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CAMEROON : UNITED NATIONS CHALLENGE TO FRENCH POLICY by David E. Gardinier (Oxford University Press, 1963)

A REVIEW by Paul Bamela Engo, B. L.

All too often, one stumbles on a treatise on Africa whose author has either never set eyes on the Continent or has spent inadequate time here. With those who have, such authors rush to publish large volumes of books and set themselves up as experts on the subject-matter of African affairs. This form of commercial journalism, some times almost amounting to actionable false pretences, has not done much good to our Continent. David Gardinier, the author of « Cameroon I United Nations Challenge to French Policy a is by no means a member of this group of e experts. Not only has he worked in the field of African Affairs at Yale, but he also took the trouble to come out to Africa's Cameroon to collect his materiel. He left a strong feeling of respect in this country for his hard work and pleasant manner. « He literally worked himself to exhaution in Yaounde a someone told me. The result is the lucid, comprehensive, factual, altogether satisfactory document he has now produced for prosterity.

It is difficult to say if any of the Colonial Powers that subscribed to the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations really knew the full extent of what they were bargaining for. In the quest for world peace and order after the nightmare of a World War, they joined with others to champion the establishment of these international organisations. The plight of colonial peoples was no primary consideration. They came into the show through a back door : in deliberations on the future of enemy property. Yet in the course of time, the issue of suject peoples (especially in black Africa) emerged from its shell into prominence. The Cameroon story as told in this book is part of a greater story which the world must know. What a blessing for Africa the Great World wars have turned out to be in the long run ; what a messiah the United Nations !

What was so formidable in the United Nations that harassed French policy into submitting to the previously unacceptable principle of independence ? Some suggestion emerge from this book ; the fact that France had to submit annual reports to the United Nations ; the fact that these reports and French activities in Cameroon were subjected to open debates at the United Nations ; the fact that the U. N. sent Visiting Missions to Cameroon. The result of this was France's resort to the defensive. One must not overlook or under-estimate the role of President de Gaule. His new approach to the « wind of change was later to save the French nation untold embarrassment.

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