of the party with the aim of using them as voters for positions in the senior organs and spreading their propaganda at grassroots level. It was on the basis of these dynamics that division among political leaders in the division was set. At this level, the party's fragmentation was influenced by its structure.

By the structure of the CNU, cells and branches were spread all over the division such that cells were to merge to form branches. The initial organization of these organs was the first demonstration of the division of the Menchum Section of the party along old party inclinations. This was because those who had been prominent within the leading West Cameroon political party (KNDP) wanted their prominence maintained. According to Kangkolo<sup>10</sup>, this was the reason for which destitute and allegiance along old party lines was maintained. Hence, the unification of political shades and opinions in order to facilitate development throughout the national territory was not achieved in Menchum as it rather intensified the rift orchestrated by old party allegiance and the struggle for dominance. This was evident in the Wum Central Subdivision during the organization, in 1967, of the first cells and branches.

During this organization every village in the subdivision constituted itself into one or more cells depending on its population and the diversity of the local political actors. Two or more cells were to merge to form a branch. Competition or conflicts over executive positions at the level of the cells was very acute though not as tense as was the case during the subsection and section elections. This was because local leaders of former political parties struggled to tilt leadership positions in the newly created party to their different camps<sup>11</sup>. For instance, in Kesu-Aghem militants close to Rev. Chief Jeremiah Chi Kangsen<sup>12</sup> supported Godfrey Njuh Kelly, a former CPNC militant, to become president of the cell that was based in the Kesu palace. In the same vein, *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong supported Anthony Kebang at Zonghokwo. At Magha, Chief Ngha supported Benjamin Kum, a former

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, aged 76, former West Cameroon Secretary of State for Natural Resources and Member of Parliament for the Wum area, Wum, January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Note should be taken that though Rev. Jeremiah Chi Kangsen had retired from politics as early as 1962, he was still a political icon in the eyes of his former political proponents. As such they continued to stay on his political rails.

KNDP militant to the office of president of the CNU cell. It is worthy to note here that the chiefs became ex-officio members of their respective cells in order to avoid party competition with their subjects<sup>13</sup>. However, the support and counter-support given by chiefs to or against militants of their choice created a rift between these natural rulers thereby creating difficulties of administering their subjects at polity level.

It was within this backdrop that tension emerged between Tselegha and Zonghokwo as both cells were to merge to form a branch. In this case, it is held that Patrick Mua and wife Josepha Namen Mua wanted to combine Tselegha and Zonghokwo in order to eliminate any Wallang Mbong-supported candidate at branch level<sup>14</sup>. When the Tselegha cell went to Zonghokwo for the 1967 organisation of the branch, the chief of Tselegha together with his cell members were denied representation by the Zonghokwo cell. This was a counter move by the CNU militants of Zonghokwo to ensure that Patrick Mua was not part of the subsection executive. In line with this, administrative reports hold that Hon. Patrick Mua and wife Josepha Namen Mua did not hold branch offices within the CNU in 1967<sup>15</sup>. Implicitly, they were not to hold offices in the Subsection and consequently the Menchum Section of the CNU in 1967. This move was sponsored against Hon. Patrick Mua by the *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong in revenge of the loss of his seat in the West Cameroon House of Chiefs in 1962, which he blamed on Patrick Mua. The latter is alleged to have exploited this opportunity to punish Wallang Mbong, the paramount Fon of Aghem, for campaigning in favour of integration (CPNC) during the 1961 plebiscite<sup>16</sup>. This situation resulted in rising tension between the authorities of Tselegha and those of Zonghokwo. Fortunately, the timely intervention of the forces of law and order restored calm between both chiefdoms. Describing this scenario, the SDO for Menchum, Oscar Bokwe, noted that:

*"[...] from what was seen, one could only draw the conclusion that the much talked of unity in certain sections of the community was mere lip-service. Predominantly among them are the Beba-Befang, Esimbi and Aghem clans where the population showed an unforgivable attitude of old party leaning. A little of the attitude was also demonstrated by the people of Kom clan. Two clans stand distinctly – and if the others can emulate it will go a long way to cement the very foundation for CNU, the party every citizen looks forward for its survival."*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Simon Kutcha, aged 68, former Parliamentarian, Wum, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>15</sup> DAW, C-DWM 65, Vol. III, 1971, Surete Reports (SR), p. 445.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> NAB, Ig(1970)1, 1970, Election Offences - the People Versus Chief Wallang Warrarrah, p. 34.

In other words, the political atmosphere in Menchum Division under the one party system was a complete contrast to the expectations of the party leadership as the gap between militants of the different political leanings created by multi-partism in the colonial era was not closed up. This implies that punishment of “former” political rivals within the CNU was responsible for the split of the party along old lines of political disagreement. Consequently, the socio-economic development aspirations of the party were not attained.

At section and subsection levels, these borders became more extensive as this was the time for those introduced in the executive at cell and branch level to give returns to those who had fought for or sponsored their elections to these offices. The newly established identities were thus put in play to determine the direction to which the division’s new political leadership would sustain, that is, either the former KNDP or CPNC. In this respect, the different identities established separate lists for competition for elective posts as illustrated in the table below.

**The Establishment of Former Political Party Alignments during the 1969  
Reorganisation Campaigns<sup>18</sup>**

Name of Candidate	Position solicited	Former Political Alignment
Augustine Ngum Jua	Section President and Kom/Bum Subsection President	KNDP
Chief Ngha of Magha	Subsection President	KNDP
Cyril Munteh	Kom/Bum Subsection President	KNDP
Fon of Bum	Section President	CPNC
S.N. Nji <sup>19</sup>	Section President	CPNC
Joseph Che Kangkolo	Section Secretary	CPNC
Chief Wallang Mbong	Wum Subsection President	CPNC
Chief Nsom Ngwe,	Kom/Bum Subsection President	CPNC
Kum E. Joseph	Wum Subsection President	CPNC
Elias Chia	Wum Subsection Secretary	CPNC
Solomon Wainfoin	Wum Subsection Secretary	CPNC

<sup>18</sup> Source: DAW/C.56, Cameroon National Union, 1967, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Though S.N. Nji was kept in the former CPNC list, he was actually of the defunct KNDP. His candidacy was probably included to attract younger politicians of his following from the former KNDP camp and dismantle the chances of success of their opponent. Sources reveal that it was for this reason that he added the candidacy of the fon of Bum for the position of Section President.

Note should be taken that the former CPNC list had more than a single person per position with the exception of the position of the Kom/Bum subsection president. In an interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, it was revealed that this was intended to distract their group members from the attitude of political carpet crossing in search of executive positions.

At the end of these reorganizations, the following results were obtained: fon Nsom Ngwe of Kom became President of the Kom/Bum Subsection, President and Vice President of the Section, S.N. Nji President of the Section, Joseph Che Kangkolo Section Secretary, Joseph E. Kum Section Treasurer, Chief Ngha of Magha President of Wum Subsection.<sup>20</sup> Implicitly, the executive of the party in the division was made up of people of diverse political background. Considering that the militants were divided by their background, it became difficult for party propaganda and objectives to be attained as CNU militants paid allegiance to their former party leaders. This was made worst by the fact that the political elite, national senior members of the party who did not hold any executive position in the section, became uninterested in party issues and even abandoned the coordination of party activities which was supposed to be their responsibility. Such attitudes were swiftly followed by their cronies.<sup>21</sup> For instance, after failing to sustain membership in the executive of the section and subsection in 1969, Augustine Ngum Jua, member of the political bureau of the CNU who prior to the reorganisation of the party in the area was the Subsection President for the Kom/Bum area and was supervising the construction of the party secretariat, gave it up. This, according to the SDO for Menchum, Oscar A. Bokwe, was a means to support or ensure the failure of the party's executive.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the failure to attain set goals resulted in accusations and counter accusations between party members as was seen in the case between fon Nsom Ngwe of Kom and Hon. A. N. Jua aimed possibly at victimising those with executive power. These reorganizational election results therefore actually became the substance of division within the party and to an appreciable extent marred the attainment of party goals.

These political alignments were further emphasized by religious allegiance characterized by the former CPNC/KNDP split, the Presbyterian versus Catholic split and inter-chiefdom divide. In Aghem, the former CPNC were predominantly Presbyterian with a strong base at Zonghokwo and Kesu, whereas the former KNDP was Catholic dominated and having no chiefdom as a strong hold though there were instances of more people of Magha and Waindugho militating in the party. The

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<sup>20</sup> Political and Economic Report for Menchum Division for Quarter ending 1969, pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Ref. No. 01/Vol. 2/210, Public Opinion in Menchum Division about the CNU, Surete Service Report, April 13, 1971.

<sup>22</sup> Political and Economic Report for Menchum Division for Quarter ending 1969, p. 2.

situation in Kom was a little more complex; where religious influences shifted with differences in the three valley settlements that make up the fondom that is; the Belo, Fundong and Njinikom valleys. Here the Baptist (mixed former KNC and later CPNC and KNDP) dominated in the Belo and Fundong valleys whereas the Catholics also of mixed party linings dominated in the Fundong valley. However, the dominant Christian denomination in the fondom in terms of political participation was the Baptist church. This denominational division was at its height in the Kom/Bum area during the 1975 re-organisation. This state of affairs affected even the traditional political set-up and heightened the degree of political disharmony that existed in the division prior to the creation of the CNU. Thus the identities of Magha, Waindugho, Zonghokwo continued to have precedence over the Aghem identity, like were those of Belo, Fundong and Njinikom over the Kom Fondom.

By 1969, when the second CNU reorganization was conducted, three aspects of intra-party disentanglement were identifiable in Menchum. There was the struggle by chiefs to secure office position for either themselves or their cronies, the segmentation along old party lines by the elite political leaders and the grouping along Christian denominational thoughts. As preparation for the reorganization of the CNU in 1969, Joseph Che Kangkolo, West Cameroon Secretary of State for Natural Resources, travelled to Wum on a private visit. During this visit he was reported to be holding private meetings with the purpose of getting members of the re-organisation commission of the CNU to select branch executive members from among members of his choice.<sup>23</sup> The first of such meetings was held on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1969 at Hon. J.C. Kangkolo's residence in Wum and was attended by Hon S.N. Nji, Daniel Mfensen and Joseph Kum to mention just a few.<sup>24</sup> During this meeting emphasis was put on religious denominational differences as it was a taboo and act of treason to talk about old party alignments. In this light, Joseph Che Kankolo of the former CPNC is quoted to have said: "the former West Cameroon Government was Catholic dominated but now the government is Presbyterian and therefore everything possible must be done to fill all CNU organs and executives with Presbyterians."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand there were members of the former KNDP led by Hon. Patrick Mua and wife Josepha Namen Mua. This situation led to constant manipulation of members of the reorganization committee of the CNU in the Wum Subsection resulting in quarrels and demonstrations against the reorganization team. The former KNDP alignment headed by Patrick Mua emerged victorious in this 1969 reorganisation at the level of the Wum Central Subsection of the party.

<sup>23</sup> Ref. No P.3/727, Activities of Hon. Kangkolo, Surete Service Report Wum, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.



There were two implications of the above results. One was that *dengkeghem* WallangMbong considered the CNU reorganization in Menchum unreliable and for this reason began to abstain during elections, while making request for his proponents to abstain as well. Secondly, the fact that Hon. Patrick Mua was Wum Central Subsection president made him favourable in the composition of the list for the general elections that were upcoming in 1970.

To tilt the political tides to his own favour, *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong began work for the replacement of Hon. Patrick Mua as representative of the Aghem (the Wum Central Subsection of the CNU) as early as February 1970. This began as a direct reaction to the nomination of Solomon Tandeng Muna in replacement of John Ngu Foncha as vice presidential candidate for the 1970 elections. An “anti-Hon. Patrick Mua” meeting convened by Godfrey Njuh Kelly was secretly held on the night of March 11<sup>th</sup> 1970.<sup>26</sup> It resolved to address a letter to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon, Solomon Tandeng Muna, congratulating him for his nomination and requesting the replacement of Hon. Patrick Mua with Anthony Kebang. Thus the nomination of Solomon Tandeng Muna as Vice Presidential candidate heightened former political alignments in Menchum division as it gave new hope to militants of the defunct CUC and CPNC.<sup>27</sup>

To counter *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong and maintain his prominence, Hon. Patrick Mua decided to give his support to the Wanagwen secession in order to benefit the support of the population of Wanagwen<sup>28</sup>. Thusly, infighting within the CNU was contributive to the Aghem fragmentation as this resulted in the administrative recognition of a new chiefdom (Wanagwen) that later split to form the chiefdoms of Wajung, Watwe and Zonghotegha. Those involved had taken upon themselves to displace Hon. Patrick Mua from the House of Assembly without the

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<sup>26</sup> NAB, Ig (1970)1, Election Offences – the People Versus Chief Wallang Warrah, 1970, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note here that following the 1965 KNDP crises Solomon Tandeng Muna broke away from the party and formed the CUC and cooperated with the CPNC which was in the opposition. With the formation of the CNU, the CUC joined the *parti unifié* as a separate party that accepted the merger with equal strength like the KNDP which was the party in power in West Cameroon. Considering that the CUC and the CPNC now sympathised as opposition parties, there were some political affiliations between both parties. It was in line with this that the appointment of Solomon Tandeng Muna as Vice Presidential candidate in 1970 in replacement of John Ngu Foncha was seen by former CPNC militants in Menchum division as a CPNC victory.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Joseph Che Kangkolo, 2011. Wanagwen following the 1959 chieftaincy gazzeting was a quarter to the chiefdom of Zonghokwo, head village of the Aghem Federation of chiefdoms and was at this point in time fighting for autonomy. It should however be noted that Wanagwen was traditionally one of the earliest chiefdoms of the Aghem federation of chiefdoms.

consent of the CNU.<sup>29</sup> As such, they were considered subversive to the party and to the regime with no effect made to their request. As consequence, *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong and his followers became more and more determined to campaign against the June 1970 general elections. In view of the fact that participation in elections was a measuring rod in the nations democratization process, campaigning against national elections was thus an undemocratic move favoured by the existence of socio-political fragments within the CNU.

These anti-election campaigns were aimed at discrediting Hon. Patrick Mua, who at the time was the political leader of the Aghem. This was equally true for *bahtum* Ngha Ezagha Sa'akwo of Magha whose membership in the West Cameroon House of Chiefs was incontestable for as long as Hon. Patrick Mua remained the political representative of the Aghem people. To guarantee a failed election in Aghem, *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong and his political collaborators used the newly enacted Animal Conservation Law to distract the people from voting. To this, they said:

*“Government has implemented the animal conservation law by which act of preservation monkeys and other animals are destroying their crops in the farm (...) monkeys and other animals should be called from the bush to come and vote on 7/6/70.”*<sup>30</sup>

These anti-election campaigns were carried out until the eve of the elections. On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1970 the elections were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere throughout the Aghem federation. Polling was reported to have been heavy throughout the division, with the exception of Zonghokwo where actual vote count was slightly above average. This was because agitation against the Animal Conservation Law was strong in this area. As such, of the 851 voters who registered in Zonghokwo, only 548 voted.<sup>31</sup>

These results became a cause for alarm throughout the Aghem Federation of Chiefdoms. On June 8<sup>th</sup> 1970 complaints were made to the administrative authorities in Wum according to which only about a quarter of the village of Zonghokwo voted.<sup>32</sup> The complainants accused *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong and some notables of campaigning against the elections. In reaction, the National Gendarmerie was charged with the responsibility of investigating the matter. Following the evidences mounted by the National Gendarmerie, 15 people were arrested.<sup>33</sup> Six of them were later discharged and 8, including *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong, were summoned in a

<sup>29</sup> NAB, Ig(1970)1, Election offences-the People Versus Chief Wallang Warrah, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> DAW, C-DWM 65, Vol. III, Suret Reports (SR), p. 667.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 668.

<sup>32</sup> NAB, Ig (1970)1, Election Offences – the People Versus Chief Wallang Warrah, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

special court session at the Wum Court of First Instance. The session, which was presided over by a visiting magistrate, H.E. Tarh, took three days for judgement to be declared.<sup>34</sup> It stated among other things that:

*“That you chief Wallang Warrah [sic] on or before the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1970 at Zonghokwo quarters in Wum in the West Cameroon Magisterial District, did announce to your people not to vote during the federal elections of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1970 contrary to law No 69-LF-16 of 10<sup>th</sup> November 1969 and Punishable under article 100(g) of the law.”*<sup>35</sup>

To further support his judgment, he declared dengkeghem Wallang Mbong and his accomplices guilty of subversion and punishable by ordinance No 62/OF/18 of March 12<sup>th</sup> 1962 and by the terms of article one and two which stated:

*“Article 1: Any person who in any manner whatsoever incites any other person to resist in any manner whatsoever the application of the laws [...] or orders of any public administrative authority [...] shall be liable to a fine of 100 000 to 1 million francs or to imprisonment for a period from 3 months to 3 years or to both such fine and imprisonment.*

*Article 2: Any person [...] who incites hatred against the government [...] or takes part in any subversion enterprise [...] shall be liable to a fine of 200 000 to 2 million francs or to imprisonment for a period of from 1-5 years or both such fine and imprisonment.”*<sup>36</sup>

Following this judgment, *dengkeghem* WallangMbong was sentenced to 12 months of detention or to paying a sum of 50.000 francs. Of the 8 who were summoned alongside *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong, 2 were found guilty. They were each sentenced to 6 months or to a fine of 25.000 francs each. These were Simon Gungo and Anthony Kebang (some administrative documents refer to the latter as Mallem Kibang).<sup>37</sup>

The jail sentence, which was a sort of intimidation put on the people of Aghem who were pro-*dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong, did discourage the *dengkeghem* from political activities but did not nullify the already existing boarder lines that existed within the CNU party. Those who were prominent in the division continued to make it difficult for the CNU party in Aghem to be border free. This continuous division was favoured by mismanagement and/or embezzlement of party resources which resulted in accusation and counter accusations. This extended existing borderlines into the unitary era.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Ph. Lippens and R. A. Joseph, “The Power and the People”, in R. A. Joseph (ed), *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadou Ahidjo*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, 1978, p. 114.

<sup>37</sup> NAB, Ig (1970) 2, Chief Warrah Wallang of Aghem Campaign Against Voting for the Presidential Elections of March 1970, p. 37.

These discrepancies were made worse by the fact that CNU policies under Ahmadou Ahidjo kept alternating to suit the political (rather furtive) objectives for which it was created. In this regard, Ahmadou Ahidjo choose, from a pile of application files, party militants who desired and had actually applied for candidacy to elective positions<sup>38</sup>. This is explained by the fact that elections throughout the national territory were a mere formality through which the will of the head of state was executed. As expressed by Ahidjo:

*"(...) it is necessary that it be understood by candidates that they are not going to be elected because of their popularity, their competence in this or other domain or because of their level of education. They will be elected solely on the basis of their fidelity to the party that is to say to the regime for their capacity to be efficient and loyal pawns in the chessboard of the party."*<sup>39</sup>

This political philosophy gave appointive or representative positions only to those political actors who enjoyed direct or indirect access to the head of state and national chairman of the party through which the state was governed. Under these circumstances, victimization and blackmail became common grounds on which fidelity to party policy and the party chairman was measured. Consequently, cohesion could not be guaranteed by the party as individuals sort to disenfranchise their opponents in order to have access to political power in the existing system.

To achieve these goals, reorganization committees were therefore empowered to take decisions in favour of the views of the national chairman without due consideration of the elections results. In the Kom/Bum Subsection for instance, the rejection of the motion for another tenure of office for President Ahmadou Ahidjo, chair of the CNU, by A. N. Jua was a consequence to a petition against him which resulted in his being considered as subversive to the party and consequently removed from the party's central committee. In connection to this and probably among other reasons, the SDO of the division Cosmas Ivo Ngole Ndelle was given the task to ensure the elimination of A. N. Jua's chances of becoming the Kom/Bum Subsection president of the CNU in 1975<sup>40</sup>. To guarantee this, the candidacy of Reverend Jeremiah Ncham (who was supported by Solomon Tandeng Muna, A. N. Jua's political opponent) was secured. The SDO was therefore to ensure the success of Rev. Jeremiah Ncham against the latter. Thus guided by support from the SDO, who was working on instructions from the party's leadership, Reverend Jeremiah Ncham went campaigning for the position of Subsection president of the Kom/Bum

<sup>38</sup> A. Eyinga, "Government by State of Emergency", in R. A. Joseph (ed), *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon Under Ahmadou Ahidjo*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, 1978, p. 105-106.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

Subsection in all the Baptist Churches of the area. This was followed by an impromptu reorganization election wherein the voting ground was filled by Baptist Christians. Realising that he had a short, yet unofficial notice, A. N. Jua withdrew his candidacy. Consequently, he was beaten in absentia<sup>41</sup>.

By implication therefore, reorganization elections were mere formalities. Where this practice was not directly applicable, other forms of unconventional methods were used to eliminate popular candidates in a bid to give chances to those competitors who found favour in the eyes of the regime's leadership. Such practices tilted party leadership (probably) to those who merited it least and consequently marred the possibility of any political cohesion in the division. The fact that the candidates for elective positions were selected by the party chair and his proxies relinquished the struggle for regional or constituency development as the idea of nation with Ahidjo at the helm remained supreme over all others. In outlook therefore and for the sake of securing their positions, politicians became nationally oriented. This unreal outlook influenced operation of political movements along whatever identities that could discretely serve as a point of convergence since it was a taboo or act of subversion against the state (Ahmadou Ahidjo) to mention party pluralism. Consequently, old party alignments, traditional political unit identities and religious denominational attractions thus served the purpose of group identities with which power tussling was done within the *parti unifiée*. As such the nomenclature of a unified party was based on the ability of the helm to dictate the direction and meaning of unity.

Victimisation was also practiced by senior party officials against their subordinates. This occurred especially in circumstances where party leaders could not attain set goals. This was the case in 1974 when delegates from Menchum Division were barred from participating in the CNU Congress in Douala because the division had not bought a single party card throughout the year.<sup>42</sup> Returning to the division, party leaders struggled to shift the blame on their subordinates within the party, especially on those who happened to be in their opposition. In the Wum Central Subsection, Hon. Joseph Che Kangkolo and Hon. Simon N. Nji shifted the blame to the sale of membership cards by the Aghem Development Committee (ADC). In the Kom/Bum Sub-section the blame was laid on Henry Kini, a former member of the CPNC party.<sup>43</sup> However, in an emergency conference to resolve the

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<sup>40</sup> B. K. Fukachia, "Political Conflicts in Kom, North West Province of Cameroon, 1951-1997: A Political History", DIPES II Dissertation, Yaounde, 1999, pp. 57-58.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Report on the Kom/Bum CNU Sub-section Emergency Conference Held in the Government School Fundong on Thursday March 6, 1975, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> DAW, C. 56, Cameroon National Union, p. 357.

problem of the weakness of the CNU in the Kom/Bum Sub-section Augustine Ngum Jua explained that funds for the sale of party cards in 1973 were still not paid into the national treasury. He however acknowledged that the treasurer of the subsection had in 1974 deposited money for the sale of 1973 cards with a sum of one hundred and forty-two thousand CFAF (142.000 CFAF) pending.<sup>44</sup> The same A.N. Jua claimed that the cards of 1974 had not been sold because of Henry Kini's campaign against the purchase of party cards.<sup>45</sup> This inconsistency proves that the leaders of the party stood against the party progress using their subordinates to cover their misdeeds. Notwithstanding, the blame for this political misfortune of the division was generally placed on the rift among Aghem politicians because of their central position in the division.

However, it is disappointing to uphold that party leadership at national level encouraged victimization as a means of ensuring political dominance, but this was the case. For instance when in 1969 Anthony Ngunjoh advocated the Tanzanian approach to party elections, in which every constituency will put up more than one candidate, he was convicted for subversion and sentenced to 14 months imprisonment with hard labor by a military tribunal<sup>46</sup>. Implicitly, Ahidjo was to retain the powers and rights of nominating "appointing" candidates for representative positions. This he did from among people who were pro-centralist and anti-federalist idealists, whatever their former party inclinations. As such, differences in political ideas and/or future of the country were still a pace setter in the CNU fractionalization process, giving individual political actors victimization and blackmail as option to guarantee their position within the existing setup.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding division within the *partie unifiée*, the existence of fragments left behind many controversial consequences on the division. In the main, the division within the party, I must emphasize, engendered blackmail, sabotage and victimization. Based on these, the development efforts of a concerted few were marred by opponents who saw harmony as controversial to their struggle for authority. In Aghem for instance the ADC, which was established in 1975 within the heights of intra-party tension for the socio-economic development of the federation, was interpreted by the opponents of its founders as a means of acquiring greater support in favour of the latter. In reaction, opponents to the ADC used sabotage, victimization and blackmail to destroy the association for fear that it was to render its proponents popular. To this effect, the association was brandished

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<sup>44</sup> Report on the Kom/Bum CNU Sub-section Emergency Conference, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> DAW, C.56, Cameroon National Union, p. 358.

<sup>46</sup> M. Etangondop, "Federalism in a One Party State", in V. J. Ngho (ed.), *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, Design House, Limbe, Design House, 2004, p. 139.

by Patrick Mua as “a budding revolutionary and dangerous political party”. This was aggravated by political victimisation as it was at a point in time when it was a taboo and act of treason to talk of pluralistic party politics in Cameroon. These damaging words were so used to give a dog a bad name to kill it. This was expressed by the SDO of the division, Cosmas Ivo Ngole Ndelle, on a letter of response to the governor of the North West Province on the issue of comportment of Aku and certain elements of Menchum living outside the division, when he said:

*“(...) Actually, I do not see what confusion the Aghem elements residing outside the division caused by openly advising their chiefs to form one traditional council. I do not see how they are attempting to set up a political party. So far as I know, no council has been formed and I do not see how a council that has yet been formed contains agitators.”<sup>47</sup>*

This was following a petition to the governor’s office according to which the founders of the ADC had actually began a revolutionary move that was to function through the authorities of the traditional council. The petitioners therefore demanded that for the purpose of security and peace in the country as a whole and Menchum Division in particular, the Aghem traditional council had to be destroyed. It was thus based on this that the efforts of the ADC were foiled. This was after laying the blame of low sales of Party cards on the sale of membership cards by the young association (ADC). Added to this, intrigues were used to dismember some of the chiefs who favored the formation of the council on the argument that such a council will give all powers and benefits to *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong. In the end, the Ministry of Territorial Administration outlawed the ADC in a Ministerial Decision. Thus the ADC, which was created to work towards the economic, social, political progress and unity of the Aghem federation, had been bundled out by division among Menchum politicians principally emanating from intra-party division that existed in the Menchum section of the CNU.

Added to this was its contribution to societal disintegration. To begin with, the Aghem federation of chiefdoms witnessed a split of the chiefdom of Zonghokwo to create the gazette chiefdom of Wanagwen. Though other reasons such as historical circumstances and the share of jangali proceeds among others were contributive to this split, the political rift between *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong and Hon. Patrick Mua was to an appreciable extent a contributing factor to this fragmentation. This influence was made to reduce the political strength of *dengkeghem* Wallang Mbong over a large and extensive Zonghokwo chiefdom that engulfed Wanagwen. In Kom, the division between the Fundong, Belo and

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<sup>47</sup> Letter No C-DMC.10/95, c. Correspondence from the SDO of Menchum to the Governor of the North West Province on the Comportment of Akus and Certain Elements of Menchum living outside the division, 1975, p. 4.

Njinikom valleys became intense under the *parti unifié* following the transfer of the subdivisional headquarters from Njinikom to Fundong in 1974<sup>48</sup>. This was because the Fundong and Belo valleys accused the Njinikom valley of monopolizing political leadership in the area during the multi-party era. Also, the transfer was used as a means of reducing the popularity of A. N. Jua in his Native Njinikom valley of the Kom Fondom. As such, the CNU party was short of attaining its preached goal of ensuring national unity and integration as even ethnic groups got divided as a result of the manipulations for power, prominence and authority within the *parti unifié*.

### **Conclusion**

This study has made efforts to examine the fractionalization that existed in the Menchum Subsection of the CNU. It has argued that the formation of the CNU as a simple merger of existing yet opposing political parties was a pace setter in the fractionalization of the party which was controversial to attaining its unifying and developmental goals. In this regard, old party alignments remained strong within a unified party setup and this marred the attainment of concerted action. In this study, this division is demonstrated in the struggle to secure elective positions in the different organs of the party which were gateways to attaining political appointments as well as serving as opportunities of selection as candidates for representative positions. In the light of this, politicians of the area resorted to blackmail and victimization to secure their places in either the party or in the government (one was synonymous to the other) since the system of election was that of single lists prepared for the nation by Ahmadou Ahidjo and his partners.

On this basis, the list system of elections in the CNU therefore generated a split at a national level between the centralist and the decentralists. It was for instance within these heights that Ahidjo replaced A.N. Jua on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1968, a federalist with S.T. Muna, a pro-centralist and anti-federalist. Two years later (January 1970) S.T. Muna, an Ahidjo sympathizer, was nominated Vice Presidential running candidate against John Ngu Foncha, an apparatus of state autonomy. The foundation of a unitary system of government was thus complete and a seed of discord had therefore been sown, dividing those who believed in keeping up with the 1961 constitution from those who were beneficiaries of the new order and believed in Ahidjo's dominance. The doctrine of a one-party system propagating unity and development through concerted action was therefore mere lipservice on the part of the party's leadership to pave the way for consolidating power and introducing a monarchy in a one party democratic system. Considering that party leadership was determined more by the supreme state authority, Ahmadou Ahidjo

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<sup>48</sup> B.K. Fukachia, "Political Conflicts in Kom, North West Province of Cameroon, 1951-1997: A Political History", DIPES II Dissertation, Yaounde, 1999, p. 58.



and not the masses over whom these party leaders had control created lapses that paved the way for the failure to attain party objectives.

Overall, this is based on the fact that while old party lines, religious denominational attachments and traditional political unit identities were lines of division at grassroots level (Menchum Division), there was the federalist and anti-federalist divides at national level where federalism was synonymous to anti-Ahidjo. For their political survival therefore, the political elite of the area resorted to blackmail and sabotage to be able to attract or gain the support of the party's leader alongside that of his political allies as a means of securing positions of influence within the party and appointive posts in the Cameroon federation. The lines of division that existed between political parties prior to 1966 were therefore not only maintained but actually became stimulation to the disintegration of Menchum Division. This was guided by victimization that sewed permanent seeds of discord among politicians of the area. In reality, while the party leadership propagated the need for national unity and integration and socio-economic and political development, the efforts of some concerted elites towards the greater developmental attainment of the area were paradoxically destroyed by party militants who saw and actually made their political success a consequence of a fragmented system that was supported by party policies and practices that were contradictory to propaganda. This leaves the thought that the introduction of the idea of a *parti unifié* issued from Ahmadou Ahidjo's intention to eliminate his political opponents through the self-selection of representatives of the people from among his proxies, principally those of the centralist thought. Thusly successful militancy was a function of division rather than cohesion wherein actors aligned with those of the pro-centrist thought as a means of political achievement, that is if political achievement, as was the case, means obtaining appointive or representative position with no direct consideration of the wellbeing of the electorate.