

THE UNITED BRANDS COMPANY IN CAMEROON

a study of
the tension between local and international imperatives

by
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ABSTRACT

The study examines the evolution since the 1950s of the banana trades from the former British and former French Cameroons into the 1982 banana business of the United Republic of Cameroon. As a case study in agricultural development, special attention is given to the changing viability of smallholders and to the role of the United Brands Company in the development of the trade. In studying the causes of changes in the business since the Second World War, the thesis examines the interaction of markets, technologies, managerial structures and the politics of independence in the two Cameroons. In that examination, some of the conflicts between the commercial requirements of an international trade operating to international standards, and the local needs of Cameroon's governments, society and environment are explored.

The findings of the study are based principally on unpublished sources. Interviews with all the leaders of the 1982 Cameroon trade were complemented by interviews with company people, former participants in the trade, and residents of Cameroon who could recall the post-war period. Important material has also come from privately-held files of those people involved in the banana business. These files were of meeting minutes, correspondence and contracts from the 1950s to the early 1970s and helped to detail the general information provided in the interviews.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A list of people who were interviewed during the course of this study appears at the back of the thesis. I would like to thank all of them for their time and patience and great skill at making sense of my questions. I am also grateful to the C. Williams Foundation of Plandome, New York, and the National Science Foundation of Washington, D.C. for their invaluable and timely support, without which this thesis could not have been written. Finally, I want to thank Professor B.W. Hodder for his encouragement and wisdom in bringing this study from the gleam of an idea to a completed study.

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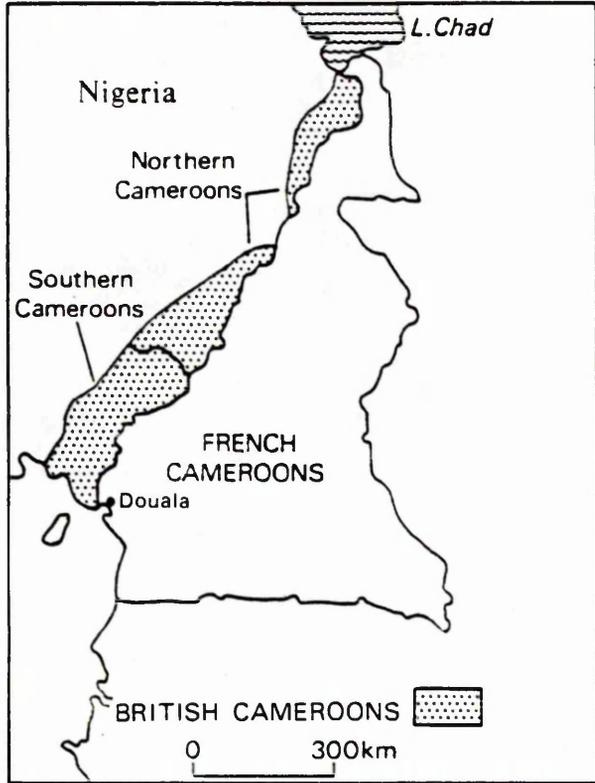
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The British and French Cameroons were established as Mandated Territories of the League of Nations in 1922 with Britain and France administering the two Cameroons until their independence and reunification in the early 1960s. In 1962, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was created after the reunification of the Southern Province of the former British Cameroons (the Southern Cameroons) with the former French Cameroons.* This Federation consisted of two states: West Cameroon whose official language was English and which was administered according to British traditions, and East Cameroon whose official language was French and whose administration was based on French practice. Since 1972, when the Federal Republic was replaced by the United Republic, there have been no administrative names for these two different regions. As a result, the former West Cameroon is now often known as "Anglophone" or "English-speaking" Cameroon, while the former East Cameroon is called "Francophone" or "French-speaking" Cameroon. All of these name changes appear on Maps 1, 2 and 3.

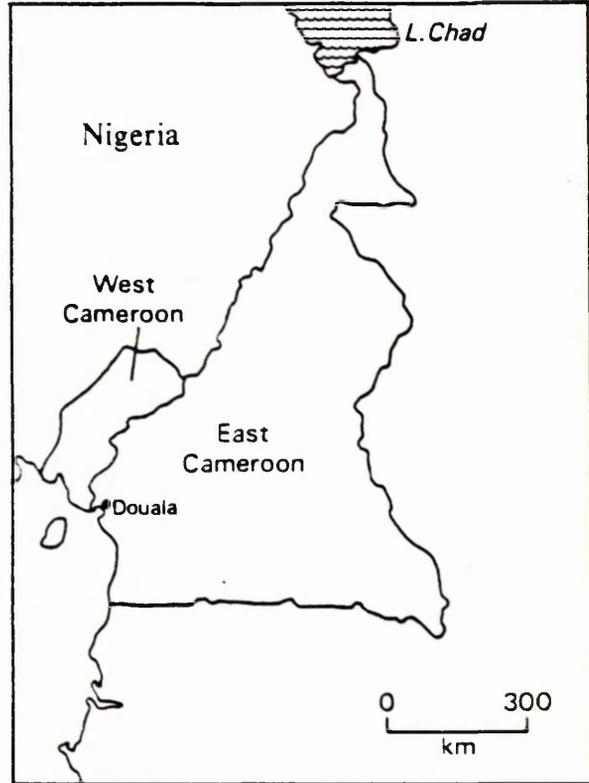
When discussing the banana trade in particular, the business on the French-speaking side is here referred to as the "Mungo" trade. This results from the fact that the export banana of French-speaking Cameroon has always come from the Department of Mungo, whose boundaries have remained unchanged since the period of the Mandate. The banana trade from English-speaking Cameroon has not been as easily labelled. In the first place, the banana-producing region crosses several administrative boundaries within the former Southern Cameroons. Secondly, these boundaries and the names given to the regions within them have changed repeatedly since the trade began during the Mandate. As a result, there has been no constant regional name for the banana-producing zone of English-speaking Cameroon. Instead, the name used here has changed with historical periods, becoming the banana trade of, variously, the British or Southern Cameroons, West Cameroon and Anglophone Cameroon.

* The Northern Province of the British Cameroons (the Northern Cameroons) chose to be administered by Nigeria, rather than join the Republic of Cameroon.

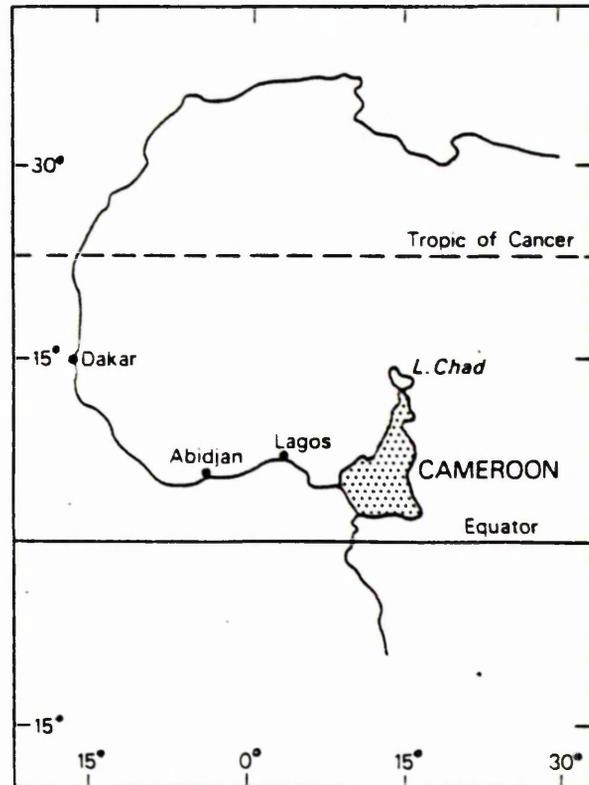
Map 1. THE CAMEROONS UNDER MANDATE, WORLD WAR 1 - INDEPENDENCE.



Map 2. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON, 1962-72



Map 3. UNITED REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON, 1972 - PRESENT.



Source: Rubin, N., CAMEROUN AN AFRICAN FEDERATION, 1971

Throughout the thesis, the English spelling of Cameroon has been employed rather than the French spelling: Cameroun. This follows usage in Cameroon where bi-lingual practice has resulted in two spellings.

The history of the United Brands Company has also resulted in some confusion in the use of company names. The United Brands Company was formed in 1970 after the AMK Corporation had taken over the United Fruit Company, now an unincorporated division of United Brands. However, since much of the discussion in this thesis concerns the period before United Brands was formed, the parent company is usually called United Fruit. Likewise, the British subsidiary of United Brands is now known as the Fyffes Group, Ltd. This name came into being in 1969 when Elders and Fyffes Co., Ltd. (established in 1901) was forced to reorganise its operations after losses sustained in Cameroon. Here again, although usage in 1982 refers to Fyffes, much of the present study is about the earlier company, Elders and Fyffes. The French subsidiary of United Brands is now, and has been since it was formed in 1921, la Compagnie des Bananes. Since first going to the Cameroons, both Elders and Fyffes and la Compagnie des Bananes have worked there in their own names.

Contrary to practice in much of the francophone literature where personal names are written with the family name, in capital letters, coming first, we have chosen here to follow the English language convention of writing the family name last in upper and lower case.

INTRODUCTION

The present research grew out of an interest in examining the role of a multinational corporation in agricultural development. Recognising that both agricultural development and multinationals in the Third World are exceedingly complex subjects, it was decided to adopt a case study approach. By limiting research to one company in one country it was hoped that the as yet unmeasurable phenomena involved in a company/host country relationship could be more precisely described and analysed. In so doing, it is assumed that the perspectives of several disciplines are required. Moreover, development is the process and direction of change over time. Therefore, not only is the present subject concerned with defining the exact nature of a complex relationship, but also with exploring the dynamic, changing qualities of that association.

There are no self-evident methodologies for approaching such a task. In weighing what might be possible, however, first consideration was given to techniques used in other case studies. Here it was surprising to find that there are few case studies of one multinational agricultural business in one developing country, and even fewer studies which confront directly the effect of such businesses on agricultural development. Rather than concentrate on a single company in one country, several economists have studied a national or regional economy and a single export crop: Thoburn writing on rubber in Malaysia is one such example, and Clower et al writing about rubber in Liberia provides another. Ellis's thesis for the University of Sussex, written on the banana trade in Central America, is in the same category. Swainson has written about specific companies in Kenya, but was concerned with a specific economic question: the process of capital formation. None of these writers needed to utilise material from other disciplines, such as human geography, anthropology and politics -- all of which have been required in the present case study.¹

Historical studies tend to have a broader perspective than economic studies, but have also been of limited value in the present research. The best of the historical studies is by Fieldhouse, Unilever Overseas, but like some of the other histories, it looks at

one company in several different countries and so fails to explore the complexities of any one situation. As a consequence, such histories tend to result in an examination of company investment decisions rather than a full-scale study of the relationship which has existed between any one company, its host country and the business being pursued. Other histories have been limited to particular periods, e.g. Coquery-Vidrovitch writing about concessionary companies in the Congo from 1898 to 1930. Such a study is concerned with a more remote past than has been considered here and has not dealt with the evolution of business and host country behaviour into the present.²

There are several histories of the United Fruit Company as well as several business histories (e.g. Wilkins' studies on American multinationals abroad) which refer to the company. There are also one or two histories which are either about the Fyffes Group, London -- one of the United Fruit subsidiaries involved in Cameroon -- or which refer to Fyffes at length. All these histories, however, were written about company operations and focus on company priorities. They contain little discussion about the exact nature of Fyffes' or United Fruit's relationship with any developing country or any discussion of the company's role in agricultural development. There are also several histories of Latin American countries within which United Fruit achieves at least a mention and often notoriety. But these histories, concerned as they are with the overall political or economic events of the region, do not detail the exact nature of the company's position in the country or show how that relationship functioned. Special mention should be made of the work done in the 1930s' by Kepner and Soothill who wrote a two-volume work on the banana industry of Central America: The Banana Empire and Social Aspects of the Banana Industry. While this is a standard work in the literature on the United Fruit Company in Latin America, it has offered little guidance to the present study. This is largely due to the fact that Kepner and Soothill take a survey approach and so do not focus on the whole nature of any one company/host country relationship.³

Only two studies have come close to exploring in detail the role of a single company in the development of agriculture. One was Courade's Les Plantations Industrielles d'Unilever au Cameroun, published by ORSTOM in 1977, and the other is a PhD thesis by Scott

entitled The Organisation Network: A strategy perspective for development, published by University Microfilms in 1979. Of these two studies, Courade's work is strong on description of the Unilever operations, but weak on the analysis of its significance for development, and relation to the host society. Scott's thesis, on the other hand, is based on the Booker McConnell Company and, using an organisational model, studies the role that the company developed for itself in various agricultural development projects in South America and Africa. For our purposes, this latter material has been the most useful in formulating an approach to the study of a multinational company's role in agricultural development.⁴

One of the problems of the present topic is that any realistic definition of agricultural development must recognise that such development is not simply a matter of how much of any agricultural product is produced, but is also concerned with the transformation of the social structure upon which that production is based. Therefore, in discussing the role of a multinational corporation in the agricultural development of a country, one is forced to look not just at production figures, but also at the society of the region where the crop is grown.

In the course of discussing the reshaping of the Booker McConnell Company since World War Two, Scott developed a model of the organisation network involved in any export agricultural enterprise. One of the features of that model which has been applied here is the idea of a 'Central Chain' consisting of those organisations or individuals performing associated tasks which "add up to the achieving of some larger objective, such as quantities of a given agricultural commodity available for retail sale."⁵ In the case of the banana trade of Cameroon, the central chain includes all tasks ranging from the field production of bananas to their final retail sale. Outside this central or functional chain there is a variety of supporting services, e.g financing, as well as interest groups which are attached to the central chain itself. When taken altogether, Scott is able to use his organisational network model to schematize the responsibilities of various organisations for different aspects of the production and sale of any commodity, including the provision of supporting services. In this present study of Cameroon, the same approach has been followed, except that little attention has been

given to many of the supporting services. Instead, analysis has been organised around the central chain itself, and in particular around those tasks located in Cameroon and most especially related to field production.

Where this study departs from Scott's work is in using the central chain as a way of schematizing the Cameroon banana trade at several different periods of time. This has been important for understanding changes in the trade since it began in the 1930s, and which have been of two kinds. One concerns the evolving definition of the chain itself which has taken place as the technologies of production, shipping and sales have advanced. The other, corollary change is in the participants of the chain, not all of whom have been able to adapt to the new technologies.

There are several reasons for taking this approach. In looking at who does what and when, many of the social aspects of agricultural development are revealed. A business which incorporates thousands of African peasant farmers is very different from one which is based solely on the production coming from mutually-independent European plantations, which is very different again from a trade based on the production of parastatal plantation estates operating on a highly industrialised scale. All these differences imply significant variations in the kinds of development which have occurred. Just as importantly, by looking at changes in the nature of the chain of activities itself, one gains some idea of the type of agricultural organisation and development which was possible within the commercial requirements of the trade at any one time.

In looking at the changes in the central chain over time, this study has compared two periods: the 1950s, when the trade was booming; and the present, 1982 when it is in a state of imminent collapse. In tracing the changes that have occurred between those two periods, and in trying to sort out the causes of those changes, some of the fundamental dilemmas surrounding the presence of a multinational agricultural business in a developing country have been revealed. Above all, the conflict between the commercial requirements of an export trade and the political, social and ecological imperatives of the producing country has provided the main theme of the thesis.

In that conflict, the United Brands subsidiaries in Cameroon have always stood at the frontier between commercial pressures of the international business and the local pressures of Cameroon's social and physical environment. The company's position comes out quite clearly in studying the responsibilities of the various participants in the central chain of activities in the banana trade of Cameroon, which, coincidentally, serves further to justify the approach that has been taken.

The methodology evolved in this work was developed in part out of a recognition that demographic and agricultural statistics would be difficult to find and, once found, not necessarily reliable. The best example of this difficulty occurs in the task of trying to assemble figures for the amount of bananas exported from the former French Cameroons from the 1950s to the present, broken down according to whether the fruit came from plantation estates or smallholdings. In the end, only one source for this information was found: a line graph on the wall of the director's office at the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques, Nyombé. The graph is old, discoloured, and badly-lit, and it is nearly impossible to estimate accurately the numbers which had been used as points to draw the various lines. Similarly, it was difficult to find any maps which showed where the plantation estates were located and where smallholder banana production was taking place. Ideally, one would like to have been able to construct several such maps for several different periods of the trade. This, however, was impossible from existing maps and equally impossible if one tried to use land tenure records. These latter were not kept in any consistent form in French-speaking Cameroon and, moreover, there has never been - - in either French- or English-speaking Cameroon -- land tenure records for holdings held under various kinds of customary law.

In the virtual absence of concrete, quantifiable information, the value of approaching an analysis of the business from the point of view of changes in the central chain of activities and its participants became even more important. In establishing the nature of those changes, published sources were found to be wholly inadequate. Research began, therefore, with unstructured interviews with representatives of all the major participants in the trade today, as well as with individuals who were involved at earlier periods.

Here it should be noted that most interviews were held with those in a position to manage various aspects of the trade and did not penetrate, except on rare occasions, below a managerial level. It should also be noted that careful attention was paid to the order in which interviews took place, so that by and large the more senior people were interviewed first and asked for introductions to others working with them. The best example of this is the fact that when approaching people in the United Brands Company, care was taken to seek first the approval of the central office in New York, then to speak with officers of the London subsidiary, Fyffes, and from Fyffes receive introductions to the Paris office of la Compagnie des Bananes who, in turn, were able to present the study to company people in Cameroon. The director of the company in Cameroon was extremely helpful in arranging interviews with planters and other participants in Cameroon. This approach was taken on the grounds that unless the company's trust and cooperation were involved, very little could be learned about a business for which there are few visible records. Moreover, within Cameroon, the company's advice on the correct protocol for meeting various government officials was very valuable and helped to keep to a minimum many of the delays usually associated with working in Africa.

As a result of these interviews, access was gained to personal and company files which proved to be an additional and extremely valuable source of information generally kept within the trade. These archives contained working documents from the late 1950s into the early 1970s, including contracts, correspondence and meeting minutes, all of which helped to specify information that the interviews themselves could only indicate in broad outlines. The files also served to identify issues that had not surfaced in the early interviews but which were then discussed as research progressed.

The approach taken in researching the material for this thesis was not the same as the logic used in writing it up, which has instead been based on the need to balance three different sets of ideas. The first set is concerned with the contrast between the 1950s and the 1980s. The second results from the fact that today's banana trade from the United Republic of Cameroon is based on the remnants of two earlier trades: one from the southern province of the former British Cameroons, the other from the Department of Mungo in the former French Cameroons. Thus, although all discussion of the present is fairly

unified, most of the discussion of the 1950s and of the politics of independence in the early 1960s inevitably divides along the dualistic political boundaries of the times.

Finally, it has been reasoned that there are three major factors of crucial importance in explaining the changes in the trade and its participants from the 1950s to 1982. These are: (i) a changing technology of field production as forced by a rising international market standard; (ii) changes in managerial structures which resulted from political events and from technological pressure; and (iii) changes in the political and social framework of Cameroon which have both influenced and been influenced by the dynamics of the banana trade.

In an attempt to present this material with a minimum of complications, the outline has followed a broadly chronological approach. This serves, first of all, to develop a sense of how and why the banana trade of the 1950s in the French and British Cameroons differed so markedly from the trade of 1982. Second, the chronology of events is the best context in which the interaction of the technologies, managerial structures and politics can be shown as a process rather than as a static paradigm. Thus, the first chapter is a discussion of the markets and technologies of the 1950s, while the penultimate chapter, Chapter 6, explores the nature of the Cameroon banana trade in 1982. Between these two chronological poles, the material divides in order to accommodate discussion of the managerial structures and politics of the French- and English-speaking banana trades. Here, the managerial structures of the 1950s are discussed first on the British side and then on the French side. This is followed by the politics of reunification in Anglophone Cameroon which leads into a discussion of the politics of independence in Mungo.

This approach has allowed for the emergence of several kinds of discussion. There is the implied comparison of the banana trades from the English- and the French-speaking territories. There is also the development of the trade from the 1950s to the present. Most importantly, however, there is the examination of the dynamic relation of technologies, managerial structures and politics, which demonstrates the tension between local and international objectives. The technologies have developed from the producers' need to respond to

the ecological capacity of their own agricultural regions and simultaneously to the quality requirements of the more distant market countries. This is the first and most fundamental of the tensions between the local and international imperatives and it affects everything else. The managerial structures, which must in part be designed to accommodate the technical requirements of the trade, are also in large part defined according to who is participating in the central chain of activities. Thus, management reflects the fact that participants include both Cameroonians and Europeans and becomes thereby not just a way of organising a particular set of technical tasks, but also a reflection of the more cultural components of the trade, representing again both local and international values. The politics of reunification and independence in Cameroon during the early 1960s and afterwards serve as an explanatory link between the 1950s and the 1980s. However, an attempt has been made not just to chronicle the events of the period, but to detail the manner in which aspects of the banana trade influenced political decisions and how those decisions both local and international, in turn affected the export banana trade.

It is from this rather elaborate set of ideas that the final chapter, "Choices, 1982", looks at the present state of the industry in Cameroon and the problems it faces. In weighing what options are now open to participants in the trade, this chapter attempts to draw on what has been learned about the technologies, management and politics of the export banana trade of Cameroon. In so doing, the thesis returns to the original interest in the role of a multinational corporation in agricultural development. The problem, however, is here examined from two perspectives: first that of the Cameroon government which must decide the kind of agricultural development it wants for the banana zone of the country; and second, that of the United Brands Company, which must decide whether or not to continue working in the country at all.

One finds, in the end, that both the government and the company are forced to consider a great number of local and international factors. Of these factors, it is extremely difficult to say which are the most important and the most likely to influence decisions in the future. In fact, the relative weight of these elements is something that seems to shift with circumstance and history. It is hoped,

however, that in identifying the major components of such decisions and in demonstrating their interaction over time, some progress has been made in the analysis of the complex phenomena of agricultural development and multinationals in the Third World.

CHAPTER 1
MARKETS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE 1950s

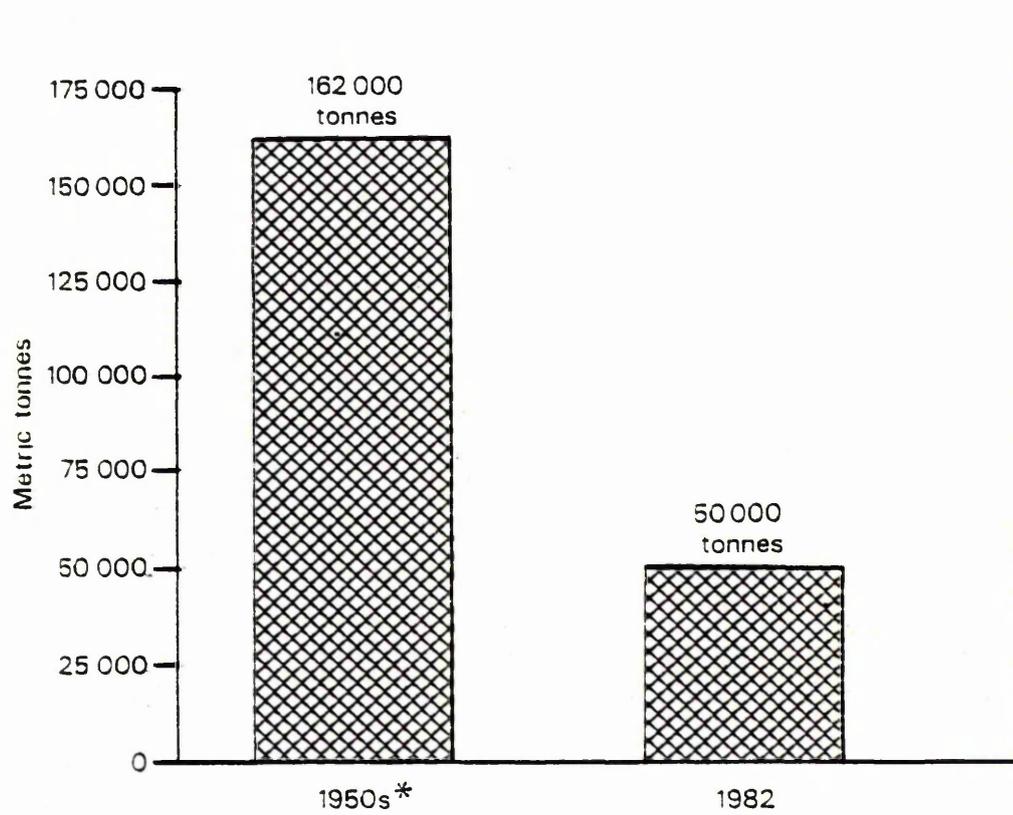
In making any comparison of the Cameroon banana trade of the 1950s with that of 1982, one is immediately struck by the enormous difference in the volume of trade involved. This is shown clearly in Figure 1, on the following page. Figure 1 is admittedly a comparison of extremes, but is still of value. What makes this fall in production even more dramatic is -- as will be shown -- the fact that although a considerably reduced area is devoted to the banana trade in 1982 (see Maps 4 and 5), it is planted in a variety which should be producing anywhere from three to ten times more fruit than was produced per hectare in the 1950s.

Looked at most broadly, and leaving aside for the moment the special difficulties of the 1982 trade, there are two major historical reasons for the difference in volume between the 1950s and 1982. The first is that the southern region of the British Cameroons lost its access to the British market when it chose in 1962 to join the former French Cameroons in the Federal Republic. Since no other market was ever found for large quantities of West Cameroon bananas, both production and export declined. The second reason is that as the trade matured after the Second World War, the smallholder was less and less able to compete. By 1982, he had virtually disappeared. Since sixty percent of the bananas of the 1950s peak was coming from smallholders, their absence has considerably lowered the overall volume of production. The importance of both of these factors has been illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

The effect of reunification on the banana trade of West Cameroon -- and hence on 1982 production -- is discussed in Chapter 5: "The Politics of Reunification". In this present chapter we take a look at the reasons for the success of the 1950s smallholder and try to show why that success became harder and harder to maintain. We also examine some of the history behind the role of plantations in the banana trade, and why, given the nature of the export banana trade,

Figure 1. BANANA EXPORTS OF CAMEROON

Peak exports of the 1950s versus estimated exports of 1982

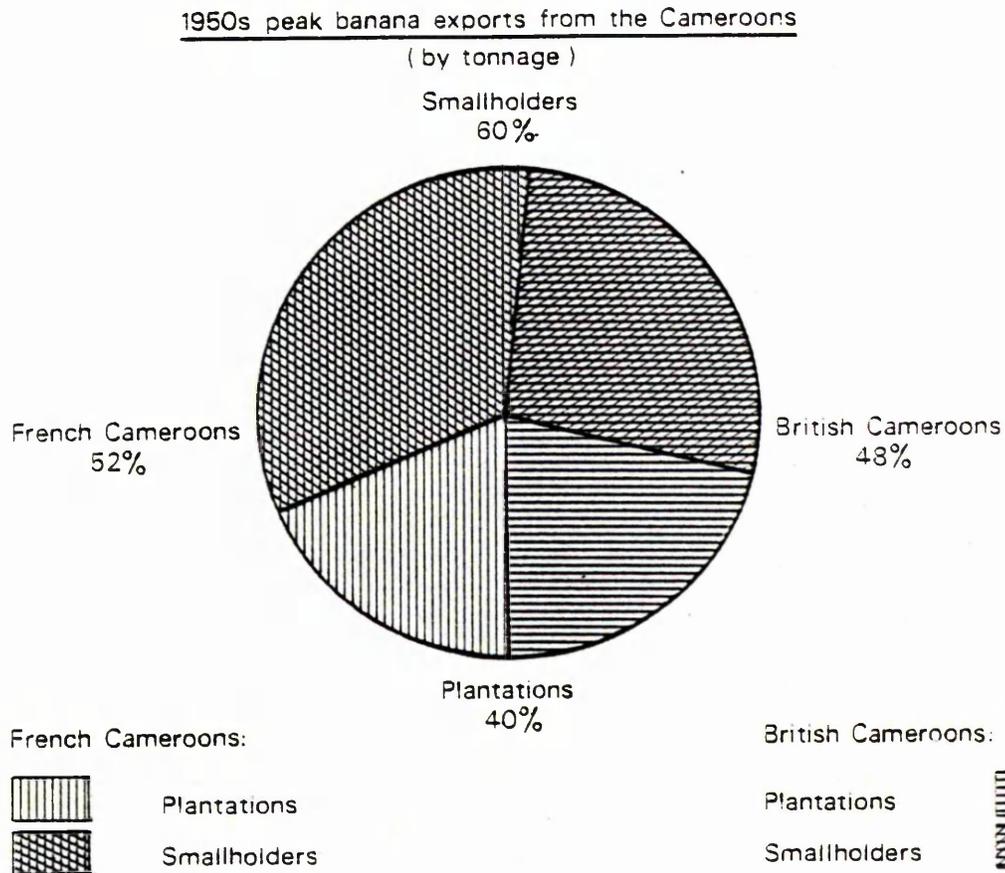


* 1957 - French Cameroons 85 000 tonnes

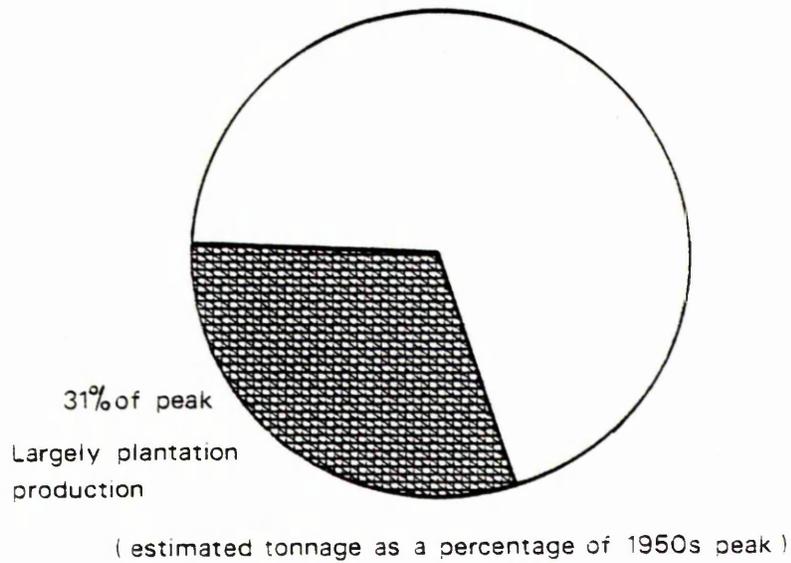
* 1960 - British Cameroons 77 000 tonnes

Source: See Note 1, Chapter 1.

Figure 2. IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCTION FROM SMALLHOLDERS AND THE BRITISH CAMEROONS DURING THE 1950s.

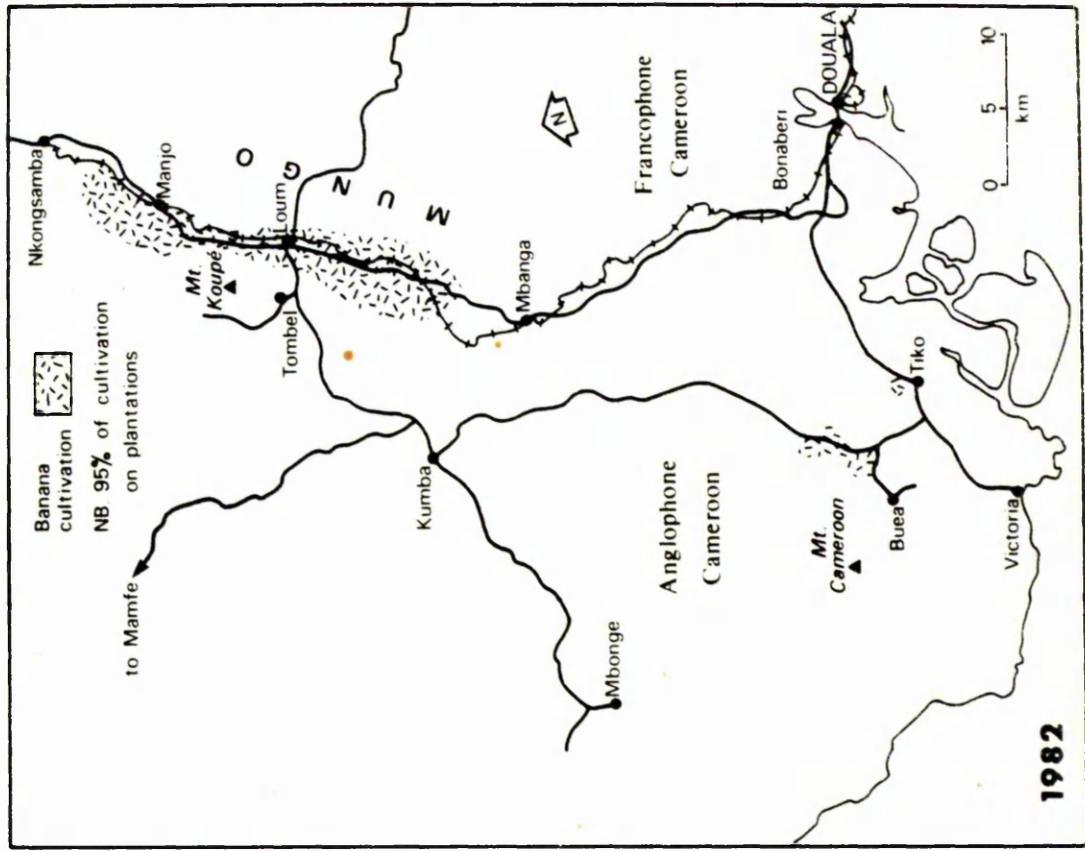


1982 banana exports from Cameroon



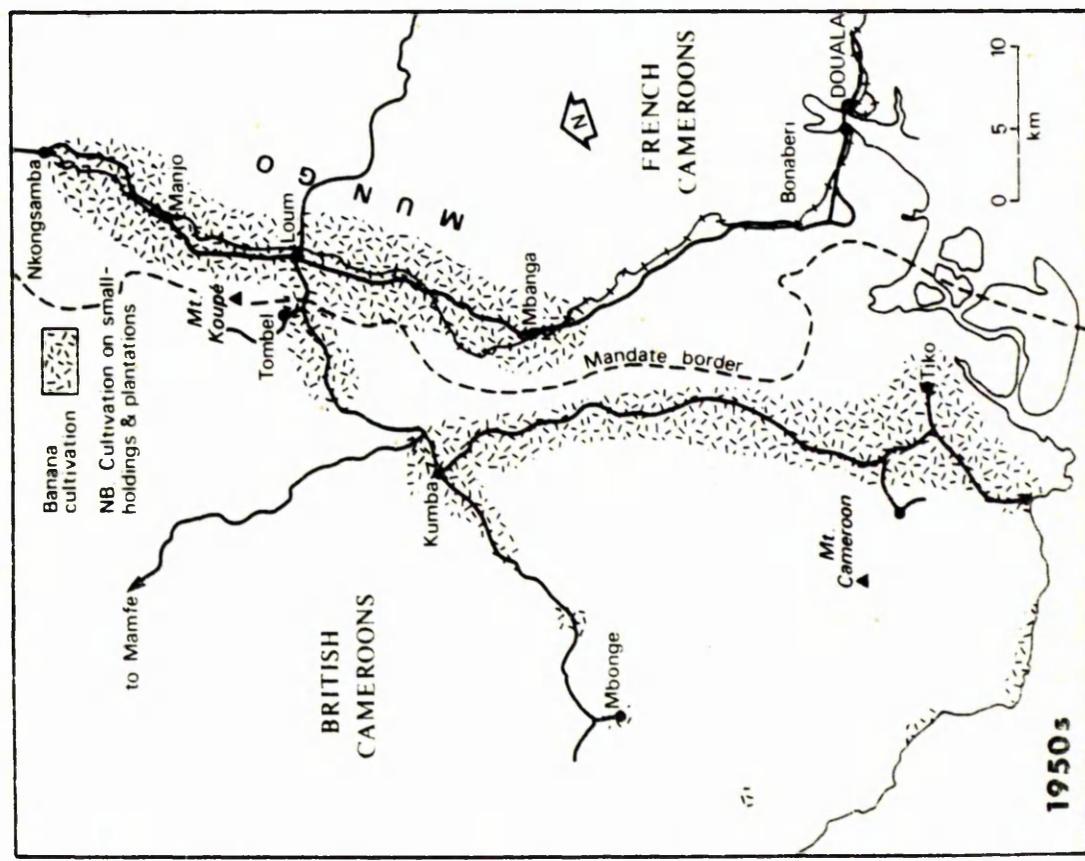
Source: See Note 1, Chapter 1.

Map 5. ESTIMATED EXTENT OF BANANA CULTIVATION IN THE CAMEROONS - 1982



Source: Author

Map 4. ESTIMATED EXTENT OF BANANA CULTIVATION IN THE CAMEROONS - 1950s



plantation ideas have tended to dominate production. Before beginning those two discussions, however, it is important to look at the nature of the markets where the Cameroons banana was being sold. Market conditions in the 1950s were considerably more propitious for the success of the smallholder than they have been at any time since then, a fact which is easy to overlook in analysing the earlier success of the smallholders of the two Cameroons.

1950s Markets

The two Cameroons, British and French, had two principal markets in the 1950s -- Britain and France. Both of these markets were protected, and had been since the 1930s. In Britain, this protection had begun at the 1932 Ottawa Conference which decided to counteract the effects of the depression by protecting trade within the British Empire. For the banana trade, the Imperial Preference of 1932 guaranteed that bananas from within the Empire would carry a duty that was one half-crown lower per hundredweight than bananas from outside the Empire. The immediate effect of the Imperial Preference was to divert Jamaican bananas from the United States' market to Britain.² During the Second World War, Jamaican production dwindled and then had a difficult time recovering in the early post-war years. As a result, Elders and Fyffes, who handled most of the banana trade into Britain at this time, asked the government for permission to begin importing fruit from the British Cameroons.³ By the late 1950s, twenty percent of Elders and Fyffes banana sales in Britain were of Cameroonian fruit.⁴

It was also in the 1930s that France first restricted her banana trade to the French territories, principally to protect the Antilles islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. This protection, however, also had the effect of stimulating production in the French Cameroons both before and after the war, since the Antilles alone were unable to meet the demands of the French market. The other important producers for the French market were Guinea, the Ivory Coast and Madagascar, but throughout the 1930s and then the 1950s the market was still open enough to absorb the rising production of all these countries.

It is important to remember that this market absorbanancy in the 1950s and the rising banana production one sees in both Cameroons during the first decade after the Second World War were very much post-war phenomena. During the war, production was either halted or destroyed largely because shipping had been diverted to war duties and was not available for the trade. In 1939, for example, Elders and Fyffes had twenty-one ships in service. Only seven survived the war; all the others were mined, torpedoed or sunk.⁵ The fact that for much of the war, therefore, no fruit was arriving in Europe, meant that after the war producers were working for a market which was expanding from zero. As a result, the combined efforts of all producers were needed to meet the demands of a population which had not been able to buy the fruit for four or five years. Only as the 1950s drew to a close and as the market became saturated did producers find themselves in the position of competing with each other in order to control larger shares of a market which was no longer capable of expansion.

Both of these factors -- the protected economies of the late-colonial period and the ever-increasing demand for bananas in the two European markets -- were responsible for encouraging production in the two Cameroons during the 1950s. It is just as important, however, that the quality of fruit which was expected during this period was lower than the quality which is taken as the trade's standard today. A memorandum written in 1961 by the banana producers' organisation in Mungo, where the French-speaking trade has always been centred, notes that the fruit being exported was being sorted into two classes which received two different prices.

Les fruits venant des plantations industrialisées qui sont classés comme premier choix, sont vendus à un prix supérieur de 7 frs. métré par kilo et les régimes dits "ordinaires" ou "tout venant" en provenance de toutes les autres plantations et qui sont vendus comme je viens de le dire 7 frs. métré moins cher le kilo. C'est donc la qualité qui est en jeu et qui nous impose ces différentes ventes.⁶

What is significant is that this question of quality only became vital in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Smallholders Versus Plantation Technologies

The generosity of the banana market in Europe during the 1950s encouraged the booming production in both Cameroons. The existence of the market alone, however, would not have been enough to ensure the great success of the trade had it not also been true that a number of local factors were equally propitious. Taken together, they argue that banana production of the 1950s was based less on the careful management of a renewable natural resource than it was on the quick exploitation of highly favourable circumstances -- a process which was, in the end, more like a rapid mining operation than like sound agricultural husbandry. This was particularly true of the production coming from smallholders, as illustrated in the following discussion which contrasts smallholder and plantation strategies for managing the more important factors of production.

Land

Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate that for much of the 1950s, plantation production was exceeded by the volume of fruit coming from smallholders' cooperatives. Moreover, much of this smallholder production was based on land which had been cleared from primary forest and where the soils were thus at their maximum fertility.

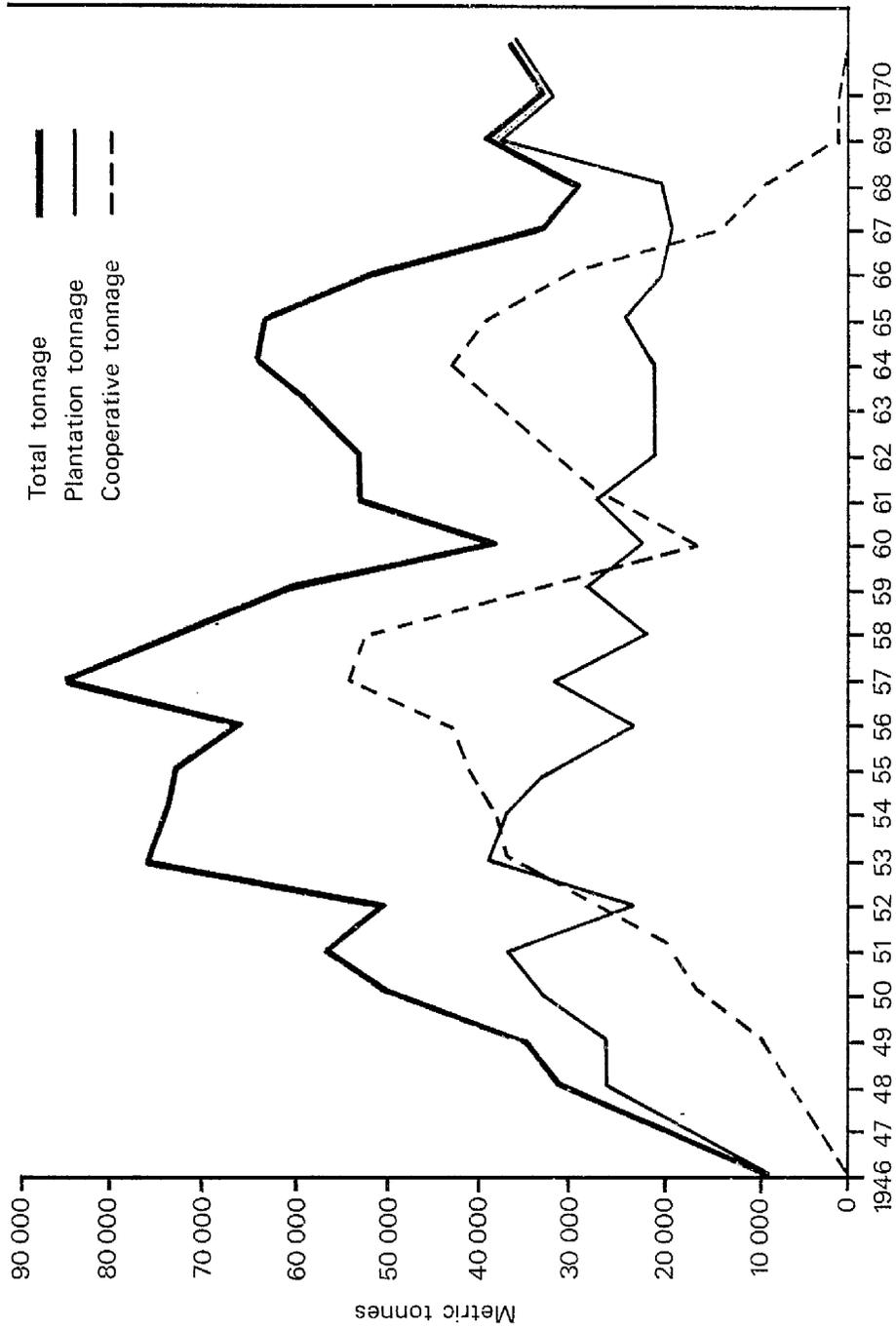
That it was new land, and not the conversion of old farms, comes out in a description of the very fluid evolution of smallholder land use that was taking place at this time. According to people who grew up in the British Cameroons during the banana boom, the typical pattern in the area around Kumba was first to clear the forest for bananas, and then plant the banana rhizomes among the fallen trees. The fertility supplied by the decaying forest vegetation was then sufficient to support a productive banana crop for two or three years, or even longer depending on the quality of the soil. As returns from the banana crop diminished, the man who had cleared the farm would put in robusta coffee plants or cocoa, using the last year or two of the banana crop to provide shade for the young trees. By the time the bananas were no longer producing profitably, a new cash crop was well in hand. This system had the advantage of securing certain rights to the land for the person who had cleared it, as customary law in this period granted title, not to the cleared land, but to the permanent

Figure 3. WEST CAMEROON BANANA EXPORT TONNAGE, 1955-64.



Source: See Note 1, Chapter 1.

Figure 4. MUNGO BANANA EXPORT TONNAGE, 1946-70



Source: See Note 1, Chapter 1.

cash crops planted on it. Unwilling to abandon land he had taken the trouble to clear, a man was then able to secure both its use and profitability by putting in a second cash crop. The more enterprising farmers might then go on to clear more ground for bananas and start the cycle over in a new location.⁷

Under this dynamic system, one can well picture the situation of a man who would, after about ten years of work, have several fields producing a mixture of crops at different stages of this cycle and probably in several different locations. Other people, perhaps the actual majority of growers in the banana boom, may only have raised bananas for a short period of time. Afterwards, finding the crop too demanding to sustain in spite of the profits which had been made (and which were, in any case, declining towards the end of the 1950s and early 1960s), they would either abandon the land they had cleared or convert it to crops they found more suitable.

Unfortunately, no maps have been found which give an accurate idea of the extent of the land put into bananas after the war. Nonetheless, a rough measure of the evolution of smallholder land use can be gauged by working back from the export tonnages which appear in Figures 3 and 4. The peak of smallholder production was achieved in 1957 in Mungo, in the French Cameroons, and in 1960 in the British Cameroons. The total for these two years combined is about 98,000 metric tonnes of smallholder fruit. Estimating from three to five tonnes per hectare, one can conclude that from 20,000 to over 30,000 hectares of land were being used to produce bananas outside of the plantations estates. If one then looks at the export tonnages from smallholders three years before peak production (i.e. 1954 in the British Cameroons and 1954 in Mungo) one finds smallholders shipping out about 52,000 metric tonnes, produced on an estimated 10,000 - 17,000 hectares of land. Regardless of which conversion figure is taken, it is clear that in the course of increasing smallholder exports, a great deal of new land was coming into use.⁸

In contrast to smallholdings, most of the plantation land in the British and the French Cameroons had already seen a fairly high level of banana production during the 1930s. Much of the area of Mungo was settled in this period by both French and Cameroonian immigrants, many of whom based their livelihoods on the export banana

plantations. Meanwhile, in the British Cameroons from 1928 to 1933 the banana crop came to replace rubber as the chief export crop being raised by the German plantation managers of the inter-war period.⁹

However, the extent to which the plantation land might have been run down during the 1930s was considerably minimised by the interruption in exports caused by World War Two. In effect, this inability to export forced a fallowing of the plantation land which had been in bananas during the 1930s. This was particularly true in the French Cameroons, where the Mungo planters were the recipients of a subsidy from the British government that was eventually used to finance a well-planned schedule of uprooting, sowing leguminous cover crops, and later replanting bananas, which left the plantations ready for the booming post-war trade.¹⁰

In the British Cameroons, things went another step further by bringing nearly all the 1930s private plantations under one coordinated management. The process began soon after the war started when the Custodian of Enemy Property took over the plantations from the Germans who had owned and managed them during the inter-war years. Eventually, the title to this land was passed to the state (at that time colonial Nigeria which administered the British Cameroons), but was leased back to the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC). The CDC was set up to develop the plantation land for the benefit of the inhabitants of the territory and was given parastatal status with a number of far-reaching obligations. In working during the early years to meet those obligations, the CDC chose to rely heavily on the quick, high income generated by the banana crop. In doing so, they made a considerable effort to renew the plantations which had previously been in private German hands and then largely neglected during the war.

The fact that the 1950s plantations were based on these earlier enterprises forced the managers to take a very different attitude towards their crop from that adopted by smallholders. Simply by using the war period to regenerate the land, the plantation managers had already begun shifting their style from that of exploiting an exceedingly rich but still limited soil, to that of managing the preservation of its assets. The smallholders, however, were still relying on the fertility of newly-cleared land and on the assumption that new land to clear would continue to be available as it had been

in the past. As can be seen from Map 6, it is an assumption that could not long endure, particularly for the better volcanic soils.

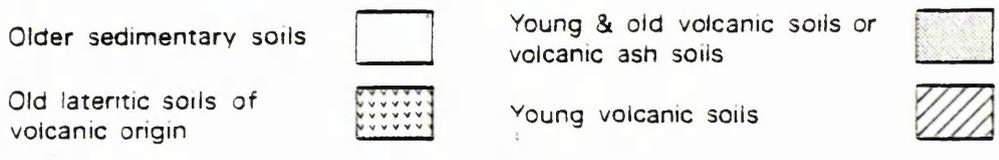
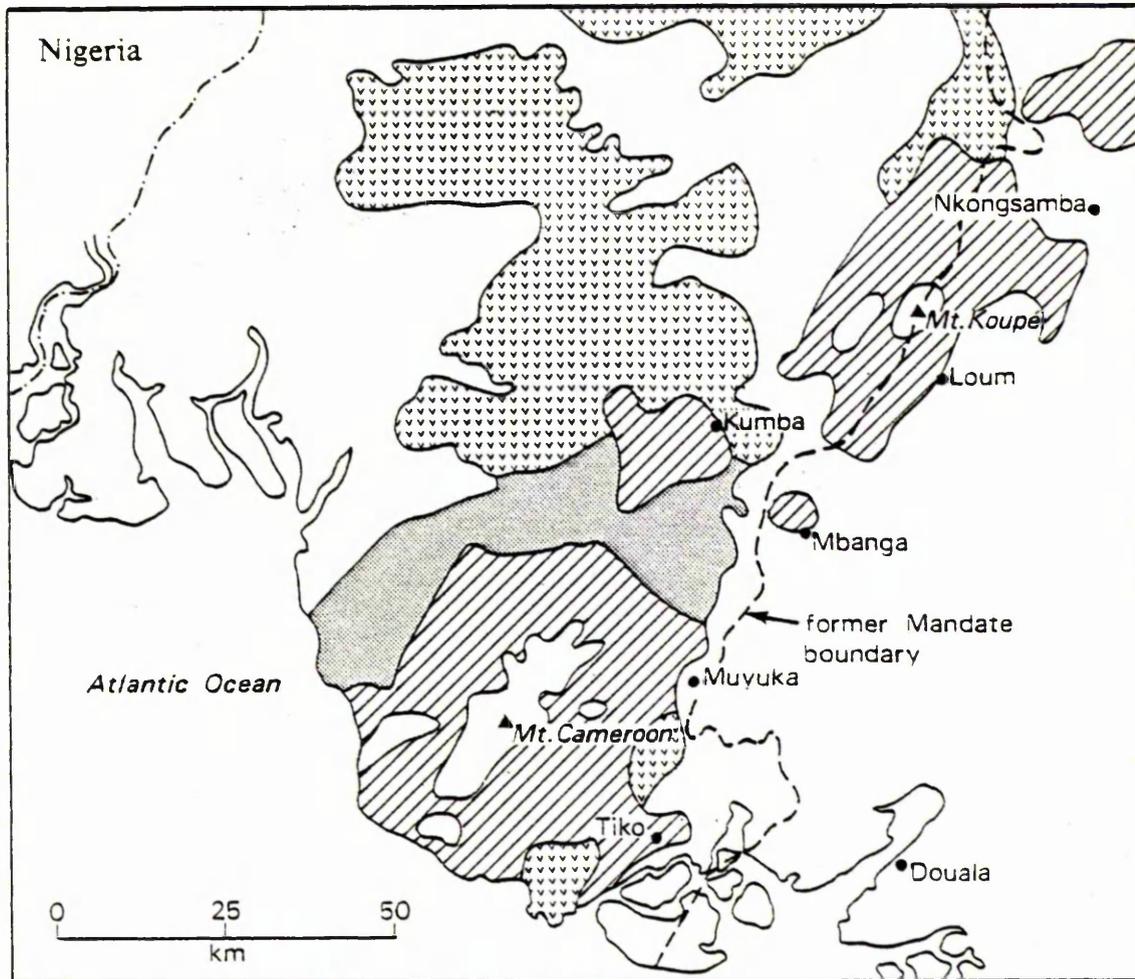
It is also important that plantations were planting a single crop while the smallholders, in developing newly-cleared land, usually finished with several different crops in a single field. In some ways, the plantations were taking the greater risks by concentrating all their investment, land and labour on a single crop. Their vulnerability to disease and soil infertility was all the greater and was inevitably exposed much earlier than that of the newly-cleared smallholdings. This, in fact, shows up quite plainly on the line graphs of export tonnage (Figures 3 and 4) where the plantation tonnage in both the British and French Cameroons peaks several years before that of the smallholders.

Sigatoka Disease

That a number of smallholders found it difficult to make the change from a "mined" to a managed banana crop shows up clearly in discussing Sigatoka disease. It is also a point where some of the conflicts between plantations and smallholdings appear most irreconcilable. This is true because, although there are a number of diseases which a banana planter can treat -- or not treat -- without affecting his neighbour's plantation, Sigatoka disease is not one of them. Sigatoka is a fungus transmitted by airborne spores. For many years it was completely absent from Cameroon, first appearing only in the late 1930s. It began to spread widely with the increase in production in the 1950s and also began to assume more virulent forms.¹¹

The best control of the disease has always been regular crop spraying. While this can be done from back-carried sprayers, the most effective control is achieved by regularly scheduled aerial treatment. In Mungo, this led to the creation of CATA, Coopérative Agricole de Traitement Aérienne, which was set up by the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, a growers' organisation which at the time represented both plantations and smallholders as well as shipping and sales organisations involved in the banana trade of the French Cameroons. This arrangement for disease treatment broke down when the price of bananas fell in 1959 and the smallholders pulled out of CATA

Map 6. VOLCANIC SOILS OF WESTERN CAMEROON



Source: ORSTOM. 'The Physical Milieu', in REGIONAL ATLAS. WEST 1. 1:1million. 1972.

in order to keep as personal income a greater share of the banana's earnings.¹² In the British Cameroons, the large plantations of the Cameroons Development Corporation and the Likomba plantation of the Elders and Fyffes Company were sprayed from the air under a joint agreement. The smallholders' cooperative, the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, was responsible for the treatment of the smallholders' farms. This was usually done by back-carried sprayers, in large part because the forest canopy around the individual farms was too much of an obstruction for effective aerial treatment.¹³

Regardless of what arrangements were made, neither the smallholders in Mungo nor those in the British Cameroons liked spraying. There was considerable resentment of the cost and a general lack of conviction that the treatment made any difference. If, in addition, farmers were only raising the banana as a short-term, transitional crop, then they may have been unwilling to make any investment to protect a crop they regarded as temporary.

The smallholders' reluctance to spray against Sigatoka was not well viewed by plantation managers. Because they were handling only one crop, it was in their interest to be more disciplined in treating any disease which affected that crop. Clearly, from a plantation point of view, it was counter-productive for a manager to spray his fields routinely when these fields were surrounded by scattered holdings which were untreated and continued to be carriers of disease. As a result, the usual plantation reaction to smallholder resistance to participate in spraying was to criticise the farmers' ignorance, laziness and greed, even though a smallholder's reluctance may have been well-founded in a very different set of priorities from those of the larger estates.

However, it is not clear that even with the full cooperation of smallholders the plantations could ever be fully protected. The banana -- in all of its many varieties -- can be found in almost any garden in Cameroon. It is also true that as banana fields were abandoned, they were not necessarily ploughed under, but left in a semi-wild state. Thus, it is likely that no treatment could ever have been so comprehensive that it would have eliminated all incidence of the disease. Treatment, therefore, was more wisely seen as a necessary measure to maintain the quality of the fruit being exported.

In this sense, pressure on the smallholders to spray grew up as much in the name of ensuring the market quality of Cameroon fruit sent abroad as it was to control the spread of the disease.

What is important about Sigatoka disease in Cameroon is that smallholder expansion during the 1950s was predicated on an assumption that the disease was either absent or not terribly damaging. As this became less and less true, the smallholder was forced to reconsider his involvement in the banana trade in the light of the growing necessity to pay for treatments that had not previously been seen as important.

Panama Disease, Conversion and Packing Stations

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the cost of producing competitive fruit for an international market was becoming increasingly difficult for smallholders to maintain. The initial absence of wide-spread disease and the high fertility of recently cleared land had acted as a form of subsidy from the natural resources of the banana-producing zone. As the subsidy ended, the smallholder found himself unable or unwilling to make up the difference from his own resources. This problem of financing smallholder conversion from a "mined" to a managed crop became even more difficult as Panama disease became more widespread. Despite several decades of research in Latin America, by the late 1950s and early 1960s there was still no effective treatment against Panama disease which infects the soil of the banana fields where it is found. As a result, producers were increasingly being forced to switch from the Gros Michel banana to a disease-resistant variety usually known as Cavendish in English-speaking Cameroon and Poyo on the French-speaking side.

Most of the people involved in the Cameroon banana trade today are veterans of the boom period of the 1950s. In talking with many of them about that period and the changes since then, they will almost always preface their remarks by pointing out that "that was the period of the Gros Michel". In many respects, the Gros Michel was ideally suited for the boom conditions and pluralistic participation of the 1950s Cameroon banana trade. It is extremely easy to cultivate and, more importantly, it is an extremely tough fruit which is tolerant of rough handling and thus easy to ship. In this sense, it is a much

simpler fruit for smallholder propagation than the varieties grown now, as it can withstand the rough transport conditions involved in collecting fruit from numerous scattered small farms. By comparison with the Cavendish varieties, however, it is extremely low-yielding. Even under plantation conditions it produces only nine to eleven tonnes per hectare compared with thirty to thirty-five tonnes for the Cavendish. Where there is still considerable access to land -- as was true during the 1950s in Cameroon -- this low yield per hectare is not as important as it becomes when the land area being cultivated for bananas cannot expand.

In fact, the decision to convert was taken only gradually with first the large plantations leading the way. The decision was complicated by the fact that the banana trade in both the British and the French Cameroons was badly hit by the politics of independence around 1960. These events are covered in later chapters, but what is of importance here is that as a result of those events producers were faced not just with the difficult and expensive decision of whether to convert, but with the decision whether to continue producing export bananas at all. In the British Cameroons, the question of conversion was largely answered by the political decision to federate with the French-speaking Cameroons in the new Federal Republic. With the subsequent loss of the Commonwealth preference and with it the ability to compete in the British market, the commercial viability of both plantations and smallholders in English-speaking Cameroon had evaporated by 1966-67. Only the Cameroons Development Corporation continued -- on a very limited scale and at the request of the government in Yaoundé -- to export bananas.¹⁴

The situation in Mungo was somewhat different. By 1960, the plantations had already begun converting their holdings to the new varieties and a steady increase in Poyo exports can be seen from that date onwards. The conversion of the smallholders' farms was less successful and several government projects foundered on mis-management and corruption before disappearing altogether. Finally, in the late 1960s, the government's Organisation Camerounaise des Bananes took over much of the smallholders' land and converted it not just to the Poyo variety, but to a more industrial style of plantation management as well, a process which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

The failure of smallholders in Mungo to maintain their independent commercial viability is due to a number of factors -- political, managerial and financial. Of the three, however, the economics alone were prohibitive. In addition to the increased need to fertilise the land, spray against Sigatoka disease, and convert to resistant varieties, the early sixties also saw growing pressure to improve the packing of bananas. At first, this meant only that the stems of fruit -- previously shipped naked -- should be wrapped individually in polythene. By 1965, this had escalated to a requirement that all fruit be cut from the stems, washed, disinfected, graded and packed in forty-pound cardboard cartons. The transition to boxing was slow throughout the trade, but as the industry worldwide began to abandon the Gros Michel with its ability to travel without heavy bruising, the necessity to protect the new Cavendish bananas increased and boxing became one of the standards of the business.

The replanting of banana fields with the resistant varieties was expensive and time-consuming. But it had clear economic limits and, once the decision was taken and effected, the financial blow could be worked off, probably at a fairly fast rate given the high yields. The same was not true of the subsequent necessity to establish packing stations for the sorting and boxing of fruit. In addition to the initial expense of setting up the stations, there was the recurrent cost of providing the labour and materials involved in operating the station every week or ten days when a shipment was made. This new operating expense followed the gradual accumulation of expenses for fertiliser, and disease and pest control. It is not surprising, then, that the economic viability of the smallholder in this situation was becoming more and more tenuous.

In the case of the Cameroon banana trade, the smallholder's viability in the 1950s was based on newly-cleared soil, a particularly generous post-war market in Europe, the initial absence of several major banana diseases, and a variety, the Gros Michel, which could tolerate rough transport and bad roads. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, all of these conditions had begun to change, squeezing the smallholder between a more demanding market in Europe and the declining productivity and quality of his banana crop in Cameroon. In that squeeze, a number of efforts -- some of which will be discussed later -- were made to keep the smallholder as a participant in the

export banana trade. Most of these efforts, however, were based on the assumption that the plantation style of monocrop production could be applied to smallholders. This, in fact, was never achieved. But it is of interest in the next section to take a look at why plantation management was being assumed, in order to understand its place in the thinking of those individuals in a position to decide the future organisation of the Cameroon banana trade in the years following independence.

Vertical Integration and the Industrial Plantation Model

If one looks at the entire history of the banana crop in Cameroon since the 1930s it is significant that for most years exports consisted principally of plantation production rather than the fruit from smallholders. Certainly the period of successful smallholder participation in the 1950s was marked more by exceptional and essentially temporary circumstances than by the discovery of new ways of involving smallholders in an old trade -- although the organisation of smallholders' cooperatives was an important innovation, especially in the British Cameroons.

Part of the importance of the plantation is that it is undoubtedly an easier unit to integrate into the long chain of activities from field production to final sale. Here it needs to be stressed that, unlike a number of other cash crops, the export banana is particularly dependent on a vertically integrated production and marketing structure. This is largely due to the fact that bananas cannot be stored for any length of time and must therefore be moved quickly from field to market, usually over fairly long distances. This task is probably most efficiently accomplished by a vertically integrated structure operating under a single management.

Such a structure was an important achievement of the young United Fruit Company in the Americas, which provides a good illustration of this kind of organisation. When the company was formed in 1899 it joined the Latin American land and rail holdings of Minor Cooper Keith and the shipping and marketing assets of the Boston Fruit Company. In their first annual report, dated 20 March 1900, the company had about 86,000 hectares of land in Columbia, Santa Domingo, Cuba, Jamaica,

Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, about a third of which was under production, principally of bananas. The company also owned eleven steamships, rented or chartered another twelve to thirty more, and had 113 miles (182 kilometers) of railroad.¹⁵ In addition, the company owned the Fruit Dispatch Company, which had been set up in the 1890s by the Boston Fruit Company to specialise in the ripening and distribution of bananas once they arrived in the United States from the tropics.¹⁶ By 1913, this shipping, production and sales system was linked together by the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company, an incorporated subsidiary of the United Fruit Company¹⁷ which is still part of United Brands today as the TRT Telecommunications Corporation.¹⁸ In the same year, the directors voted to attempt to supply eighty percent of their fruit from their own plantations,¹⁹ and in 1916, a botanist, Wilson Popenoe, was hired to do tropical research.²⁰ Thus, by 1920, the United Fruit Company was already emerging as an elaborate, integrated system. Bananas could be grown, transported to harbour, shipped and distributed through company subsidiaries alone.

In the context of that system, it is significant that the United Fruit Company directors wanted to depend on their own plantations for the majority of their bananas. This is not surprising. By that time, a dependable supply of fruit in sufficient and predictable quantities was needed to provision the extensive company infrastructure that had been created. In fact, the company never did rely completely on its own plantations, buying fruit from independent producers as well. But the independents were often independent plantations, rather than smallholders. In 1935, for example, the company offered loans, materials and engineers to help equip 13,000 acres of private land (5300 hectares) with the machinery to spray against Sigatoka disease from permanent overhead spraying pipes.²¹ This is not to say that smallholders were never involved in the Latin American banana trade. Certainly Jamaica and the Windward Islands both have long traditions of smallholder production. However, one suspects that if the whole industry were studied over a long period of time, smallholder participation would probably be seen as episodic, or only permanent in selected locations.

In this respect, it is important that the plantation -- whether in bananas or some other crop -- represents the industrialisation of

agriculture. As such, the object of a plantation is to produce a single product in large quantity on a regular basis at a consistent quality. In achieving that objective, the plantation has developed many of the features of a sophisticated assembly-line factory and functions as the main productive unit of a coordinated industry. As such, it is a highly disciplined operation which not only supports an elaborate infrastructure for shipping and sales, but which often depends on that structure for marketing, materials and technical knowledge.²²

It is important to recognise that this kind of plantation is an industrial unit. As such it has developed over the years into an organisation that achieves its maximum efficiency through access to the most advanced agronomic research working in tandem with a highly structured and disciplined work force performing routine tasks according to a well-defined schedule. It is this kind of plantation that has, worldwide, consistently been at the forefront in the development and application of production techniques in the banana trade. It is also this kind of plantation which has produced the highest, uniform quality of fruit and which has classically been taken as the model for any banana industry trying to achieve the best possible standards of production.

Because it is essentially an industrial creation, part of its strength lies in the disciplined ordering of work and the ability to produce and ship fruit in harmony with the larger vertical system of transport, ripening and sales. But the industrial plantation is also valued for the consistent quality and quantity of fruit it produces, all of which are factors of critical importance in the discussions that follow.

The post-World War Two banana trade of Cameroon has never functioned along the lines of an early United Fruit style of vertical integration under a single management. Nor have the plantations of Cameroon -- with the possible exception of those in the British Cameroons in the 1950s -- ever been managed to the highest standards of the modern industrial estate. Instead, one sees a very pluralistic population of producers entering the market in the 1950s and then slowly being squeezed out again as the trade became more expensive and

competitive. In that transition, increasing stress was laid on the importance of the industrial plantation as the only means of producing large quantities of fruit to an ever-rising standard of quality.

However, the industrial plantation represents not just a particular technology, but also a specialised style of management, both of the plantations and of the trade. Thus, in the next two chapters we concentrate on the management practices of the banana industry in the 1950s, first as seen in the British Cameroons, then as experienced in Mungo. In the discussion, the models of a vertically integrated trade and an industrial standard of production are taken as points of reference and comparison. They represent, in a sense, the optimal efficiency in the business although, as will be seen in the following chapters, there have been many other forms for approaching that efficiency in Cameroon.

CHAPTER 2

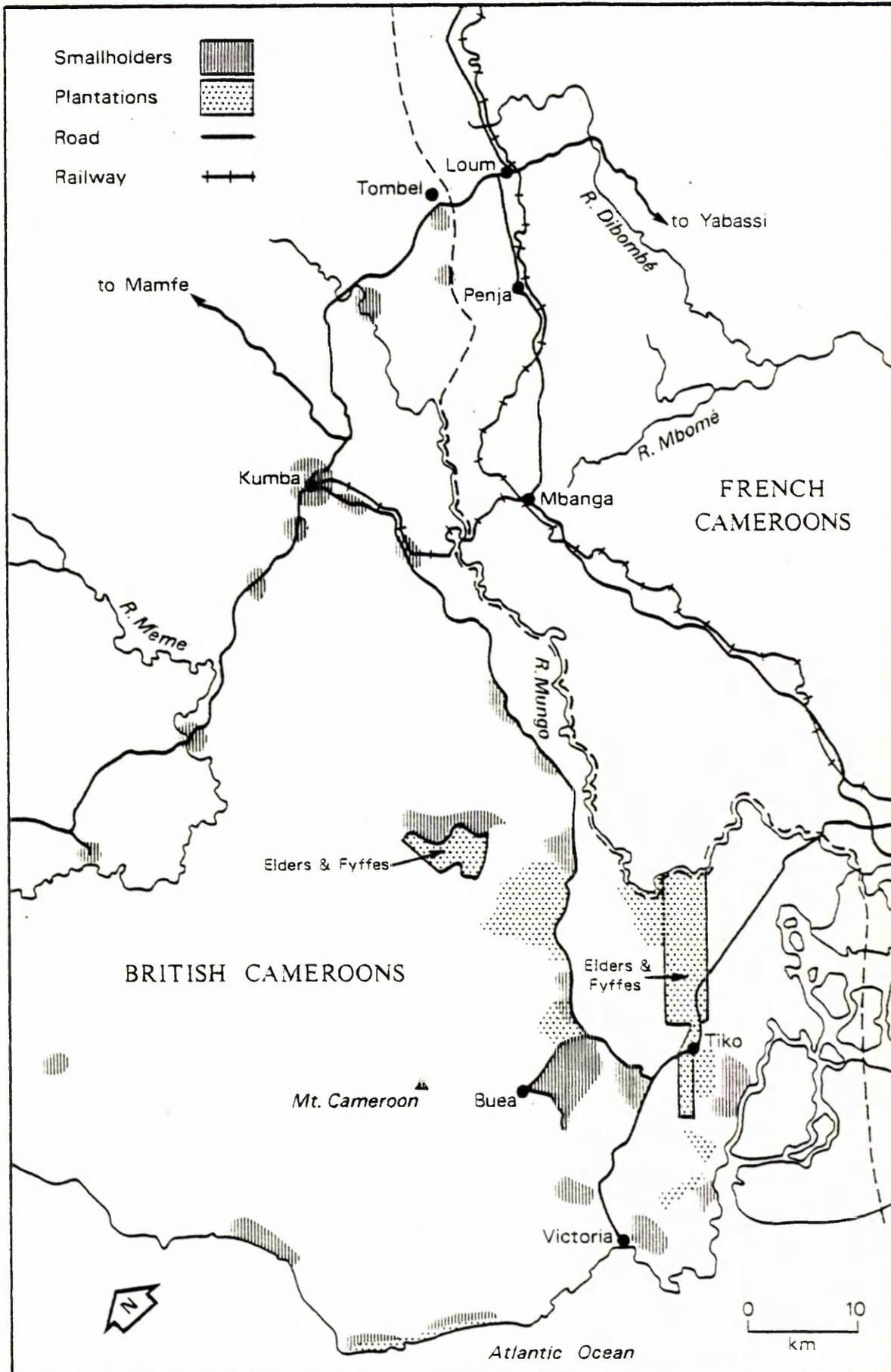
MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES OF THE 1950s:

THE BRITISH CAMEROONS

In the banana trade in the British Cameroons during the 1950s there were three main producers: i) smallholders' cooperatives, ii) the plantations of the Cameroons Development Corporation, and iii) the plantations of the international company, Elders and Fyffes, which was also responsible for shipping and sales (see Map 7). These groups were autonomous in their ownership, but linked by contract in a fashion that created a well-balanced managerial structure which nonetheless represented a significant departure from the idea of a wholly company-owned, vertically integrated production and marketing system.

In this system, the smaller productive units, i.e. plantation estates and farmers' cooperatives, were amalgamated into larger managerial bodies. Thus, what had in the pre-war years been separate privately-owned German plantations, were by the 1950s a single corporation, the Cameroons Development Corporation. This operated with a unified management structure within which one office spoke for all the banana production taking place on the Corporation estates.¹ Similarly, the smallholders' banana cooperatives did not operate in competitive isolation from each other, but were organised into primary or village-level societies which were then grouped into secondary societies which, in turn, had representation in the apex society, the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers (BCUF). It was the BCUF which represented all of the banana cooperatives in any dealing with the Cameroons Development Corporation, the Elders and Fyffes Company, or any other outside body. Sitting neatly between the industrial plantations of the Cameroons Development Corporation and the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, was Elders and Fyffes. The company was the sales agent and shipper for both the Corporation and the BCUF. They had their own plantations -- Likomba and later Bavenga -- which rendered them more than sympathetic to the requirements and advantages of industrial agriculture, but they had also, by 1957, signed a contract with the BCUF which, among other clauses, committed the

Map 7. BANANA CULTIVATION IN THE BRITISH CAMEROONS -
1950s smallholders and plantations.



Source: Interview with David Philp, February 1983

company to providing managerial and technical staff to the cooperative union.

This managerial triangle seems to have formalised the technological and administrative differences between European plantations and African smallholdings. This very formality seems also to have provided a structure within which complaints, inequalities and tensions could be resolved. Although it was not always successful, there was nonetheless a high degree of administrative stability. Another important aspect to having three such sharply defined organisations dominating the trade was that it created a balance of power and allowed a circulation of comparative information that went a long way to preserving confidence in the trade and in each other.

The Three Principals

Cameroons Development Corporation

Of the three organisations involved in the banana trade of the British Cameroons, the Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC*) was in the strongest position, a fact which is reflected in their survival and expansion today, long after both the BCUF and the Elders and Fyffes company have virtually disappeared from English-speaking Cameroon. The strength of the CDC was derived from a number of factors, not the least of which was their control over much of the land of the Victoria Division (now Fako Department). Their holdings are based on land that was originally taken over piece by piece by the German colonial government in the 1880s and '90s after the defeat of the Bakweri people in a battle at Buea. As the German administration acquired this land it was conceded to various private German companies, a number of whom returned in the 1920s after the division of German Kamerun into British and French mandated territories in 1922.

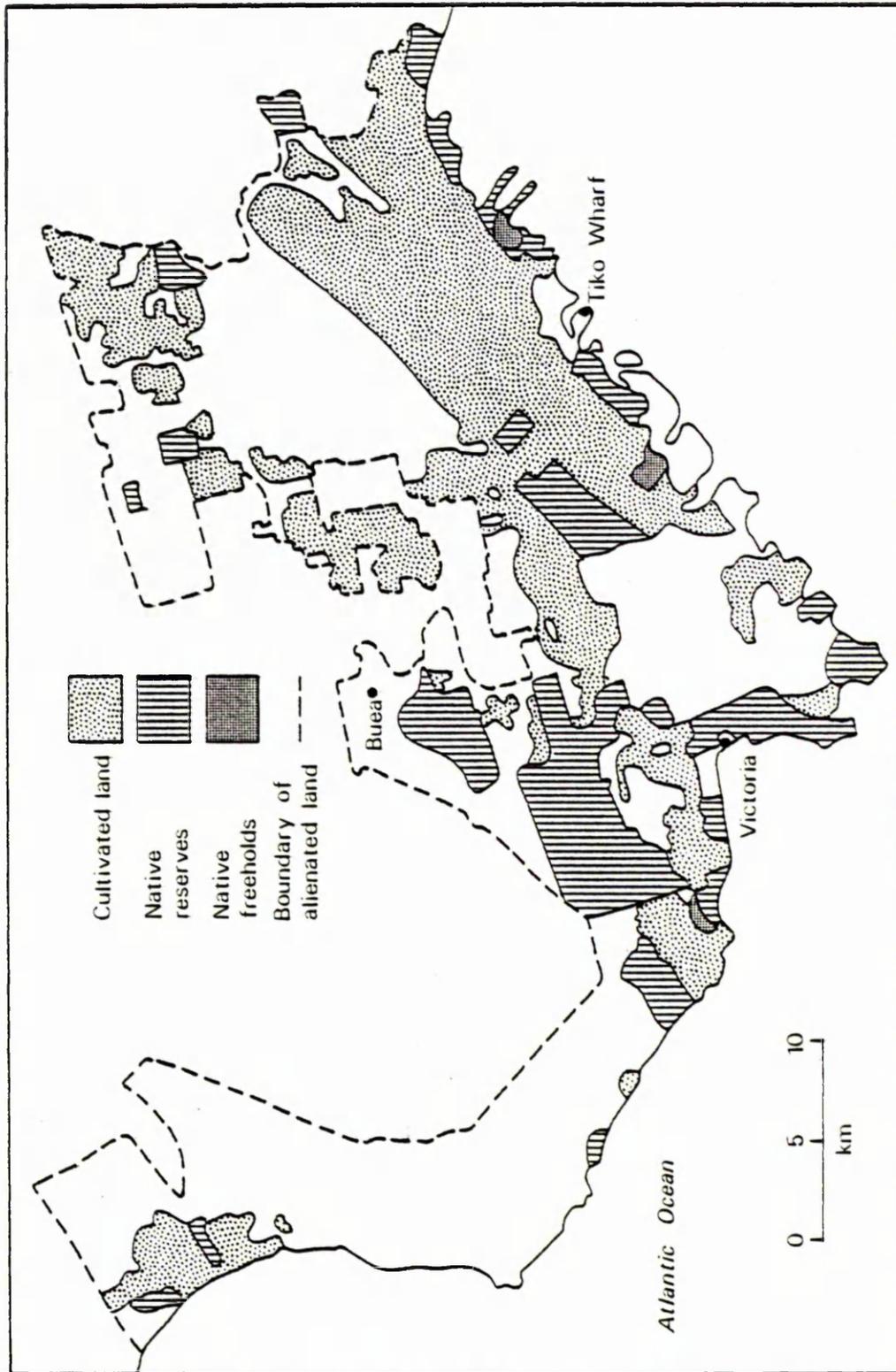
* For the purposes of this thesis, CDC indicates the Cameroons Development Corporation and not the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which is based in London and which helped to create the Cameroons Development Corporation. CDC is the acronym used most often in Cameroon, although in London the Cameroon business is known as CamDev.

The expropriation of these inter-war German plantations by the British Custodian of Enemy Property during the Second World War provided the basis for the land holdings of the CDC. As a result, when the Cameroons Development Corporation was established it included the institutional participation of the colonial government (then Nigeria) which held title to the land. Moreover, the mandate of the CDC was not just to operate a profitable plantation company, but also to use the earnings of the corporation to develop the territory of the Southern Cameroons for the benefit of the inhabitants. Thus, the CDC in the 1950s was not just the dominant economic force, which the plantations had always been since they were first established by the Germans, but it was also a state-backed bureaucracy with formal social obligations that only enlarged its influence on a multiplicity of affairs in the Southern Cameroons.

Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers

According to Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, who has been President of the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers since its founding, the BCUF was a logical development from the CDC Workers' Union which was first established in the late 1940s.² Dr. Endeley's role in organising the Workers' Union led to his inclusion on the Board of the Cameroons Development Corporation and is a good example of the balance he maintained between opposition to and collaboration with the British colonial authorities. Like the plantation workers' union, the farmers' union was first created to negotiate with the CDC, in this case not wages, but the sale of smallholders' bananas.³ The existence of the BCUF institutionalised informal arrangements which had existed between smallholders and the German plantations of the inter-war years and which had been transferred to the CDC. The development of the smallholders' union was not greeted with any enthusiasm by the CDC just at a time when they were struggling to put their plantations on a sound economic footing and to meet some of the requirements for social services which their legislative definition imposed. Nonetheless, the BCUF grew, and in 1953 expanded its territory into the Kumba Division, moving out of their base in the Victoria Division where farmers were limited by the availability of arable non-CDC land.⁴ (See Map 8.) By the late 1950s, Dr. Endeley

Map 8. CULTIVATED AREAS AND NATIVE LANDS ON 1950s CDC LAND



Source: Ardener, E., Ardener, S., & Warrington, W.A., PLANTATION AND VILLAGE, 1960, p.95

had become the Premier of the Southern Cameroons,* in addition to his role with the CDC and as President of the BCUF. He was, therefore, in a position of both economic and political influence. Moreover, the BCUF was strongly backed by the Co-operative Department of the Government of the British Cameroons, which consistently defended the interests of the BCUF, along with those of other farmers' cooperatives.

It is perhaps of some value at this point to take a quick look at the post-war government in the British Cameroons for its role in establishing the cooperatives. While there was a certain neglectful air about the administration of the Cameroons mandated territory before the war, exactly the opposite was true during the post-war period. One is struck by the several measures which were enacted immediately after the war to protect indigenous interests. One of these was the Lands and Native Rights Ordinance which was first enacted in 1948 and extended the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of Northern Nigeria, no. 1 of 1916, to the Cameroons. It required that in making laws affecting the transfer of land and natural resources,

...the Administering authority shall take into consideration native laws and customs, and shall respect the rights and safeguard the interests, both present and future, of the native population...⁵

While the law did not go so far as to return the newly-organised CDC lands to the descendants of the Bakweri people who had first been expropriated in the late nineteenth century, the land law was indicative of a government concern to protect native interests, particularly when in competition with European development plans. It was no doubt this same concern which created the CDC's social obligations.

The same philosophy was behind the government's Co-operative Department, members of which were perhaps most effective as representatives and advisors, acting, in the case of the banana trade,

* In 1957, the Southern Cameroons achieved its own House of Assembly within the Nigerian Federation, which had been responsible for the British Cameroons since the Mandate had been created in 1922.

as an intermediary between the farmers' co-operatives and the larger plantation organisations with whom they had to negotiate. As the banana cooperatives grew, however, the Department found itself also handling the increasingly demanding logistical problems of the banana boom period. Not surprisingly, the Department, understaffed and thinly distributed, found it nearly impossible to cope with the elaborate arrangements for moving bananas from thousands of small farms to dockside, while continuing to serve the needs of other crops such as cocoa and coffee. As a result, it was in some desperation that the Department asked Elders and Fyffes to second managerial and technical people to the BCUF.⁶ The Department thereby gave up its involvement in the day-to-day operations of the banana trade, but continued in an influential role by providing supervisors and ombudsmen -- a role which tended to strengthen the position of the BCUF in their dealings with Elders and Fyffes and the CDC.

Elders and Fyffes

Elders and Fyffes' introduction to the territory came during the Second World War when the ex-German plantations were under the management of the Custodian of Enemy Property and the company was asked to provide shipping for the bananas that had been going directly to Germany. This arrangement was interrupted when all banana shipments to Britain were banned and the Fyffes' ships were commandeered for active wartime duties. As the war ended, Fyffes laid a further claim to involvement in the British Cameroons on the grounds that the Likomba Plantations, formerly registered as the Guatemala Plantation Company, a German business, in fact belonged to Elders and Fyffes who held most of the European equity in the Guatemala Plantation Company. In 1948, this claim was settled with a licence to operate the Likomba plantations for eighteen years, even though the formal title rested with the CDC and the Nigerian Government. While this Likomba arrangement gave Elders and Fyffes a physical stake in the country, they were still very much at the mercy of the CDC's goodwill and ideas of expansion, as is shown in the 1958 agreement whereby the company handed over to the Corporation a number of assets -- principally in railroad equipment and medical facilities -- that had previously been administered by the company.⁷

As a plantation company operating on the sufferance of the CDC,

Elders and Fyffes found themselves having to live up to the social obligations of the CDC and even to outdo the CDC's own performance.⁸ As a result, one finds a significant difference between the functions of the CDC Workers' Union and the Likomba Plantation Workers' Union, which was established in 1949. According to Warmington in A West African Trade Union, published in 1960:

The policy of the Likomba union has tended to be rather more active and imaginative than that of the C.D.C. Workers' Union. Union administration has been somewhat better, and there has also been a more positive and in many respects more progressive attitude on the part of the company than of the Corporation. This has led to rather different conditions of employment and more complex negotiating and consultative machinery being developed in Likomba than in the Corporation's estates.⁹

The company's reputation as a more progressive employer was reflected again in an interview with one of their former employees, Anthanacious Eddia, who now works for the CDC. He credits the company with a number of superior working conditions, better wages, free schools for workers' children, earlier promotion for Africans, that outshone the CDC's own efforts.¹⁰ To the extent that the company did operate to a higher standard in these matters, it is tempting to think that they served as a goad to the CDC's own ambitions, and therefore had a wider effect on living conditions in the Victoria Division.

Advisors and Managers: Elders and Fyffes and the BCUF

Most people today when asked about the role of Elders and Fyffes in the British Cameroons remember best their work with the farmers' banana cooperatives. The CDC's dependence on the company was limited to the company's role as shippers and salesmen for all Southern Cameroons' bananas sent abroad. By contrast, the relationship between the BCUF and Elders and Fyffes was considerably more intertwined. While in many respects the BCUF contract with the company duplicates provisions of the CDC contract with Fyffes, the cooperatives' request for managerial personnel transformed both the BCUF and the nature of the company's role in Cameroon. Under Clause 4 of the BCUF contract both company managerial and technical personnel were to be assigned to the BCUF, at the Union's request. In addition, Elders and Fyffes also

INSERT TO FOLLOW PAGE 51

... agreed to act as extension agents -- by making "available to the Union the accumulated research and practical experience of (the Company) and its associated and affiliated companies ..." -- and as the Union's purchasing agents in the United Kingdom. This latter provision offered to the Union all discounts the company would receive, and included a clause saying the Union would have "preference" in the use of company vessels for shipping goods to the Southern Cameroons.

The effect of all these clauses was to place the Elders and Fyffes seconded personnel in the position of supervising, if not actually managing the complete chain of BCUF activities from field to final sales. Their control was in no way absolute; any village society which, for example, did not choose to spray against Sigatoka disease could not be forced to do so. On the other hand, the final selection of fruit to be placed in the ship's hold was, like that of the CDC fruit, completely in the hands of Elders and Fyffes and unsprayed fruit was much more likely to be rejected.

This final dockside selection was problematic for the farmers since it was done out of the farmers' view. But it came after two earlier selection processes at village level had already taken place. The first was governed by the president of the village society, who generally selected which fruit farmers could cut for the current shipment. From this collection of cut fruit a second selection was agreed between the farmer, the village society's president and a representative of the BCUF who arrived with the truck to take the best of the village's banana stems to the dock. By the late 1950s, with the introduction under the Co-operative Department of a two percent savings plan, each farmer also had a book in which to record his shipments and receipts. There was considerable difficulty with the selection process as it was extremely difficult for the farmers to imagine that fruit which looked reasonably healthy when cut might deteriorate during the journey to the United Kingdom. There were frequent attempts to move rejected fruit from one village to another in hopes that it might eventually be accepted and shipped. It may also have been difficult for farmers who were only a few years out of a subsistence level of agriculture and in the habit of consuming all production, regardless of quality, to understand why edible fruit might be rejected because it was not absolutely perfect.¹²

One of the features of the CDC and BCUF contracts with Fyffes which is of interest here is that the CDC agreed to market their fruit jointly with that of other producers so long as "the fruit of other producers shall not be accepted by the Company if below the standard laid down in Clause 1 (B)."¹³ This provision placed both the BCUF and their Elders and Fyffes managers under a considerable strain to ensure that the quality of the BCUF was equal to the quality of the

CDC's plantation production. In many ways it was an impossible task (it could even be read as an attempt by the CDC to drive the BCUF out of the trade, although there is little to support that idea), and by the mid-1960s the Union was rewriting the contract so that BCUF fruit would be labelled and inspected separately.¹⁴ During the late 1950s, however, when new lands were being constantly opened up by farmers, it was at least possible that a large percentage of the banana production could escape the effects of declining soil fertility and accumulated diseases and so ensure a substantial quantity of fruit that in quality compared favourably to fruit of a plantation standard. As disease spread -- both Panama disease and Sigatoka disease -- and as it became more and more difficult to find virgin forest land close enough to good roads for the crop to be evacuated from farm to ship's hold within thirty-six hours, the task of both the farmers and the expatriate managers working with the farmers' union became much more difficult.

A good example of the problems involved in raising the standard of smallholder fruit comes from David Philp, the Elders and Fyffes manager seconded to the BCUF during this time. He remembers a considerable resistance to "medicine", as Pidgen English labelled fertilisers and pesticides, more, he claims, out of an unwillingness to pay the cost of them than out of fear of their effects. The BCUF arranged for a nucleus of eight employees to demonstrate spraying techniques using hand pumps and the Union had a contract with a local company to sell these pumps in the villages. When that proved to be ineffective, the BCUF began moving towards a centralised spraying service for which members would be charged. The trade ended, however, before that system was fully introduced.¹⁵

This task of maintaining the quality of production so that it could pass the selection process and meet the CDC standard was -- with the logistics of a twenty-four to thirty-six hour evacuation of fruit -- probably one of the more demanding tasks that the Elders and Fyffes personnel took on and demonstrates the kind of detail into which their management obligations led them. Exactly what differences their management made, however, is difficult to judge. The data on the cooperatives is extremely incomplete and, like a comparable study of the cooperatives in Mungo, would require at least a year of fieldwork in historical anthropology before one could begin to measure the

effect of the Elders and Fyffes management on the banana cooperatives or on the villages where the cooperatives were based. There are, nonetheless, a few visible clues of the company's importance.

The Report of the Co-operative Department for 1956-58 credits the Elders and Fyffes management with improving the financial position of the Cooperative Union in a brief, understated compliment:

The efficiency in management attributable to the Manager seconded from Messrs Elders and Fyffes was reflected in very favourable comments from the Union's professional auditors.¹⁶

The same paragraph notes net surpluses in two financial years of more than £40,000 and more than £56,000, of which roughly £10,000 and £22,000 respectively were distributed as year-end bonuses to farmers. They also mention that funds had been set aside for expanding the offices, building agricultural stores and setting up a radio communications network in the banana-producing areas. The same prosperity entered the villages. Almost anyone who was living in West Cameroon at the time will mention the rise in living standards and housing and beer drinking which became a form of conspicuous consumption.¹⁷

How much all this was due to the terms of trade at the time, and how much was the result of Elders and Fyffes' management of the BCUF's affairs is still nearly impossible to say. It is not unreasonable, however, to suspect that the inherent prosperity of the period was considerably enhanced due to the improved organisation of a very widely dispersed collection of growers. But it seems to have been a prosperity that came at the cost of a "wartime discipline", in David Philp's phrase, which was not always appreciated. Mr. Philp was often announced in villages as "Satan done come"¹⁸. Later, in 1982, Dr. Endeley laughed and admitted that his English colleague was very strict, but liked by the average farmer as a loving elder father who kept banana grades high¹⁹. Yet, one suspects that as market conditions became more difficult, the more "satanic" sides of the Elders and Fyffes management were less easily tolerated by those farmers still trying to sell fruit on the earlier, easier terms.

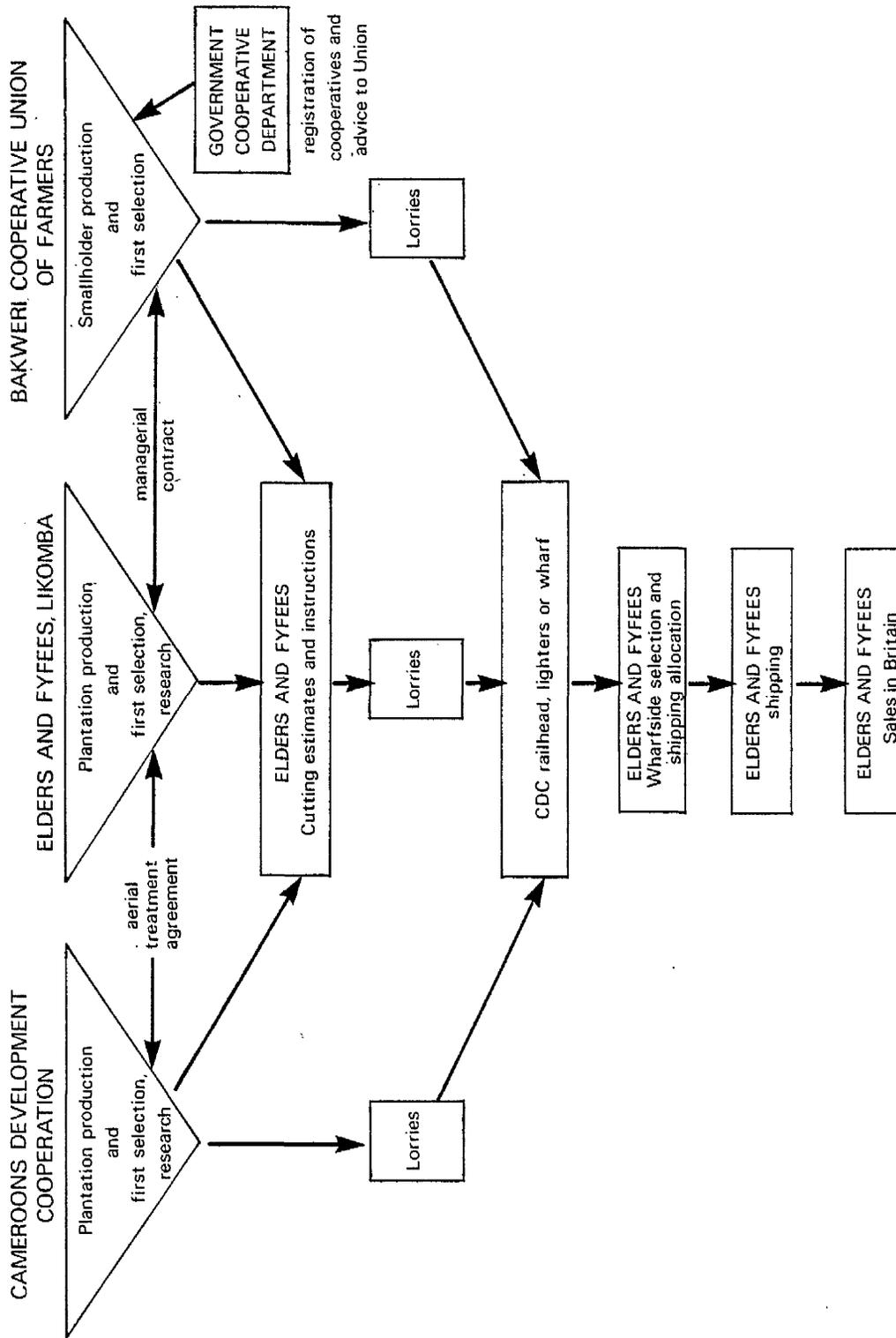
Contractual Balances: CDC, Elders and Fyffes, BCUF

From the point of view of the overall management of the banana trade in British Cameroons, Elders and Fyffes' work with the BCUF was undoubtedly beneficial. If nothing else, the professional contribution of the company to the efficiency of the BCUF helped to put the Union on a par with the other two major producers, the CDC and Elders and Fyffes' Likomba and Bavenga plantations. As General Manager of the Union and as a Fyffes employee, David Philp had access to several key points in the organisation of the business and undoubtedly strengthened the Union's ability to bargain with what must have often been an alien European standard.

Nonetheless, the essential tripartite balance between the CDC, Elders and Fyffes and BCUF does not seem to have been upset by the closer links that existed between the company and the cooperatives. In large part, this is due to the 1958 contract that the CDC made with the company. As the 1957 Elders and Fyffes' contract with the BCUF was by then signed and operating, the CDC had had an opportunity to gauge exactly where they were likely to be threatened by the BCUF and had written several protective clauses into their own contract with the company. The stipulation that all producers meet the same standard of production was one such clause, and meant that the CDC would not find its high quality fruit subsidising the lower-quality exports that might come from smallholders. Other clauses, however, which existed in the CDC contract but not in that of the BCUF, anticipated those occasions when the amount of fruit ready for shipping might exceed either the shipping space available or the ability of the market to absorb the volume of production. In both cases, the CDC made certain that the final allotments of fruit that could be sent out of the country by each of the three producing organisations was proportionate to the final estimates sent into the company as part of the routine monthly predictions of production.²⁰

The most important feature of the Elders and Fyffes contracts with the CDC and the BCUF was the manner in which some of the weakest links in the Cameroon side of the chain of activities from production to sales were kept firmly in the hands of the company. Figure 5, "Managerial Structure of British Cameroons Banana Trade, 1959" gives a rough idea of who controlled what aspects of the business. Field

Figure 5. MANAGERIAL STRUCTURE OF BRITISH CAMEROONS BANANA TRADE, 1959



production with its numerous tasks of planting, weeding, pruning, propping, fertilising and spraying was largely in the hands of individual farmers and the various plantation managers. The tasks of cutting the fruit for selection and shipping were also handled individually as was spraying among the BCUF farmers. Aerial spraying gave rise to a joint arrangement between CDC and Elders and Fyffes. They also exchanged research findings, although not quite as often as might be supposed. According to John Robertson, who worked with the CDC during the banana boom, Elders and Fyffes were often reluctant to divulge their knowledge or research findings.²¹ Transport to the ships was the most cooperative part of the process. In the case of the BCUF, the central management of the Union (as supervised by Elders and Fyffes seconded staff) provided the link between farm and collection point, after which the fruit was taken out to shipside by CDC rail or boat.

Thus, from field to ship, the responsibilities were very evenly divided with different producers more or less controlling most of the tasks. Where planters' groups did not completely control the exporting side of the chain was at those points which affected the optimal use of the shipping space available. Thus, although each producer estimated his harvest, it was the company who controlled the final adjustment of those estimates against the number of ships needed for the Cameroons trade. Similarly, it was the company who issued the first cutting orders and apportioned (based on estimates) how much each producer was allowed to cut for the ships waiting in the harbour. Finally, to ensure that no fruit was sent which could not survive the journey in good condition, it was the company who made the last inspection and selection before fruit was placed in the hold. Thus, while the producers were allowed more or less complete control over their styles of production, it was the company who guarded primary controls over the organisation of the twenty-four to thirty-six-hour period between cutting and loading.²²

In this way, the company's points of authority were chiefly in the shipping and sales. At this time, few bananas left the British Cameroons which were not shipped and sold by Elders and Fyffes, almost always in the United Kingdom. Such an arrangement, it might be argued, placed an economy like that of the Southern Cameroons in a too vulnerable position, at the mercy of a single company exploiting a

single market. Certainly, as later events showed, the dependence of the Southern Cameroons on Britain's Commonwealth preferences proved ruinous when the country federated with the former French Cameroons. As for their dependence on a single company, however, it is important to remember that the company was not in a totally dominant position -- both the CDC and the local government had considerable authority over the company which could be brought to bear. Moreover, at this period in the company's life, it was supplying twenty percent of their United Kingdom market with produce from the Southern Cameroons. Thus, their dependence on the Southern Cameroons was as important to the company as the country's reliance on Elders and Fyffes. Other sales agents, and particularly those in other markets, might have helped to diversify the British Cameroons' economic dependence on the British market. And yet, one should approach such an idea with caution, as another sales agent and shipper might have upset the managerial balance that had grown up over the 1950s and had developed with increasing efficiency and refinement. It is also possible that a greater number of participants would have reduced the economies of scale, particularly in shipping, where a good refrigerated ship adapted for the trade required at least 800 long tons of fruit before it began to pay its way.

One is tempted, in studying the formal relationships between the CDC, Elders and Fyffes and the BCUF, to argue that it was a well-balanced structure in which the requirements of the industrial plantation, the smallholder and the European banana market were brought together in reasonable functional harmony. If only, one wants to hypothesize, the Southern Cameroons had not voted themselves out of the Commonwealth and into federation with the former French Cameroons, one would have the perfect model of a pluralistic agricultural ideal.

Unfortunately, like most "if onlys", this is an hypothesis impossible to test. Certainly one would like to believe that with the help of the professional management coming from Elders and Fyffes, the BCUF would have been able to find a way through the very serious problems of disease, soil fertility and rising market standard which helped to drive the smallholder out of business in Mungo. One would also like to think that Elders and Fyffes as a progressive plantation company able to draw on United Fruit expertise, and pushed by the necessity to outdo the CDC in social services so that the CDC would

continue to grant them leave to stay, would have continued in the ambitious style in which they began. One would also like to hope that the company's future contracts with both the CDC and the BCUF would have maintained the balance of interests and responsibilities which the early contracts described.

In fact, however, throughout the post-war period, the banana trade from the British Cameroons was changing almost month by month. Its success was remarkable, but in many ways the banana crop of the 1950s was a pioneering crop, planted only at the beginning of a long development process. Certainly it had never before been produced in such volume or by so many numbers and kinds of farmers, and for many people it was the first cash crop ever planted for European markets. There was, therefore, still a long way to go before the crop could survive as a permanent fixture of the economic landscape.

It is also undoubtedly true that in the volatile environment of African independence during the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was little chance that the kind of working relationship that existed between the farmers, Elders and Fyffes and the CDC could have long survived. The paternalistic style, the expatriate standard of production, and the many radical transformations in local society that attended the success of the smallholders' banana trade, would eventually have either radically altered or destroyed the balance achieved in the late 1950s.

In any event, the business was transformed and then ruined by the loss of the Commonwealth preference. Exactly how that happened, and why, is something that will be discussed in Chapter 4: "The Politics of Reunification". But the deus ex machina impact of the decision begs a thousand unanswerable questions about what would have occurred if the banana trade of West Cameroon had been allowed to develop from the very sound base it had established by the late 1950s.

CHAPTER 3
MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES OF THE 1950s:
MUNGO

Like the trade from the British Cameroons the banana trade from Mungo has always departed from the idea of a centrally controlled, vertically integrated management structure like that exemplified in the early development of the United Fruit Company in the Americas. Even more than in the British Cameroons, the trade from the French Cameroons has been characterised by a diffused structure, a high degree of independence among the participants, and a handful of contracts which had the effect of organising the trade.

In this chapter we describe the managerial structure of the 1950s trade in Mungo and point out some of the characteristics of that structure which have influenced developments since then. We begin with the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers which throughout the 1950s was the official representative of the many interests working in the banana business and was, therefore, in a position to provide the kind of integrated management required in exporting bananas. Where the Syndicat failed to provide that management, we then look at some of the other organisations in Mungo in order to establish what exactly was the division of managerial responsibilities during the booming post-war business.

Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers

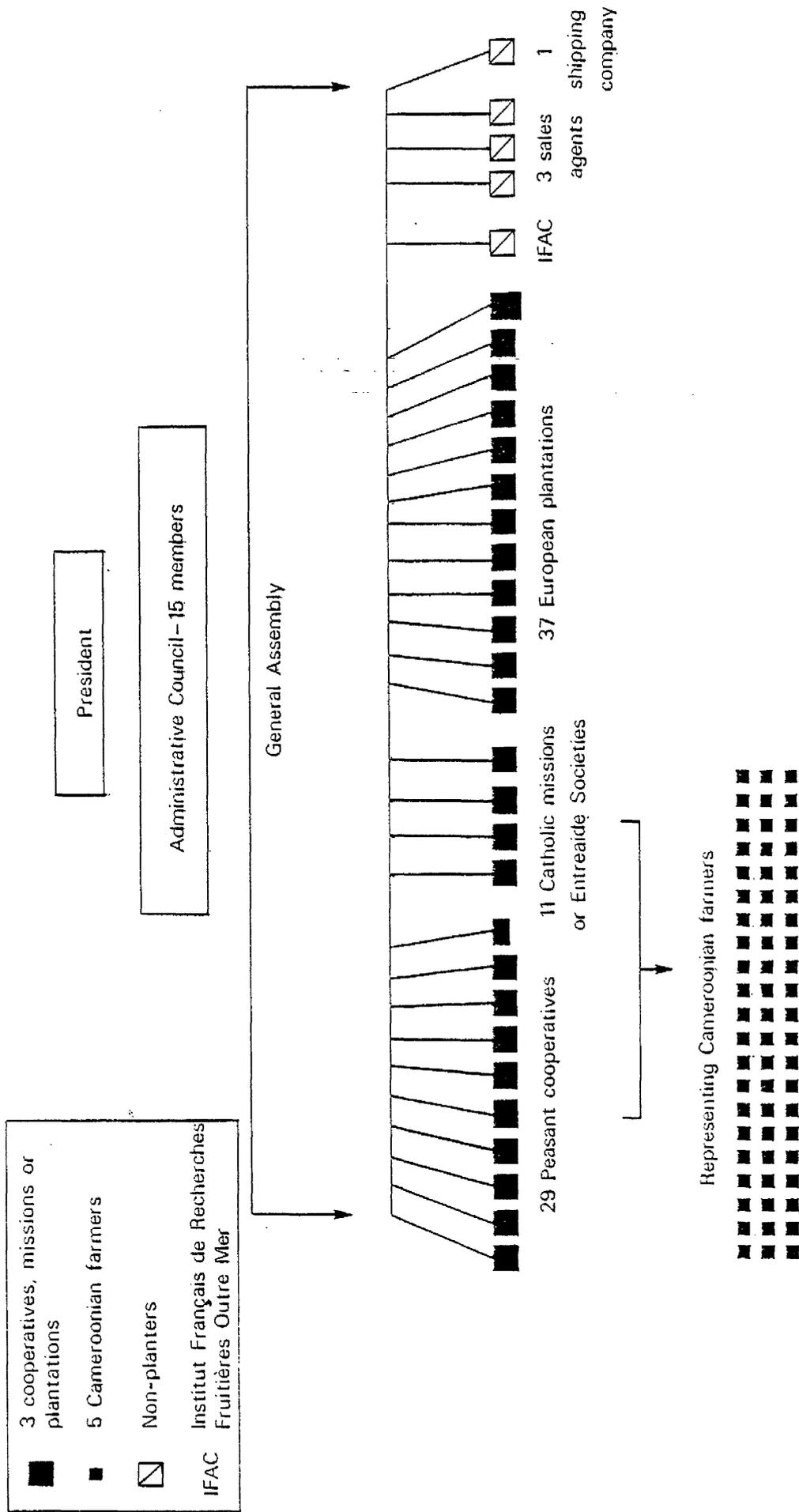
The banana trade of Mungo began during the 1930s when European immigrants were encouraged by the administration of the French Cameroons to take up land concessions and develop them for the agricultural export market. A number of crops were tried, but the most successful was the export banana. In the course of this pre-war development, a number of African immigrants also came into Mungo, some as cessionnaires with land grants of their own, but many more as labourers. In time, these workers also began producing and exporting bananas, usually planting on land adjacent to the European lands and shipping their fruit out with that of the neighbouring plantations.

The Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers was first formed by European planters in the late 1930s as a union representing European banana growers. As early as the 1930s, according to one of the African planters, the Syndicat lobbied with the colonial government for the interests of the European banana planters in Mungo, in particular against those Africans who wanted a larger, formal share of the trade.¹ It was a lobby that formally failed. By the late 1940s, Cameroonian planters had obtained a sixty percent quota of the banana exports from the French Cameroons and, by the early 1950s, the Syndicat's membership had expanded to include Cameroonian smallholder cooperatives as well as all of the European planters.²

The Syndicat's 1950s membership is illustrated in Figure 6, "April 1959 Membership in the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, Mungo". Several aspects of this membership should be noted. First, the peasant cooperatives and the Catholic Missions together represented the bulk of the Cameroonian producers who were, in 1958, producing seventy percent of the exports from Mungo. The cooperatives and missions were not only responsible for the smallholders' production, but were also in charge of transporting the fruit from the smallholder farms to the railroad for shipping to the port at Bonaberi. Counterpoised to the cooperatives and missions were the European plantations. They were providing thirty percent of exports in 1958 and like the cooperatives were responsible for transporting their fruit to the railroad. The cooperatives, the missions and the European plantations made up most of the membership of the Syndicat, and thus continued the original 1930s definition of the Syndicat as a producers' organisation.

In addition to the membership of planters and smallholders' cooperatives, however, the 1950s Syndicat also included IFAC, the agricultural research station at Nyombé, which at the time was under the direction of the French government's Institut Français des Recherches Fruitières d'Outre Mer; Chargeurs Réunis, the shipping company which provided regular service to Europe; and the three sales agents, the largest of which was la Compagnie des Bananes. With the addition of these organisations, the Syndicat represented nearly the whole central chain of activities from field to wharveside sales in Europe. The only features of the chain which did not hold Syndicat membership were two government organisations: the railway line from

Figure 6. APRIL 1959 MEMBERSHIP IN THE SYNDICAT DE DEFENSE DES INTERETS BANANIERES, MUNGO



Source: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, Procès verbal de l'assemblée générale ordinaire, 9 avril 1959.

Nkongsamba to Bonaberi which took the fruit down to the harbour, and the Service de Contrôle du Conditionnement, which inspected the fruit at wharftside and rejected any banana stems which were not of exportable quality.

This membership resulted in an organisation with a broad democratic base, a kind of town meeting of the trade in which (four times a year) everyone could vote. As defined by its 1950s constitution, it was a political organisation that was relentlessly diffused with few formal vehicles -- outside an administrative council of twelve and the quarterly general assemblies -- for manipulating differences within the banana trade. There was, for example, no constitutional obligation that the administrative council should represent both Cameroonian and European planters. Nor was there any constitutional provision for the routine administrative participation of the shipping lines, the railroads or the sales agents, any one of whom could make or break the success of the trade.³ It was a formula for obscuring legitimate differences and in so doing confusing the operational relations between different segments of the whole industry, as well as obscuring the social contradictions which, as independence approached, were becoming more and more volatile.

Thus, instead of becoming managers of the more complicated trade that emerged when the smallholders' cooperatives joined the Syndicat and started exporting, the Syndicat wrote its new 1950s constitution in such a way that the organisation remained essentially a political lobby and an agricultural union. As such, it was more concerned with promotional and cooperative buying schemes than it was with the routine management and coordination of the trade. As the goals were defined in Article 5 of the new constitution they read:

- 1° - d'étudier l'amélioration à apporter aux cultures, la conservation, le transport et la vente des bananes;
- 2° - de prêter son entremise gratuite pour la vente des produits provenant exclusivement des exploitations des syndiqués, de faciliter cette vente par expositions, annonces, publications, groupements d'expéditions, et de procurer à ses seuls sociétaires des instruments et produits nécessaires à leurs exploitations. Il pourra en outre acquérir des terrains, construire des bâtiments, ateliers ou magasins dans l'intérêt de ses adhérents et pourvoir en général à tous les besoins professionnels de ses membres.⁴

A number of practical steps resulted from this set of goals, among them the setting up of CATA, the aerial treatment company which was formed to spray against Sigatoka disease. Still, the tone of the organisation was that of a lobby which functioned more on the basis of persuasion (including the persuasion of its own members) than of authority.

In this respect, it is of interest to take a short look at the rapport moral of the Syndicat for 1958. It was presented at the April 9, 1959, general assembly meeting by Monsieur Penanhoat who had been president of the Syndicat since it was founded before the Second World War. During this same meeting, M. Penanhoat resigned and the first Cameroonian president of the organisation was elected in his place. It was the last general assembly of the Syndicat to be untroubled by political events in the region and so serves, in some ways, to epitomise the era of the 1950s.

In his speech, M. Penanhoat spent a lot of time exhorting members to maintain standards of production. He urged planters to use the plastic wrapping for exported banana stems that was just coming into vogue; he pressed on them the importance of maintaining their lorries and access roads so that the fruit did not get bruised while being transported to the trains; he argued that everyone should build paved hangars to protect the fruit from the weather after it has been cut; and he discussed the problems of aerial spraying. He also mentioned efforts to move into the centralised purchase of agricultural products and outlined contacts that had been made with various official bodies: the Production Minister, the Chamber of Agriculture, the USPAC for the creation of an agricultural wage scale, and with the CIB (Comité Interprofessionel Bananier in France) to discuss access to the French market and relations with the French Overseas Departments, Martinique and Guadeloupe.⁵

What comes across quite clearly is that the Syndicat's greatest successes were political, e.g. with the agricultural wage or negotiations in France. By contrast, the campaign against Sigatoka disease was introduced by a complaint about the cost:

Si la lutte contre la Cercoporiose a permis par son efficacité la quasi disparition de cette maladie sur nos plantations, c'est grâce à un effort financier énorme que les planteurs supportent avec peine.⁶

Only as an afterthought did M. Penanhoat thank the government agricultural services that made the campaign a success, returning quickly to the argument that the tax to support this treatment should be diminished. This, he stated, should be possible since the price of treatment fell after opening the contract to competitive bidding.

The same pattern occurs elsewhere in M. Penanhoat's presentation: complaint and exhortation, appeal for a state remedy, search for a commercial solution. A good example comes again where he was discussing the need to wrap all exported banana stems in plastic. He first issued a less than veiled complaint against the African producers for not bothering to wrap:

... malgré l'évidence de l'intérêt de l'emballage tant sur le plan pécuniaire que sur le plan de la qualité, nous avons rencontré auprès des producteurs africains une certaine réticence.⁷

He then described efforts with the Production Minister to make wrapping obligatory for all exporters, and finally finished by announcing that the Syndicat had managed to lower the cost of plastic wrapping by two francs a kilo (about one English penny's worth) and had stocked a large supply for the Syndicat's members.

Clearly, despite the expansion of membership in the early 1950s and with it the increased complexity of the trade, the Syndicat chose to react to problems more as a political body demanding remedy than as a managerial organisation capable of resolving different situations on its own. This role can, in part, be explained by the fact that the Syndicat was an organisation begun by Europeans and, even after the admission of Cameroonians, it was weighted in favour of Europeans. These planters in turn had been described by Edwin Ardener as "a cross between French peasant farmers and the French Foreign Legion",⁸ implying an undesirable hybrid of both. Ardener's description is undoubtedly extreme, but what does seem to be true, and what characterises their survivors in the industry today, is a radical individualism which does not admit easily of outside suggestion or

control. At its worst, it has been a destructive form of managerial egotism, while at its best it has been ideally suited to the independence and isolation of creating and operating a plantation estate.

It was this spirit, however, which would seem to have made the Syndicat what it was. Jealous of their own autonomy, the early founders of the Syndicat seem to have been reluctant to concede to a public body like the Syndicat the formal right to make contracts for shipping or sales or transport in their name. They would rather make such arrangements individually, or at least guard the right to make them individually. It is also possible that when the European Syndicat was opened to Cameroonians and a new constitution was drafted, the original members of the Syndicat were disinclined to invest very much of the organisation of the trade in a body in which Cameroonian farmers could hold membership. There may well have been a fear that the control of the Syndicat would one day pass into Cameroonian hands and that the European planters would lose out in any such shift.

It should be noted, however, that since the 1930s several important aspects of the management of the trade had been taken over by la Compagnie des Bananes. The company's authority was contractual rather than hierarchical, and as such could only be exercised with a very light hand, as will be seen in the following discussion. More importantly, it was an administration of affairs that had won the approval and trust of the planters and which had been effective in seeing that the banana trade of Cameroon was healthy and profitable. Thus it is not surprising that in the early 1950s, when the new Syndicat constitution was written, the management of affairs was not really altered. There is, after all, always pressure to believe that as long as a business is doing well -- and at the time the banana business was doing extremely well -- it is wiser to leave the structure of affairs basically unchanged.

La Compagnie des Bananes

The first time one is aware of the company taking a central managerial role in the banana trade of Mungo comes during the Second World War. What is remembered today is that the Compagnie des Bananes

subsidised the banana plantations during those years when it was impossible to ship any fruit to Europe. In fact, the subsidy came from the British government who offered it as a gesture of support for the backing given by the French Cameroons to Free France.⁹ M. Penanhoat, as President of the Syndicat, introduced Alistair McLaurin, the company director, to General LeClerc. The General then placed the administration of the subsidy with Mr. McLaurin.¹⁰ The subsidy was, therefore, a joint effort of the LeClerc wartime government in the French Cameroons, the Syndicat, and la Compagnie des Bananes, with the British government as a fairly silent partner. Mr. McLaurin was responsible for seeing that fruit was produced -- even though it was later destroyed -- and eventually used the subsidy to support a programme of fallowing and replanting that lasted three years.¹¹

According to Salomon Mpondo, who later became president of the Syndicat in the 1960s, none of the benefits of this subsidy went to Cameroonian planters because they never knew it existed.¹² Alistair McLaurin claims that they would have received funding through the European planters with whom they exported.¹³ That being the case, it is not unlikely that the distribution of the British subsidy was uneven. Nonetheless, the administration of the subsidy seems to have earned the company a reputation as the company which "saved" the banana trade during the war. With that reputation came a certain amount of goodwill which became particularly valuable during the 1950s when competition between planters for shipping space was unusually complicated.

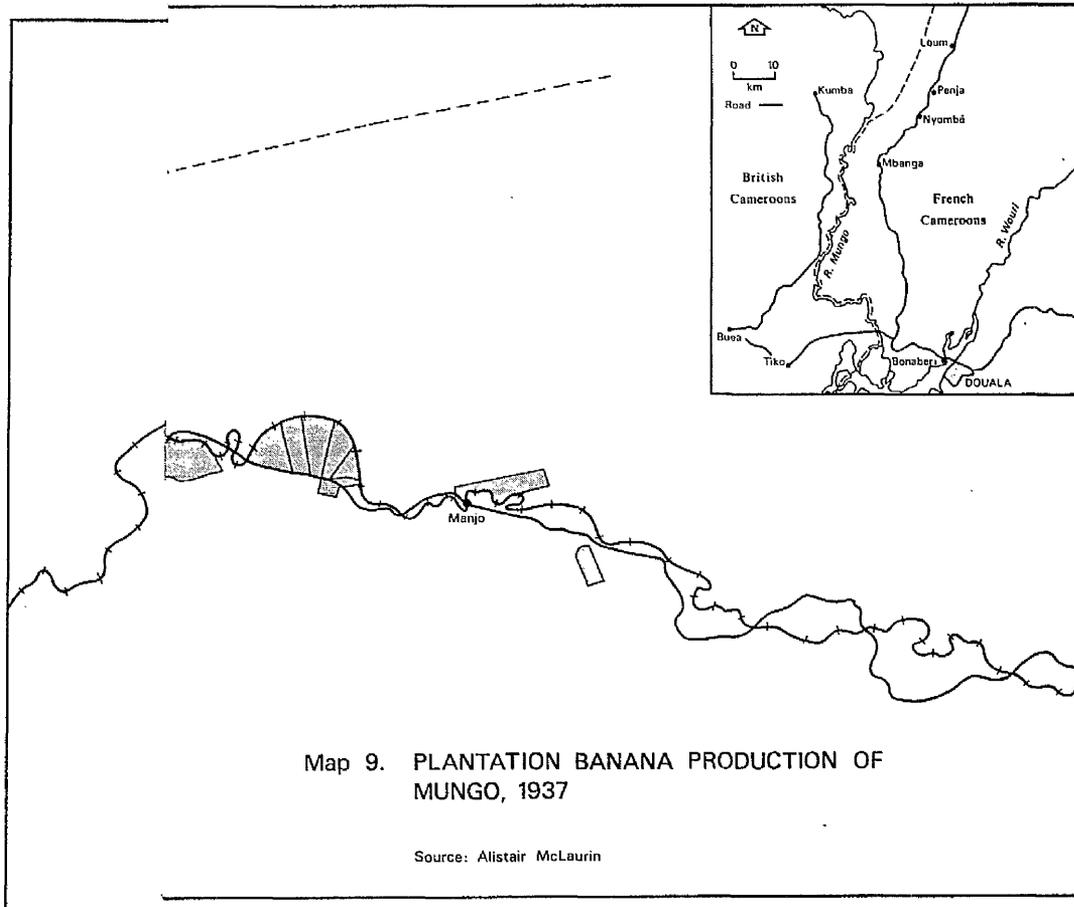
As was true of Elders and Fyffes in the British Cameroons, it was in this matter of cutting and evacuating the fruit that la Compagnie des Bananes exercised the most authority and its strongest managerial role of the trade. Matters of production, e.g. crop treatments, planting patterns, varieties used, were left largely in the hands of the planters themselves. Both the Syndicat and IFAC, the agricultural research station, offered advice to the planters on preferred approaches, and the Syndicat, as has been noted, worked as a collective buying organisation for planters' supplies and services. But neither IFAC or the Syndicat had any authority to dictate the practices actually used by planters who made these decisions on their own. La Compagnie des Bananes which had, through the United Fruit Company structure, access to up-to-date advice on agricultural

practices, also served informally as a planters' advisory service, but again without much authority or even comprehensive use of that service by the many different planters in Mungo in the 1950s. Undoubtedly, there were in the company's contracts with planters and cooperatives stipulations on the quality of fruit that was required. But how that quality was to be achieved was a question to be decided by the individual farmers themselves.

Unfortunately, none of the company's contracts with planters in Mungo was found during field research in Cameroon. However, the practice of signing contracts had begun during the 1930s under Alistair McLaurin, who provided a map of those Mungo planters under contract to the Compagnie des Bananes in 1937. A simplified copy of that map appears in Map 9. At first, according to Mr. McLaurin, much of the 1930s shipping of the bananas was done by Armateurs Martins, whose parent company, Martin Frères, managed the SPNP plantation of 1500 hectares. By the 1950s, however, la Compagnie des Bananes had signed a contract with Chargeurs Réunis to provide refrigerated ships departing regularly from Bonaberi. In the process, Armateurs Martins discontinued banana shipping (to reappear later after independence) and left its fruit to be handled by la Compagnie des Bananes and its contracted shipping company, Chargeurs Réunis. The regular shipping service provided by this arrangement, which was the same for all growers and cooperatives contracted to la Compagnie des Bananes, was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the success of the 1950s trade.¹⁴

In managerial terms, the fact that the Compagnie des Bananes had managed to include the SPNP plantation -- the largest single producer in Mungo -- in their arrangements meant that by the 1950s the company was in a strong position to assume some of the management responsibilities of the trade. Ninety percent of the Mungo production was sold on commission by the company's offices in France, and the company had the only shipping contract regularly serving the Mungo banana trade.¹⁵ This made the company in Mungo the pivot organisation in the complicated task of moving the banana crop from the field into the ships at Bonaberi.

Figure 7, "Managerial Structure of Mungo Banana Trade, 1959", shows the position held by the company in 1959. Practically speaking, the actual cutting and evacuation of banana stems from the field to



Map 9. PLANTATION BANANA PRODUCTION OF MUNGO, 1937

Source: Alistair McLaurin

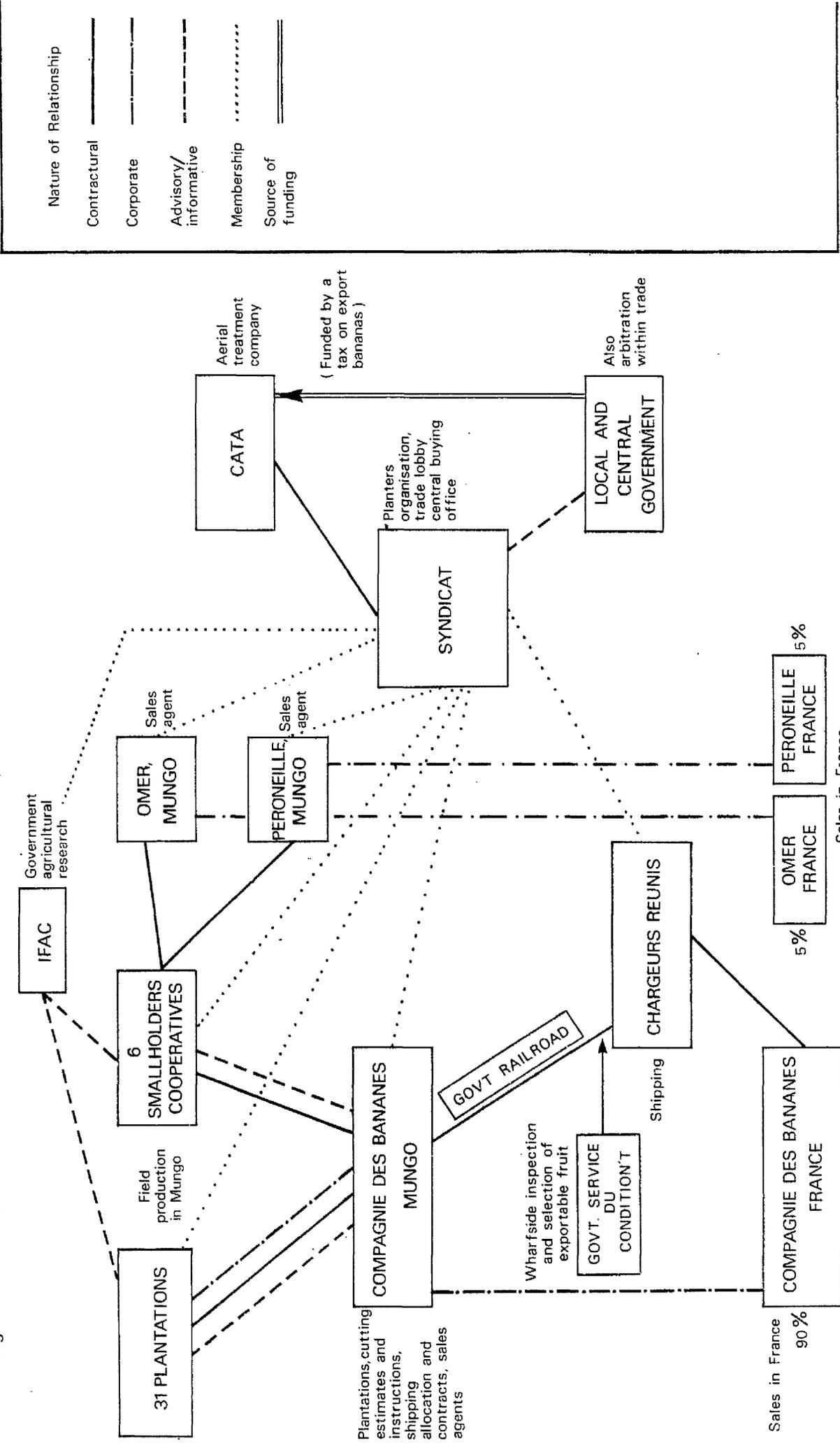
the railroad station was the responsibility of the plantations and the smallholders' cooperatives. The company, however, had the responsibility for establishing accurate crop estimates and from that calculating the required shipping space and apportioning the available shipping to the various producers. It was the latter of these tasks that took up the most time. Eventually, the company began holding weekly Monday morning meetings in the company offices at Penja. The purpose of the meeting, to which all planters and cooperatives were invited, was to work out in concert the expected levels of production and to apportion the shipping space accordingly.

There was undoubtedly a fair amount of bluff involved in these meetings as planters and cooperatives tried to secure for themselves as much space as they thought they might need, perhaps over-estimating their requirements. Certainly in the early 1950s, according to Alistair McLaurin, he had to spend much of his time visiting farms to get some idea of how accurate the estimates had been. This, he said, was particularly difficult on the smallholders' farms where food crops were routinely planted with the bananas.

Once the estimates were fixed, the company then had to share out the amount of available shipping space. According to Mr. McLaurin again, this was particularly difficult when dealing with the smallholders' cooperatives. By the 1948 agreement which had given post-war African producers a quota of sixty percent of the shipping space in bananas, the allotments available to European and Cameroonian farmers were more or less fixed. There was, therefore, little room to quarrel over how much space was allowed to Europeans as opposed to Cameroonian producers. Nor was it too difficult to decide how much space each of the European plantations required. The plantations were not numerous -- about forty different estates under thirty different managements -- and were planted in one crop, the banana.

In the case of the smallholders' cooperatives, however, there were between fifty and sixty different organisations representing anywhere from two to five thousand small farms. Moreover, membership in the cooperatives was extremely fluid: overlapping, not easily counted and liable to change. In addition, the cooperatives were in intense competition with each other for the shipping space available

Figure 7. MANAGERIAL STRUCTURE OF MUNGO BANANA TRADE, 1959



within the Cameroonian quota of sixty percent. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that according to Mr. McLaurin the greatest difficulty was not in apportioning space between European and Cameroonian planters, but among the various Cameroonian smallholders' cooperatives.*

Perhaps, however, the most important observation to be made about Figure 7 is that the actual responsibilities of la Compagnie des Bananes in the Mungo banana trade were extremely limited. Despite the company's pivotal and very political role in allotting shipping capacity to various producers, there were still large areas of the whole business that were outside company control. Of these, production is the most obvious area where the company was of only limited importance. They could suggest what was required, but could do little to decide what procedures were ultimately used. In the same ways, the company had no agricultural research role, a task which was left largely in the hands of IFAC's research station in Nyombé. This is not to say that the Compagnie des Bananes plantations never introduced and modelled new procedures, which they did, but the company never had a research station of its own geared solely to the requirements of the Cameroon trade. Nor, in fact, did IFAC specialise in the banana trade since their research involved not just banana cultivation, but also other cash crops that might be introduced.

Transportation is the other major area where the company had no role to play, aside from arranging the contract with Chargeurs Réunis. Unlike Elders and Fyffes or the United Fruit Company, la Compagnie des Bananes never had its own shipping fleet, relying instead on agreements with existing shipping lines. Similarly, the rail line from Nkongsamba to Bonaberi which ran through Mungo was not a company

* There are no figures available for the number of farms involved in the 1950s cooperatives. However, cooperative exports for 1958 were 51,714 tonnes. At an average yield of five tonnes per hectare and an average of five hectares per farm, there would have been 2068 smallholdings involved in producing that quantity of fruit. At three tonnes per hectare and three hectares per farm, the number of holdings goes up to 5746 farms. Dominici estimates 12,000 hectares and 6000 farmers on smallholdings with bananas.¹⁶

operation like for example the early railroads in Costa Rica, but was a government project completed soon after the French were installed in the French Cameroons.

Finally, one of the most important procedures outside of the company's control was the inspection of fruit. In the British Cameroons this task rested firmly with the company, Elders and Fyffes, and involved fairly elaborate procedures both at the collection points in the field and at wharfside before loading onto the ships. For the Mungo trade, however, there was only one inspection point, the wharf at Bonaberi, and the inspection and selection were done, not by la Compagnie des Bananes, but by the government's Service de Contrôle du Conditionnement. There was, again according to Alistair McLaurin, a company representative who could offer suggestions on the selections being made, but in effect one of the most critical steps of the trade was being handled by someone who had no commercial relationship to the business and who did not feel the effects of the choices he made. While this procedure might well have been designed to avoid corruption, it had the effect of distancing the inspection procedures from the commercial criteria that ultimately operated on the fruit in Europe. This selection procedure -- the fact that it was at a single point, distant from Mungo, and was not done by anyone actually trying to sell the fruit -- had several consequences, some of which will be mentioned in what follows. One of the places where it did the most damage was in the operations of the smallholders' cooperatives.

Smallholders' Cooperatives

It is unquestionably true that the most difficult managerial feature of the Mungo banana trade in the 1950s was the smallholders' cooperatives. In part, this was due to their great success and the numbers of farmers who joined cooperatives. The sixty percent export quota for Cameroonians and the ease of the early Gros Michel cultivation combined to encourage a large number of planters to join the trade. Their entry was further facilitated by the government's local Provident Society. The government of the French Cameroons had established these societies -- which were administered through the local government administration and based in part on compulsory dues -- in 1937. They became important in local areas, however, in the mid-1950s when new investment funds became available, largely from

French development funds like FIDES. These investment funds were put into a Common Fund to which any local society had access. In Jane Guyer's paper on "The Provident Societies in the Rural Economy of Yaoundé, 1945-1960", she notes that the mid-1950s were a period of rapid expansion of the commercialisation of agricultural products, much of it encouraged by the Provident Societies of that time. Of all the Provident Societies, she writes, the one in Mungo was "by far the most active Society." It was, she reports, "controlled by commercial growers of bananas for export. They made it into an extremely lively business venture, which made producer loans, and financed transport and marketing for the national consumer market as well as for export".¹⁷

Unfortunately, Guyer does not elaborate on exactly how the Provident Society related to the fifty or sixty banana cooperatives which were exporting at the time. Nor is there any document which describes the manner in which the cooperatives functioned internally, or how they related to each other, to their members or to the Syndicat. What follows, therefore, is based on the impression of the cooperatives which has emerged after reading Syndicat meeting minutes and the minutes of the post-independence cooperative organisation: FEBACAM/UGEOBAM, and after discussions with a number of Africans and Europeans who worked with the cooperatives.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the cooperatives, in managerial terms, was the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by each cooperative. There was no umbrella organisation to which all the cooperatives in Mungo belonged. Instead, each organisation seems to have formed its own rules, its own accounting system and its own fashion for managing the production and transport of bananas. Another interesting feature of these cooperatives is that they were organised around individuals, rather than around villages, which were the basis for the smallholders' cooperatives in the British Cameroons. This meant that any individual who was able to convince other farmers to join his cooperative was free to do so. Members no doubt joined for a wide variety of reasons: the president of the cooperative might have been a neighbour, or a relative, or a particularly successful individual who seemed capable of managing a good cooperative or, in some cases, the Catholic father of the local mission.

What such a system certainly required was a great deal of confidence in the individual who was forming the cooperative, and who had full responsibility for the success of the organisation. The lack of any umbrella organisation, like the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers in the British Cameroons, for example, meant that the individual cooperatives functioned without supervision or advice from any broader authority. Such an authority might have been used to resolve problems between cooperatives, such as the allotment of shipping space, or might have been used to research ways of treating Sigatoka disease in fields that carried both food crops and bananas. Without a broader organisation, each cooperative president had virtually sole responsibility for his society. In this respect, one can also speculate that because cooperatives were based on an individual's appeal rather than on a village structure, the cooperatives lacked whatever authority and strength might have come from the village political structure. Where this might have had considerable importance was in checking the accounts and procedures used by any president in order to make certain that members were not being abused.

The overall lack of accountability that this system allowed was aggravated by several features within the banana trade itself. One of these was a very poor circulation of routine information, in particular the price received for each shipment of bananas. Here again, there is a useful contrast to the situation in the British Cameroons where cooperative members were able to compare the price they had received against the price received by the Cameroons Development Corporation as reported by workers in the CDC. Since the cooperatives and the CDC were contracted to receive the same price for their fruit, cooperative members had a way of checking whether or not they had received a fair price for their fruit. Nothing comparable existed in the French Cameroons although, according to Alistair McLaurin, any planter could ask la Compagnie des Bananes for price information,¹⁸ a procedure which would not have been effective in spreading such information very widely. The lack of price information meant that cooperative members were essentially ignorant when it came to judging what their earnings should have been. In this situation, it is not surprising to hear, for example, that as the banana earnings declined in the late 1950s, one cooperative president was keeping for himself seventy-five percent of the income of the whole organisation with, apparently, relative impunity.¹⁹

Similarly, the fact that the fruit inspection and selection always took place at the wharf at Bonaberi meant that no cooperative member knew whether in fact it was his fruit that had been rejected or that of another planter or another cooperative. This had two consequences. In the first place, it left great room for the unfair manipulation of individual accounts, and in the second place it meant that the reasons for rejection of fruit were essentially invisible to the man who had produced it. There was little way, therefore, for a farmer to learn what had failed in his farming and how to improve it.

There is one other feature of the cooperatives, taken as a whole, which should be considered. This emerges in looking at the cooperative export figures for January 1959 which appear in Tables 1 and 2. In these figures, one sees that a group of twelve cooperatives each (twenty percent of all cooperatives) was exporting fifty-five percent of all the bananas from smallholders. These large cooperatives each exported an average of 203 tonnes of bananas in January 1959. The smaller cooperatives averaged only forty-two tonnes each, but together made up eighty percent of all the banana cooperatives in Mungo.

While there is considerable variation in exports from one month to another, and between the years of the banana boom, it is not unreasonable to suppose that these figures present a reasonably accurate idea of the nature of the cooperatives involved in banana exports. What is of interest is the fact that such a large number of the groups was exporting a relatively small volume. This argues that the profits of the banana boom had attracted a great number of individuals who just wanted to export a few stems to raise a small amount of very quick cash. They did not see themselves as the proprietors of a banana holding, but as farmers who raised a few bananas among several other crops. This was even more likely to be the case if the number of members in each cooperative was very large, but unfortunately there is no way of knowing that without the luck of finding membership archives for 1959.

What this also means in managerial terms is that the commitment of this large number of smallholders to the banana trade was probably not as great as those larger cooperatives who may have had a greater dependency on the business. Here again, it would help to know whether the larger cooperatives had a larger membership or only a greater

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF COOPERATIVE TONNAGE IN MUNGO JANUARY 1959
consolidated information

<u>Jan. 1959</u> <u>tonnage</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>coops.</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>tonnage</u>	<u>Percentages of</u>	
			<u>All</u> <u>coops.</u>	<u>Jan. 1959</u> <u>coop. tonnage</u>
over 100 tonnes	12	203	20%	55%
0-99 tonnes	48	42	80%	45%

Total number of cooperatives - 60.

Total cooperative tonnage January 1959 - 4451 tonnes.

Source: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, "Bilan,
31 décembre 1959."

Table 2

DISTRIBUTION OF COOPERATIVE TONNAGE IN MUNGO JANUARY 1959
detailed information

<u>Jan. 1959</u> <u>tonnage</u>	<u>Number of</u> <u>coops.</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>tonnage</u>	<u>Percentages of</u>	
			<u>All</u> <u>coops.</u>	<u>Jan. 1959</u> <u>coop. tonnage</u>
over 300 tonnes	2	386	3%	17%
100-299 tonnes	10	167	17%	37%
50-99 tonnes	16	78	27%	28%
25-49 tonnes	14	32	23%	11%
0-24 tonnes	18	14	30%	6%

Total number of cooperatives - 60.

Total cooperatives tonnage January 1959 - 4451 tonnes.

Source: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, "Bilan,
31 décembre 1959".

volume of production. Either way, however, the presidents of these cooperatives would be more likely to be involved in the management of the trade because of the pressure from their members who were either very numerous or heavy investors in banana production. In contrast, it is more likely to have been the small cooperatives who resented the increased discipline and investment the business was requiring throughout the late 1950s and early '60s. Likewise, it was probably from among their number that the economic pressure to drop out of the trade was felt most acutely and was most effective.

What becomes clear in even a speculative attempt to understand the functioning of the banana cooperatives is that they were in a very weak managerial position. The diversity of their membership and the variation between cooperatives would have made it difficult for them to agree on policies relating to technological changes, managerial requirements or political objectives. It also means that there was, as there was in the Syndicat itself, something of an organisational vacuum.

In summary, the outstanding feature of the 1950s Mungo banana trade is the diffused nature of the organisation. Neither the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers nor la Compagnie des Bananes had, in the end, either the responsibility or the authority to manage the full range of tasks that composed the central chain of activities from field to European sale. This is not to argue that either organisation was powerless. On the contrary, in the exercise of those individual responsibilities they did have, both the Syndicat and the company were able to inject considerable discipline and professionalism into the trade. But the managerial structure, diffused and democratic as it was, made adaptation to the changing requirements of the market place in the late 1950s and early 1960s less easily achieved, since full agreement to modernise had to be won piecemeal from the various participants in the trade. One suspects that, throughout the late 1950s, the accomplishment of this task resulted in an informal partnership between the Syndicat's officers and la Compagnie des Bananes. There was considerable weakness, however, in the informality of this arrangement, which by its very existence suggests that the broader membership of the Syndicat would not accept any more formal authority than that offered by persuasion. There were, in addition, the many weaknesses of the smallholders'

cooperatives. These made the kind of modernisation the maturing banana trade was requiring in the late 1950s more difficult to achieve and played an important role in the politics of independence in Mungo, discussed in Chapter 5.

In the long term, the importance of the managerial structure of Mungo's banana trade in the 1950s is that it was the structure from which grew the management in 1982, which is discussed in Chapter 6. One of the points to notice in that discussion is that despite the many changes from the Mungo business of the 1950s, the authority to manage the trade in 1982 was still diffused and still operating with a mixture of formal and informal arrangements. As will be seen, this has been an important factor in the disorganisation of the trade and in the growing inability of the Cameroon banana to compete even in the protected markets of France. Part of the 1982 problems, however, also resulted from the decline of the trade from the former British Cameroons, and from the failure to establish a post-independence business that incorporated the strengths of both banana trades from the 1950s. Exactly how that happened is discussed in the next chapter, "The Politics of Reunification in Anglophone Cameroon".

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF REUNIFICATION IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

It is important to remember that the production coming from the British Cameroons accounted for forty-eight percent of the peak production of the 1950s from both territories (see Figures 1 and 2 in Chapter 1). Thus, the fact that 1982 Cameroonian production is only one-third of the 1950s best years is in large part due to the fact that almost the entire trade from the British Cameroons was slowly eliminated after the Southern Cameroons voted to join the former French territory. This was caused by the fact that after reunifying with the French-speaking Republic of Cameroon, the Southern Cameroons found itself economically thrown into the French Union and out of the British Commonwealth. It is a change that -- although obvious now -- had not been fully appreciated by the voters or their leaders in 1962. Thus, the resulting economic upheaval, and with it the destruction of the banana trade in the state that became West Cameroon, was a severe shock and is still recalled today with much confusion and criticism of the British firms who left the territory.

That reunification would have the effect of uprooting the banana trade and nearly all the British aspects of the economy of the Southern Cameroons was not widely foreseen at the time of the vote. Instead, both the referendum question and the campaign around it were based on the politics of independence which deserve to be explored for the manner in which they determined the outcome of the vote. The vote itself, however, was merely a rough choice between continued incorporation with Nigeria or federation with the new French-speaking Republic of Cameroon. If the vote had been in favour of Nigeria, there would have been little immediate disruption in the running of affairs, since it was a vote for the status quo. However, the choice was made to federate almost immediately with the new Republic of Cameroon. This largely eliminated the opportunity to work out with patience and forethought exactly what the terms of the new federation should be. In the post-referendum negotiations that took place between the Republic and the Southern Cameroons, little detailed

thought was given to economic questions. Instead, these were worked out piecemeal over the next three or four years. As such, there was no chance to form a policy that would minimise the disruption of the new arrangements or to prepare businesses and bureaucracies for the implementation of the new political order.

One is, therefore, obliged to study not just the referendum, but also the process of federation that followed it in order to understand how the banana industry was affected by this change in the territory's political status. The final collapse of the business came soon after the withdrawal of Elders and Fyffes from the territory. That, however, did not occur until 1966, some four years after the referendum had taken place. Thus, there were three or four years during which the economic implications of reunification might have been negotiated in such a way that the West Cameroon banana trade could have survived. The fact that Elders and Fyffes did not stay was in fact only one business decision among several made by the British firms in West Cameroon. That it was one of the more traumatic of these decisions is due to the high level of integration of the banana trade into the lives of people in the Southern Cameroons and to the fact that unlike other firms such as Barclay's Bank, which transferred its business to BICCIC, or R.W. King, which was turned over to a French company, no Francophone organisation ever took the place that had been created by Elders and Fyffes.

The Referendum

To an outsider looking at this history twenty years after the vote, it is astonishing that people could have chosen a political future that ran so directly counter to at least their short-term economic interests. That vote was conditioned, however, by the nature of the question posed in the referendum. There are, thus, two aspects to the reunification vote: the framing of the question and the actual vote on the question posed. The manner in which both were settled goes a long way to explaining some of the non-economic pressures which were at work in this situation.

Framing the Question

Much of the literature on the 1962 referendum in the British Cameroons discusses the nature of the voting. But it is important to realise that the referendum offered only two choices: to stay with Nigeria who had administered the British Cameroons since it became a Mandated Territory, or to join the French Cameroons. In short, there was no option open to be an independent state. If reunification with the former French Cameroons had gone smoothly, this would not have mattered. But reunification has not been very smooth, and the kind of bitterness and resentment one sees in Anglophone Cameroon in 1982 forces one to ask why the referendum did not offer the option of becoming an independent state. If such an option had been open, and if it had been chosen, and if the people of the British Cameroons had elected to stay within the Commonwealth -- all of which could have happened -- the economic life of the British Cameroons might well have been allowed to continue without too much upheaval. But this did not occur and one must, therefore, ask how and why the referendum, which was administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Committee, was worded the way it was.

Although the day-to-day administration of the two mandated Cameroons often had more in common with colonial practice than with their status as protected territories of the League of Nations and the UN, the fact of being administered by France and Britain as United Nations Trusteeship Territories came to have considerable importance at the time of independence. Both the League and the UN had historically functioned as a court of appeal where grievances against the Trustees' administration could be brought, assuming they could make their way past the vigilance of the Trustees themselves. This function of the international body was repeatedly relied upon during the independence debates of the late 1950s. It was particularly important to the political strategy of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), one of the earliest and most radical of the independence parties in the French Cameroons, and the first party to call for the reunification of the two Cameroons.

The UPC was formed in April 1948 and became the Cameroon section of the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA).¹ The Rassemblement also included Leopold Senghor's party in Senegal

and Felix Houphouet-Boigny's party in the Ivory Coast. The men who had formed these parties and the RDA had largely been educated in France and were much influenced by radical left-wing philosophies of the day. They were nationalist, anti-colonialist and closely aligned with and supported by the French Communist Party whose critique of colonialism was more than compatible with their own.

As the parties of the RDA began to gain respectability in their own countries, and with the expulsion in 1947 of the French Communist Party from the coalition government in France, the French administrations in Africa began to try to suppress the RDA.² It should be remembered, that at no point in establishing their rule in Africa had the French conceived of the relationship between France and the African territories as anything but a close economic and political union that was absolute and indivisible. While the Brazzaville Conference of 1946 weakened aspects of this conception it was first effectively challenged as a whole by the RDA in the late 1940s. At that time the RDA argued that the French African territories should be both politically and economically independent of France, a position that was shared and supported by the UPC in Cameroon.

In 1950, however, after two years of intense repression of the RDA in the Ivory Coast, Francois Mitterand negotiated a rapprochement with Felix Houphouet-Boigny. Two aspects of this agreement would have been particularly disagreeable to the Cameroonians of the UPC: first, a relaxation of the call for economic independence,³ and second, the ending of all association with the Communist Party of France.⁴ In accepting the Mitterand agreement, the Ivory Coast and similar parties in the Rassemblement were able to legitimise their positions in their own countries and thus became the heirs to the French rule in Africa. In return, the French were able to maintain strong economic links with Africa and, through the skilful placement of technical advisers, a fair amount of bureaucratic influence as well. To those who chose to stay outside of this arrangement, subsequent history was not nearly so kind. In the case of the UPC, the party was first persecuted, then outlawed in 1955, then engaged in a protracted civil war -- first with the French authorities and finally with the government of Ahmadou Ahidjo, as assisted by members of the French army. By the mid-1960s, most of the UPC leaders were exiled, imprisoned or dead, although a few chose to work with Ahidjo's government after an offer of amnesty.

The influence of the UPC on the referendum in the British Cameroons lies in the export of their anti-colonial policies to the Trusteeship Committee of the United Nations. As the UPC found itself increasingly excluded from the legitimate political processes of the French Cameroons, it relied more and more on its influence in the Trusteeship Committee to gain respectability and power. As the party in the French Cameroons which had first called for independence and which, even after the split with the RDA, still maintained links with the French Communist Party, the UPC and its policies were endorsed by the anti-imperialist and usually Soviet-bloc countries of the UN. Thus, within the Trusteeship Committee reunification, as a UPC policy, came to be regarded as the only true anti-imperialist policy. This fact helped to polarise the committee into two factions on this question: one which supported reunification as a thoroughly anti-colonial measure and the other which favoured continued integration with Nigeria, the position taken by the Western bloc representatives involved in the question.⁵

This polarisation in fact reflected only a segment of the range of opinion within British Cameroons itself. The government elected by the Southern Cameroons Assembly in 1959 contained a majority which rejected both integration with Nigeria and reunification with the French Cameroons. The preferred alternative was to secede from Nigeria and function as an independent state within the Commonwealth, leaving reunification as a desirable but distant goal. In August, 1959 a plebiscite conference met in Mamfe to decide the wording of the referendum and whether migrants from Nigeria and the French Cameroons would be allowed to vote. The majority of the forty-three representatives from the Southern Cameroons (twenty-nine, or sixty-seven percent) felt that the referendum should be a choice between secession from or integration with Nigeria, leaving aside any discussion of the future relationship to the French Cameroons. The remaining fourteen (thirty-three percent) thought that the choice should be between integration with Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroons.⁶

Premier Foncha had already presented the United Nations with the wishes of the Southern Cameroons Assembly. He now added the opinion of the Mamfe plebiscite conference that the referendum should be a choice between integration and secession. Secession, as a choice,

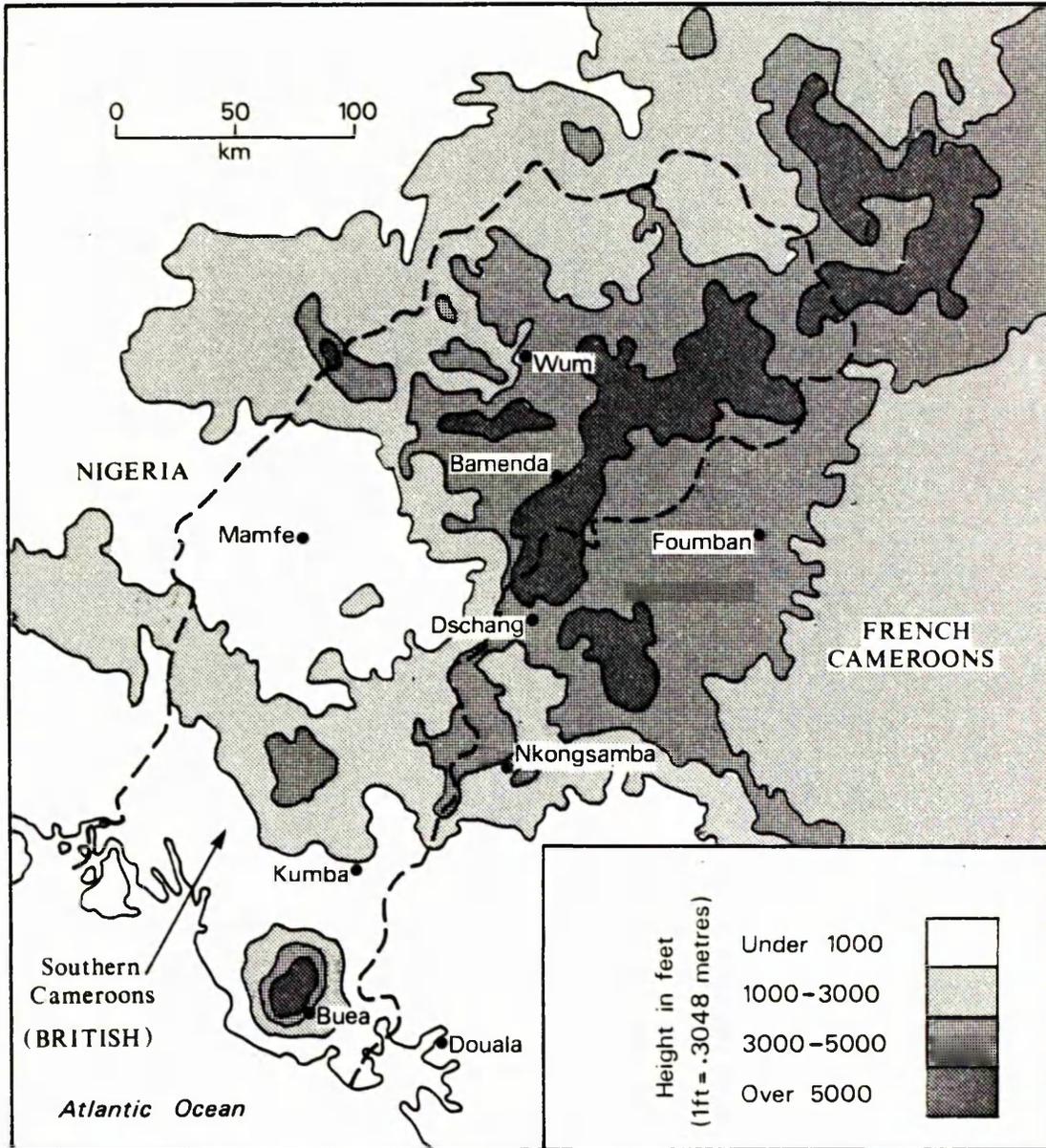
however, did not fit into the polarities of the United Nations in 1959. As a result, rather than reshape their ideas to the Cameroon reality, the UN committee put pressure on Premier Foncha to accept their version of how events should be seen. Shortly after his return to the United Nations in September 1959, therefore, Foncha unilaterally agreed that the question should be a choice between Nigeria and the French Cameroons.⁷

The decision was widely opposed within the Southern Cameroons and a number of efforts were made throughout 1960 either to abandon the referendum or to rewrite the question to include the secession alternative. All of these attempts failed.⁸ At the same time, Foncha made several efforts to negotiate the terms of reunification with Ahidjo, the president of the newly-independent Republic of Cameroon, as of January 1960. Significantly, Foncha insisted that the new federation not be a member of either the Commonwealth or the French Community, a condition which Ahidjo would not accept at all.⁹ In November 1960, a conference was held in London between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and various leaders of the Southern Cameroons to consider making a case in the United Nations for abandoning the plebiscite and requesting instead an independent Southern Cameroons outside the control of both Nigeria and the Republic. This also failed,¹⁰ and in February 1961, the plebiscite was held based on a question that was at best an inadequate representation of the range of choice desired in the Southern Cameroons.

The Vote

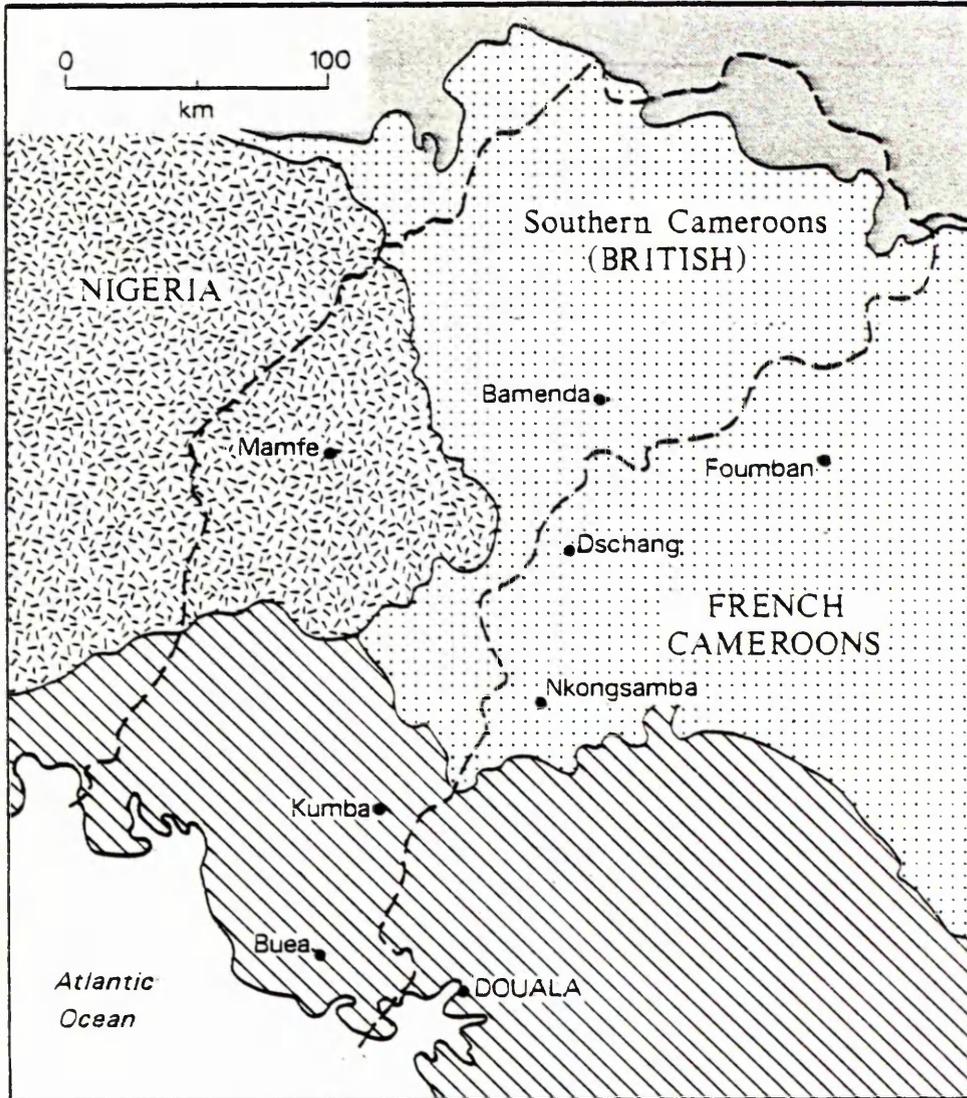
A number of factors influenced the vote. Most people would agree that the boundary established between the British and the French Cameroons took little account of the geographical, cultural and historical links which existed in the area and that there was a strong cultural bias in favour of reunification. Maps 10, 11 and 12 display the corner of Cameroon which contains both the former Southern Cameroons and the regions bordering it in former French Cameroons. There are several features of these maps which should be noticed. To begin with, the Bamoun and Bamiléké people of the former French Cameroons share the same mountainous plateau where one finds the Grassfields people of the British Cameroons. Moreover, long before

Map 10. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES ALONG THE MANDATE BOUNDARY OF THE SOUTHERN AND FRENCH CAMEROONS



Source: CAMEROONS (NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN). Directorate of Overseas Surveys, Tolworth, United Kingdom, 1962.

Map 11. MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS CROSSING THE MANDATE BOUNDARY OF THE SOUTHERN AND FRENCH CAMEROONS



Southern Nigerians



Plateau Nigerians



Cameroon Highlanders

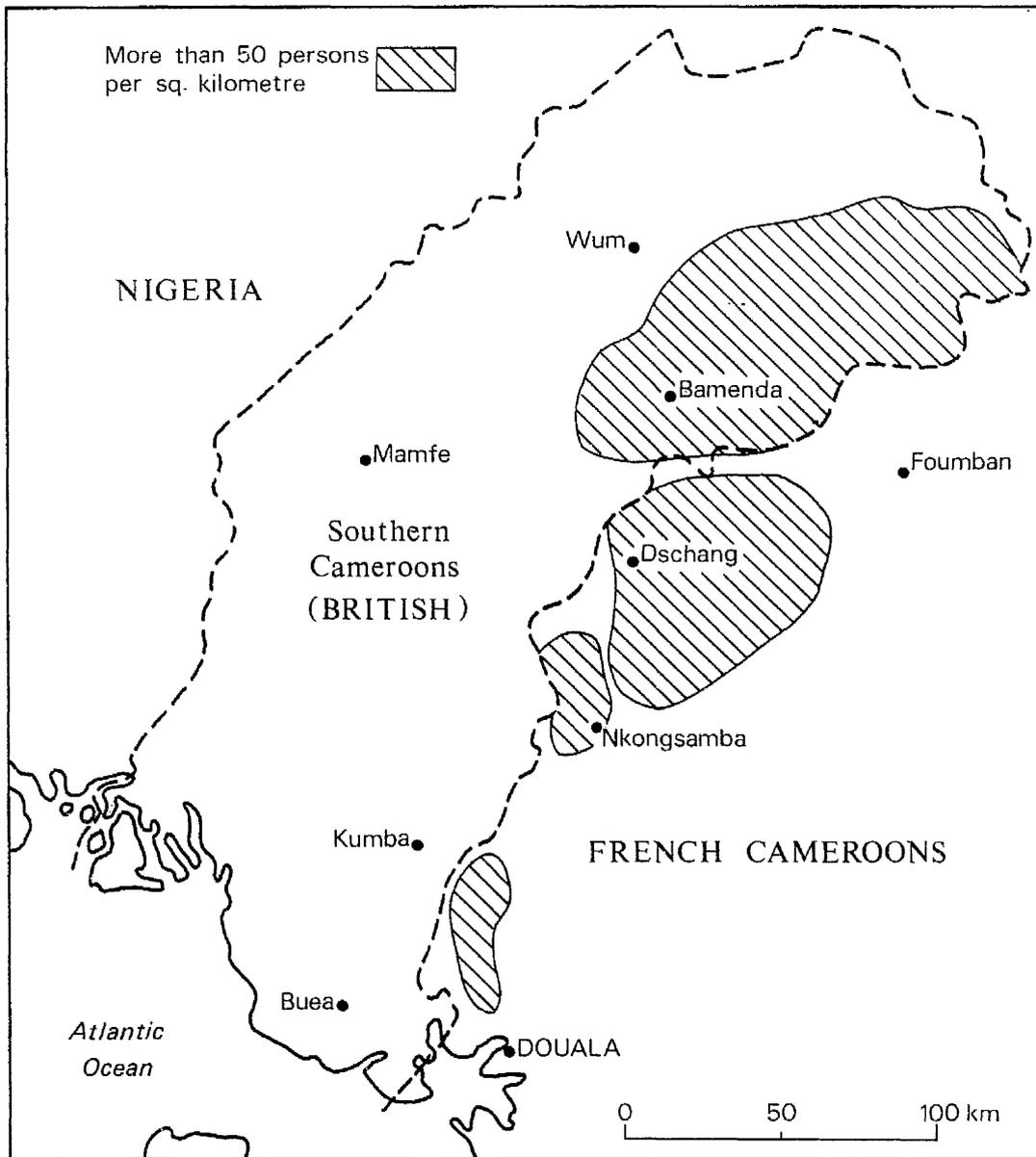


Northwest Bantu



Source: Le Vine, V. T., THE CAMEROONS FROM MANDATE TO INDEPENDENCE, 1964, p. 7.

Map 12. AREAS OF MAXIMUM POPULATION DENSITY ALONG THE MANDATE BOUNDARY OF THE SOUTHERN AND FRENCH CAMEROONS



Source: Le Vine, V.T., THE CAMEROONS FROM MANDATE TO INDEPENDENCE, 1964, p.10.

the plateau was split between a French and a British region there was considerable trade, conquest and migration occurring among the different towns and tribes of the plateau people. Not surprisingly, there are considerable similarities in culture, politics and languages.¹¹

Second, when compared to the lower forested regions of the coastal plains, the plateau has experienced a much higher population density. Under the Germans and then under the French, this relatively dense population meant that much of the forced labour for the lowlands plantations was recruited from the highlands areas. When forced labour was finally abolished, the pressure of population growth on traditional farming practices in the plateau -- in addition to various economic and cultural factors -- meant that the coast continued to receive a large number of workers from the plateau region. Some of this labour went into Mungo, some into the city of Douala, and a large number of people crossed the border to work on the German plantations in British Cameroons, which later became the CDC estates.

There is a third factor of more questionable importance in the vote of reunification. Namely, the area fanning out and upwards from the coast to the plateau was that area of Cameroon which had had the longest and most intense contact with Europeans. Here, the standard of Western education is higher and there is a certain unity based on European influence. Paradoxically, this might not always tend to inspire reunification. According to an interview with S.J. Epale, those people living along the Anglo-French border were more aware of the different cultures which had grown up around the British or French administration and were among those least in favour of reunification.¹² Still, a growing acceptance that some form of reunification was inevitable seems to have been influenced by all these historical and cultural factors.

The actual campaign, however, was not fought on the social links and similarities. Instead, in the choice between Nigeria and reunification, it was easier to stress the known evils of the Nigerian association than to project the dangers of a federation which had not yet been formed. In this respect, much was made of the disliked presence in the Southern Cameroons of Ibo traders from south-eastern Nigeria. A skilful campaign was based on equating Nigerian

administration with Ibo conduct in the villages and towns. There was also the comparison between development in the British Cameroons and in the French Cameroons. Up until the end of the Second World War, the British seem to have paid very little attention to their responsibilities in Cameroon. There was a deplorable lack of roads, railroads, hospitals and schools, all of which compared unfavourably with the higher level of material development in the French Cameroons. Finally, one rather suspects that in the climate of general economic well-being that prevailed in the late 1950s, there was a certain complacency about the vote on the part of those who favoured Nigeria. The campaign of those who preferred the option -- Dr. Endeley's party among others -- seems to have got off to a slow start, over-confident perhaps that their record of achievement during the 1950s would speak for them in the referendum. However, according to one interview, the general population understood very little of the reunification debate and were easily persuaded to vote for the first person or party who promised independence. In this, the British Cameroons' arm of the UPC (the OK party) would seem to have had the upper hand. They were among the first to canvas the bars, introducing songs that equated reunification with independence and taking up a grass roots campaign that was off and running before Dr. Endeley's group even began.¹³

With all of these factors, the vote to reunify won. Throughout the campaign it would seem that no discussion of the economic consequences of reunification was ever raised. Nor, strange as it may seem, did Elders and Fyffes or other British companies in the British Cameroons attempt to take sides during the months before the vote. Elders and Fyffes at least were well aware of the dangers of joining the Republic of Cameroon and the French Union to which it was attached. So, doubtless, were the British administrators of the CDC. And yet, strangely, Elders and Fyffes do not seem to have taken sides. Instead, they may have limited themselves to warning the Cameroonian leaders of the potential economic problems involved in reunification. Whether the warnings were never received, or never believed or dismissed as the exaggerations only to be expected from the British people in power, is difficult to gauge. What is true, is that although many people today in Anglophone Cameroon regret the passing of the banana trade and the lost prosperity of the 1950s, none of them remembers the prospect of that loss being discussed at all in the

reunification debate which, as described by Victor Mukete, "was a very emotional affair".¹⁴

The Process of Federation

By 1958, the policy of reunification was adopted by the established pre-independence government of the French Cameroons. Their endorsement may have been an attempt to undercut some of the appeal of the UPC, which was still active although outlawed. But the idea of "One Kamerun" was fairly widespread by this time and not completely unreasonable. What form that reunification would take, however, was not widely discussed, either within the French Cameroons or within the Southern Cameroons, or even between them.

By the time negotiations with the Republic had begun at a conference in Foumban, the Southern (now West) Cameroonians were at a severe disadvantage. Given that a majority of the leadership of the country had preferred reunification as a distant rather than an immediate goal, there had been little thought among West Cameroonians as to the form of the new Cameroon Federation. At best, according to W.R. Johnson, they anticipated "... a loose federation with a diminutive and weak government at the center, and robust states endowed with nearly every power they had formerly exercised."¹⁵ This view ran directly counter to the centralising traditions of French administration, traditions which had been incorporated in Ahidjo's own plans for the new Federal Republic of Cameroon.

The great divergence of views and values between East and West Cameroon took the Anglophone West Cameroonians by surprise. As a result, much of the five-day conference at Foumban was taken up by meetings of West Cameroonians among themselves, with only one formal session of the delegations from both states. It was a session that lasted just over an hour and a half.¹⁶ The resentment still felt in Anglophone Cameroon over the outcome of the conference is still reflected in the rumours which circulate today of the trickery of the East Cameroonians confounding a rather bumbling naiveté of the West Cameroon representatives. The fact that the resentment and the rumours have survived until 1982 is in part due to the feeling that "centralising" often seemed to mean the elimination of Anglophone traditions and the dominance of Francophone objectives.

As far as the banana trade was concerned, no arrangements seem to have been made during this period of political negotiation for the eventual incorporation of West Cameroon's production into East Cameroon's exports. This is not too surprising, as the French market had just been divided in January 1962 into quotas for franc-zone producers that gave Cameroon only thirteen percent of the market -- about 55,000 tonnes. This was considerably less than the 1950s level of production and was imposed as the Mungo trade was battling for its own survival and going through one reorganisation after another, none of which was particularly effective. Mungo's confusion, however, and their lack of consideration for the position of the West Cameroon trade, did not help the Anglophone producers who found themselves increasingly under threat of being squeezed from the British market by the demands of Jamaican producers.

The Jamaican banana trade had been one of the early cornerstones of the United Fruit Company's business, beginning back in the 1870s and trading to Boston. With, however, the introduction of the Imperial Preference in 1932 most Jamaican fruit was diverted to Britain where it was marketed by Elders and Fyffes. By the beginning of the Second World War, the Jamaican banana trade was so dependent on the British market that a special subsidy was arranged for the Jamaican planters to see them through the war years when no bananas were shipped to Britain at all. After the war, Jamaican planters took longer than had the British Cameroons to recover. They were also hampered by inopportune hurricanes in the early 1950s. By the late 1950s, however, they were clamouring for the dominance in the British market they had had before the war and before the success of the British Cameroons. Jamaican producers, therefore, were urging the enactment of a tariff that would discriminate against all non-Commonwealth fruit -- an act that was finally passed in 1960.¹⁷

The Kumba Federation

In the first few years after the referendum, the most current assumption on all sides seems to have been that the access of West Cameroon to the British market would somehow be maintained. Even as late as March 1964, in a meeting of Anglophone producers with the Mungo planters and Victor Kanga, the Minister of the National Economy, the Minister spoke of two banana exporting groups in Federal Cameroon:

one from East Cameroon and one from the West, the latter of which "s'occupe de ses propres débouchés".¹⁸ This sense of separation never really broke down, and it is one of the remarkable features -- or non-features more exactly -- of the meeting minutes for both the Syndicat in Mungo and the cooperative union which came to replace it, that throughout the 1960s there are not more than a half dozen references to the West Cameroon trade. Only two of these are at all revealing. For the rest, and for the rest of the 1960s meeting minutes of the East Cameroon banana trade, the West Cameroon producers might just as well not have existed.

One of the meetings where West Cameroon interests were represented was with FEBACAM.* After the 1959 strike by smallholders, the Syndicat had found itself being slowly destroyed by inter-racial arguments between European and Cameroonian planters. As a result, much of the management of the trade was transferred to FEBACAM/UGECOBAM which was charged with the modernisation and reorganisation of the banana industry in Mungo. Thus, when in 1964 the Kumba Federation, one of the larger West Cameroon banana cooperatives, decided to try to ship some of their fruit out through Mungo, they arranged for the central government to set up a meeting between Kumba Federation and FEBACAM to discuss the arrangements.

Several interesting facts emerge in reading the discussion between FEBACAM and the Kumba Federation. For one thing, it is clear that whatever may have been the outcome of the referendum, the boundary between East and West Cameroon was still treated in 1964 as an international boundary. Thus, the banana producers of West Cameroon were required to have an export authorisation and customs papers before sending any fruit to Mungo for shipping.¹⁹ Second, whatever may have been the pressures on West Cameroon producers, or whatever obvious geographical sense may have been led to shipping Kumba fruit through Mungo rather than Tiko (see Map 4 above), the FEBACAM committee was fully persuaded that the Kumba Federation's participation in the Mungo trade was only temporary. In May 1964, when this meeting took place, Mungo production was still far below the

*

Fédération Bananière du Cameroun, later remaned UGECOBAM, Union Général des Coopératives Bananières du Mungo.

level achieved in the 1950s, but most members of the trade were convinced that their production would eventually rise to fill the entire quota allotted to Cameroon under the 1962 arrangements with the CIB in Paris. The director general of FEBACAM, M. Breton, was careful, therefore, to specify that the Kumba Federation's access to the East Cameroon market was only temporary, and could be cut off once the final size of the quota had been determined. "Tout arrangement avec la Kumba Fédération n'est que provisoire et dépendra du tonnage qui nous sera attribué par la France."²⁰ In the same manner, the president of FEBACAM spoke of the railroad freight cars from Mungo being "lent" to the Kumba Federation, one of the larger West Cameroon banana cooperatives, with the clear understanding that one day the loan would be retracted.²¹

One senses in reading the minutes of this meeting that the East Cameroonians were distinctly unwilling to let in this competitor and, even with the support of the central government behind them, the Kumba Federation was not at all welcomed in Mungo by the banana planters of the area. This attitude had hardened five months later in the next recorded meeting between the banana growers of West Cameroon and the Mungo planters in October 1954. The West Cameroonians had come to complain that they were not being allowed a sufficient number of freight cars to transport their fruit to harbour. Four cars is not enough, they argued; we need twenty-one cars to be satisfied. To which the East Cameroonians quickly replied through M. Breton, the Director General of FEBACAM/UGECOBAM, that the arrangement with West Cameroon was only temporary and good only for the period of low production in Mungo. The meeting closed with the assignment of six cars to the West Cameroonian producers.²²

None of the other 1960s meeting minutes mentions the problems of West Cameroon and one surmises that the Anglophone state was left to look for its own markets and survive without the help of their new brothers in East Cameroon who clearly feared there was not enough room for all in the new French system of quotas.

Elders and Fyffes and the Foreign Exchange Office

In 1965 another complication arose in the dealings of the West Cameroon banana trade with the new federal bureaucracy. In February of

that year, a new two-page contract had been drawn up between the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers and Elders and Fyffes. Under the previous contract, dated 1957, (and discussed in Chapter 2) payment to cooperative farmers had been made on the basis of the "net proceeds of sales attributable to Union bananas after deduction of costs and expenses" and the company's commission.²³ The 1965 agreement, however, made a different arrangement (one of several differences resulting from independence, reunification and the decline of banana quality), on the model of what is known as an "FOB (free on board) contract". Under the new contract, which was to last only a year, the company would pay the Union

at the rate of CFA francs 18204 for each metric ton of bananas including stalk discharged from the vessel (the remittance of the foreign currency involved to be in accordance with the requirements of the Exchange Control Authorities), provided that wastage and unsaleable on discharge do not exceed 3% of the total weight of the cargo consigned into the vessel by B.C.U.F.²⁴

This clause was followed by provisions concerning the amount to be deducted when the waste was greater than three percent and also stipulations for an independent surveyor to "assess deterioration" whenever waste was high.²⁵ The contract no longer required that the cost of freight and sales be deducted from the price paid to the farmers because by the new agreement the company bought the fruit outright as it left Cameroon, absorbing all costs from that point onward, with the exception of any excessive waste or deterioration of the fruit.

It is not unreasonable to assume that when the BCUF signed this agreement, they did not realise the consequences of Clause 8 which made the producers responsible for wasted and unsaleable fruit above a certain level. Moreover, the clause made no provision for losses due to faulty shipping or handling on the part of Elders and Fyffes, and can be criticised on that ground. That it could be an extremely damaging clause to West Cameroon producers in 1965, therefore, is unquestionable. As the market standard rose and more and more small farmers had trouble meeting that standard, the clause clearly served the purpose of eliminating from the trade both poor quality fruit and, by extension, those who produced it. Thus, at the same time that the contract seemed to be giving producers a guaranteed price independent

of market fluctuations, it also exposed them to the problems of meeting a higher market standard just when their own production was deteriorating. The impact of that exposure was, very likely, only worsened by the fact that the 1965 contract, unlike its 1957 predecessor, no longer included the secondment of Elders and Fyffes personnel to the management of the BCUF. The loss of the management in ensuring a high quality of fruit from the smallholders could only have aggravated the situation of the cooperative members.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the new government -- which at least on the Francophone side came from a tradition of protection, even uneconomic protection, of smallholders -- should have sought to minimise the effects of this clause. Judging by some of the correspondence on the question, however, their approach was at the very least tactless and avoided completely any discussion of the underlying problem, namely the survival of the small farmer.

The end result of this situation was an attempt, first by the Director of Economic Services in Victoria and then by the Foreign Exchange Director in Douala, to insist that the company had to pay the full price for all fruit shipped and disregard any wastage over three percent. An FOB contract, argued Mr. Ebanja, the director of Economic Services in Victoria, could not be anything else and no deductions could be allowed after purchasing the fruit in Cameroon. "...Until I hear to the contrary from higher authorities, you will, for the time being, be bound to repatriate and pay the FOB contract price of 18,204 fcs. CFA per metric ton of bananas you purchase from West Cameroon."²⁶

It is not possible from the correspondence in hand to understand fully what followed. The General Manager of Elders and Fyffes, Eric Sharples, clearly believed that the terms of the contract had been accepted, and cited in a letter dated 17 August 1965 a meeting with Mr. Ebanja in early February to this effect: "... on 8th February, 1965 .. it was then agreed that we would submit our Exchange Undertakings on the basis of 'Firm Sales Contract'". Mr. Sharples then argued that this arrangement was also accepted by the Exchange Director in Douala on February 25. "You (Monsieur T. Koulé, le Directeur des Changes, Douala) confirmed that the Exchange

Undertakings were to be submitted by us on a Firm Sales Contract basis...".²⁷

However, Mr. Koulé's answer to Mr. Sharples' two-page letter of 17 August 1965 threw the entire argument onto a very different plane. Up until August, it would seem that the difference between Elders and Fyffes and the new Cameroon government was rooted in the problem of wasted and unsaleable fruit. Certainly the 1965 contract itself left room for dispute. In Clause 3, the terms of purchase are given as: "FOB Tiko or other loading point in West Cameroon" with the implication that payment was based on fruit loaded in Cameroon. But the terms of payment were in Clause 6 described as "payment to be on the outturn weight of the cargo sold".²⁸ The difference between Clause 3 and Clause 6 was very clearly the wasted and unsaleable fruit, which under the contract was the responsibility (when over three percent of the cargo) of the producers. Arguably, then, resolution of this question should have been tied to a reworking of the contract.

Instead, M. Koulé dismissed the importance of the contract entirely. "J'ai toujours déclaré que l'Office des Changes ne se préoccupait pas de vos conventions avec les producteurs du Cameroun Occidental et que seules vos ventes sur l'étranger l'intéressaient." He also described the meetings Mr. Sharples cited as nothing but "une série de malentendus," and argued instead that the company was obliged to repatriate to Cameroon not just the earnings owed to producers, but the gross earnings on sales. "Vos engagements de change doivent donc être établis sur la base du contrat de vente sur l'étranger et non sur la base de la convention d'achat aux producteurs."²⁹

It is difficult, nearly twenty years after the affairs, and with little more than a handful of letters as evidence, to understand exactly what purpose lay behind M. Koulé's September 3, 1965 letter to the General Manager of Elders and Fyffes. The 1965 contract with West Cameroonian producers committed the company to buying 20,000 metric tonnes of fruit at a fixed price at a time when the British market was almost completely closed to Cameroonian fruit, and when the quality of the fruit sent was lower than it had been in earlier years. The position taken by M. Koulé, however, attacked this contract and thereby ignored the problems of West Cameroonian producers, endangered

their ability to continue to do business with Elders and Fyffes, and showed an ignorance -- whether deliberately contrived or genuine, one cannot say -- of the usual practices of the banana trade in both East and West Cameroon; whether M. Koulé knew it or not, the full price of sale had never in East or West Cameroon been repatriated to Cameroon without first deducting expenses and commissions.

In an interview, David Philp, now a director of Fyffes Group, London, and formerly the manager of the BCUF seconded by Elders and Fyffes, mentioned that the exchange control problem contributed to the company's decision to leave West Cameroon.³⁰ How much it contributed is difficult to say. It is equally difficult to judge the government's motives for requesting a change in the nature of payments to Cameroon, particularly one that runs counter to the practice of the trade generally. While Koulé's request to repatriate the total of banana sales receipts before paying off expenses could be seen as a decision based on ignorance or simple misunderstanding, it is also much too easily interpreted as a bureaucratic manoeuvre to eliminate an important British firm from West Cameroon thereby forcing West Cameroon to join the economic chasse réservée of the French-speaking Republic of Cameroon. Alternatively, it may have been a simple request for a bribe, which was either not understood or, by conscious decision, simply ignored.

Regardless of the interpretation one puts on the correspondence with the Office of Exchange or even how one views the meetings between the Kumba Federation and the organisation of Mungo planters, it is clear that the process of federation was not at all simple or straightforward. More important, however, is the sense that, at least in terms of the banana trade, federation was an unequal affair. When compared with the Mungo trade, particularly in the early 1960s, the strengths of the West Cameroon banana trade were considerable. Its biggest assets were the managerial structure which had been created to coordinate the shipping and sales of very different kinds of producers, and the management of the farmers' cooperatives. These, not unlike the Mungo cooperatives, had begun to experience some of the same problems of rapid growth and corruption.³¹ But notwithstanding the inevitable strains, one cannot help but feel that the organisation of production and sales in West Cameroon was intrinsically stronger than that in Mungo. Moreover, much of the strength of that

organisation in the late 1950s was due to the role played by Elders and Fyffes. And yet, none of these advantages was of much value when trying to harmonise the two systems. Inevitably, it seemed that one system or the other would have to yield. Given that the only surviving market was in France, it is not surprising that, of the two systems, it was the one serving the French market which endured.

Withdrawal of Elders and Fyffes

In the destruction of the West Cameroon banana trade which followed reunification and federation, the first organisation to withdraw was Elders and Fyffes. In terms of the triangular managerial structure which had grown up in the 1950s, they were in the pivotal position, serving all producers and coordinating the timing of the evacuation of fruit from the fields as well as acting as fruit inspectors. With the departure of the company, the rest of the trade was on much weaker ground.

The decision to withdraw was not easy. During the 1950s, twenty percent of the company's sales in Britain had been coming from the Southern Cameroons, and profits were consistently over £1,000,000 year. Throughout the early 1960s, however, profits were low and erratic and in 1966, the company recorded its first net trading loss.³² In this situation, to have Britain cut off as a market of Cameroonian fruit but still to be under contractual obligation to sell that fruit became too much of a strain, and the company's decision to leave was finally made in the summer of 1966.

Some of the difficulties of the early 1960s come through in the files, which were found in the Buea Archives, of correspondence between the West Cameroon government and Elders and Fyffes. A letter from J.A. Taylor, acting General Manager of Elders and Fyffes, Likomba, dated 13 February 1963 was sent to Prime Minister Foncha in Buea. The letter quoted from a cable sent to the company's Likomba office from the Elders and Fyffes head office in London. The cable gives some idea of the extent to which even in 1963, the company was supporting the West Cameroon banana trade:

... Glad to say slight improvement market situation and in order to assist general position and contingent on government and CDC co-operation regarding export duty and charges will make ex

gratis allowance from general funds on this occasion of one pound ten shillings per ton as from Changuinola loading February nineteenth while boat price at present level must point out still subsidising boat price to extent of nine pounds per ton.

"Under the circumstances," added Mr. Taylor in his letter, "it will not of course be possible for us to make any other allowances or concessions."³³

The Search for Markets

In September of that same year, a circular went out from Eric Sharples, General Manager of Elders and Fyffes, Likomba, which gives some idea of the problems involved in finding non-British markets. The circular quotes from another cable from London which says:

... because of delay which occurred over obtaining agreement in West Cameroon to accept the West German offer ... the West German importers concerned made other arrangements."³⁴

West Cameroon's rejection, even as a pocket veto, of the West German offer was not surprising. The German's final offer had been an FOB Tiko price of £20.7 shillings per ton "based on outturn rates of saleable fruit -- price net of commission and includes diothene wrapping,"³⁵ which must have seemed derisory compared to the prices West Cameroonians had received from Britain. And yet, the position of West Cameroon's fruit in the British market was hardly secure. Another item in the Buea Archives files, dated November 1963, notes that West Cameroon bananas were unpopular in Britain due to their "poor appearance and overall poor quality."³⁶

The squeeze, then, on both the West Cameroon banana trade and on the company was becoming tighter. After many good years, it was difficult for West Cameroonians, both leaders and smaller farmers, to understand the change in economic environment. Both Dr. Endeley and Elders and Fyffes were often accused of sabotaging the market, presumably in retaliation for the reunification vote going against them.³⁷ A BCUF delegation was sent to Britain at this time to see for themselves what the market was like and what their competition could offer. There was also a mission in 1963 composed of Cameroonian representatives of the BCUF, the CDC and the government which resulted

in the German offer described above. Here, too, it was easy for the Cameroonians to imagine some trickery was involved. Victor Mukete, then chairman of the CDC and one of the largest landowners in Kumba, described their trip as a series of frustrations and particularly talked of their negotiations with the African Fruit Company in Germany, where negotiations were long and drawn out and repeatedly inconclusive. According to Chief Mukete, the hidden stumbling block was the United Fruit Company; when the African Fruit Company representative was asked to say simply whether or not his business wanted Cameroon bananas, the German replied that they did not want to cross the United Fruit Company because they would have to deal with them elsewhere in the world. When asked to clarify this point, Chief Mukete added only that everywhere the Cameroonians tried to negotiate a market, largely in Germany and Italy, the Elders and Fyffes company in London seemed to know the state of negotiations, and then added that the German price was in any case too low.³⁸

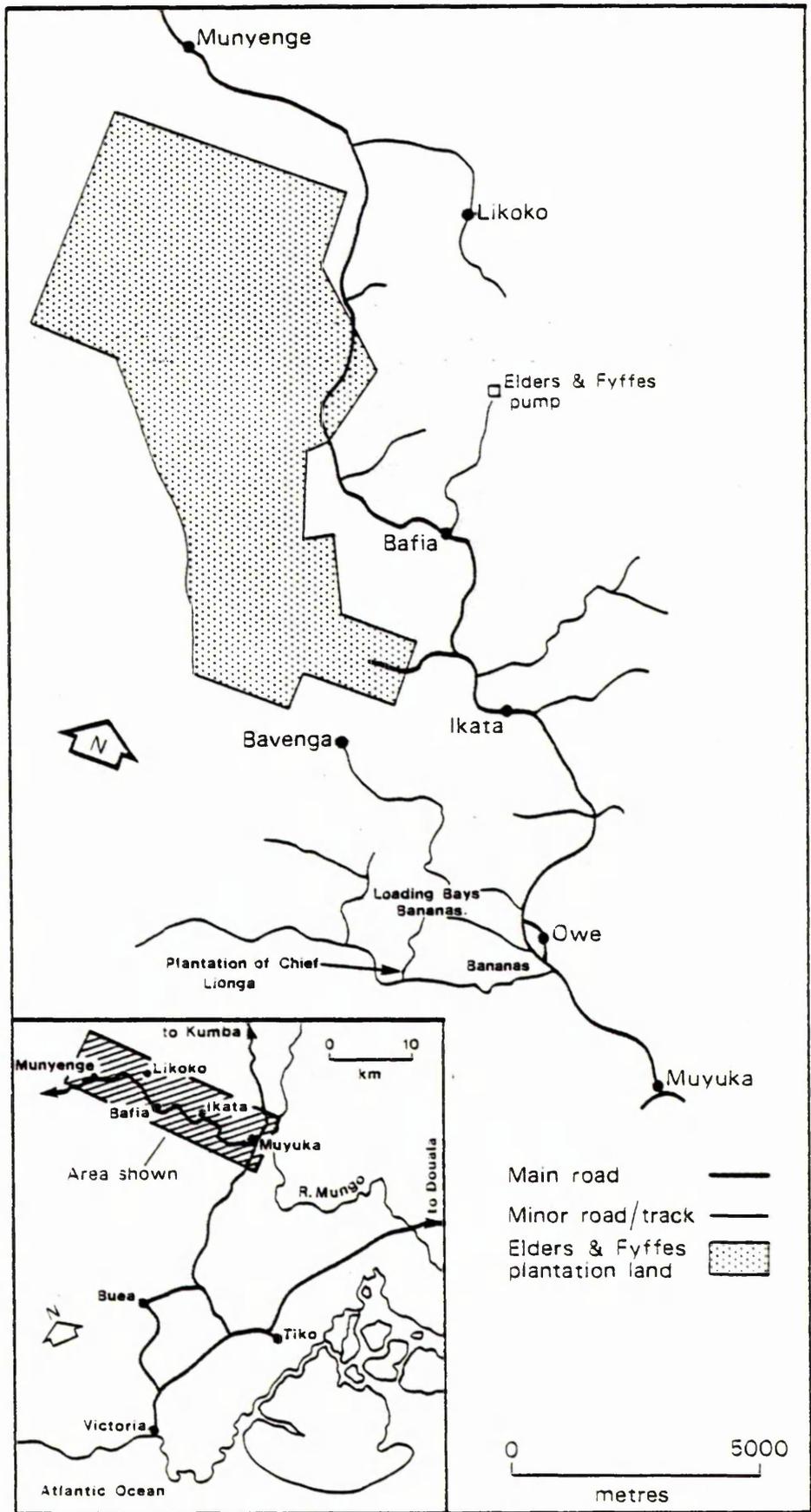
The company's knowledge of negotiations is not in itself unusual. Industries function like villages in many respects and will gossip about the state of industry affairs in much the same way that villagers will gossip about the health and well-being of any of their neighbours. Moreover, Elders and Fyffes had an interest in the success of the negotiations and would no doubt have used their contacts in the business to keep track of what progress was being made. What the interview with Chief Mukete points up, however, is the degree of suspicion which arose during the difficult years of the 1960s and a desire to be able to blame the company for the complicated collapse of that time. A high level of trust, one is tempted to argue, is a luxury only good times can afford.

In fact, the brutal fact was slowly apparent that there were no European markets open to West Cameroon bananas in the 1960s that could even approach the favourable terms offered by the British markets in the 1950s. As the consequences of that reality began to show themselves, it was inevitable that relations between the company and people in West Cameroon would become somewhat strained.

Giving Up the Bavenga Plantation

A similar breakdown of understanding seems to have occurred over

Map 13. ELDERS AND FYFFES PLANTATION LAND AT BAVENGA/
BAFIA



Source: SKETCH MAP OF MUYUKA MUNYENGE BANANA GROWING AREAS,
Tracing No. M. 363, Dept of Surveys, Buea, Cameroon

the future of the Bavenga and Bafia plantations (see Map 13). This land, which the company was planning to clear and plant in about ten farms, was 10,000 acres (or 4048 hectares) and had been obtained from the villages of Bafia and Bavenga through a long process of negotiation both with the villagers and the Buea government that finally resulted in 1961 in three Certificates of Occupancy for the land in the name of Elders and Fyffes.³⁹ Consent to use the land had been given to the company much earlier by the villages, who accepted what can only be considered derisory compensation by Western standards, but which by village standards would seem to have been more than sufficient. According to Dr. Endeley, who took part in these negotiations, the chief of Bavenga had asked for a new black coat, to show that he was chief, and a cow. In return, he would grant Elders and Fyffes use of the village land. Dr. Endeley raised the price by requesting in addition that the chief be given a cement block house and Land Rover, and that the company put running water into the village.⁴⁰ All of these conditions were met, and while the formal arrangements were being made through the government, Elders and Fyffes began clearing land and putting up buildings. By 1956, a five-room house had been constructed on Farm 1, and in 1958 the company began clearing 150 acres for a nursery. By 1961, they had cleared three farms, and had planted nearly 1000 acres (405 hectares) in Cavendish bananas. In the three camps taken together there were nearly 1000 men, a workshop, a sickbay and a modest pumping system for getting water from a rather distant stream into the plantation.⁴¹

The development of the Bavenga/Bafia lands was considered by many people to be proof of the company's long term commitment to Cameroon, and indeed the company saw it that way themselves.⁴² Bavenga was a form of insurance -- against losing the Likomba lease, against the decline of the smallholders, and against the reduction of CDC acreage in bananas. Bavenga, it was reasoned, would help maintain a high level of banana exports from British/West Cameroon.⁴³

Any yet, by 1964, it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep the plantations going and pay for their further development. The files of the Buea Archives hold a letter dated 4 May 1964 from J. A. Taylor, acting General Manager of Elders and Fyffes, Likomba, to the acting Prime Minister of Buea. In the letter, Mr. Taylor indicates that he is sending the acting Prime Minister maps of Bavenga

and details of Farms 1 and 2. Mr. Taylor

"... reiterates that buildings and cultivations will rapidly deteriorate if not properly maintained and of stressing the importance of the property being surrendered being put to whatever use the government has in mind for it without delay if this is to be avoided."

He ends the letter with an offer to show the acting Prime Minister or his representative around the farms and encloses a list of the buildings at Farm 1, which was the most developed.⁴⁴

At the end of June, 1964, the secretary to the Prime Minister passed Mr. Taylor's letter to the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Cooperatives and Community Development in Buea. "I should be glad if you would let me know early whether the cooperative movement will require this plantation area." And by mid-July, 1964, the letter had reached Simon Shang, the Registrar for Cooperatives, at which point the correspondence disappears into the sand.⁴⁵

Notwithstanding this correspondence, there is a note of shock in the introduction to a plan that was drawn up in the summer of 1966, two years after the correspondence cited above. The plan is titled "Scheme for Immediate Use of Land Surrendered at Bafia/Bavenga by the Elders and Fyffes" and is undated, but seems to have been drafted sometime in July of 1966. The first four paragraphs of this scheme are worth quoting in their entirety for the sense of grievance they contain and for some of the charges which are made against the company.

"A" INTRODUCTION

1. Some time last year, the Elders and Fyffes informed groups of West Cameroon banana producers, i.e. the Cameroon Development Corporation and the Cooperatives that the Company would cease operations on their banana estates at the end of 1966. Early this year, the General Manager - Mr. Sharples, in an informal manner informed the Prime Minister of his Company's intentions. All along, therefore, the West Cameroon Government has kept its mind prepared to take over the properties by December 1966, and on 12th July 1966, a meeting was held in the office of the Director of Land and Surveys to propose ways and means of putting into proper use, the properties, including the existing banana crops, after the known date of surrender by the Elders and Fyffes.

2. Government had a shock last week when Mr. Sharples announced that his company had now taken a decision to stop the farm operations by July 31st 1966, five months earlier than had been proposed; the Company had further taken action to give a formal notice of surrender, the said notice to take effect on 15th October 1966.
3. Government felt very concerned about this aggressive attitude of a Firm which has operated in the territory under very favourable conditions, not counting the huge profits it has reaped from our virgin soil. Accordingly, the Secretary to the Prime Minister summoned Mr. Sharples - the General Manager to explain to selected Government Officials why his Company had decided to take the West Cameroon Government by surprise, considering that we were being given one week's notice to work out a scheme to take over an existing banana plantation.
4. At the end of the meeting with Mr. Sharples, the Government Officials were convinced that, despite much talk of Government being given a "free gift", there had been a calculated plan to sabotage the whole scheme so that Government would eventually inherit a liability.⁴⁶

The feeling that West Cameroon had not been given adequate notice of the company's intentions was, and still is widespread. Dr. Endeley says that he had no notice of their withdrawal from Bavenga until a boy who was delivering letters for the Company told him.⁴⁷ This is not impossible, as the 1964 notice had been given to the government, and Dr. Endeley, as Prime Minister Foncha's long-time political opponent, may not have had much access to the thinking of the government at this time. On the other hand, as President of the BCUF, the 1964 offer of the land to the Cooperative Movement should have come to Dr. Endeley. More surprising perhaps, was that one of Elders and Fyffes chief employees at Bavenga, Anthanacious Eddia, was also taken unawares. When he was sent out to work at Bavenga in 1961, he was told the company was planning to renew their lease on the land for ninety-nine years.⁴⁸

What seems to have happened is that after having given notice to the government in writing in 1964 (and perhaps later as well, although those few files that were found did not show this), the company did not announce its plans publicly until the government had decided what to do. The government, however, seems to have kept silent. As the correspondence from 1964 had ended with Simon Shang, he was asked in an interview in Yaoundé in May 1982 why the government had not prepared earlier for the withdrawal of Elders and Fyffes. He answered

by admitting that the government knew the company was giving up the Bavenga estates, but that no one believed they were serious. The company, he argued, had too many investments in West Cameroon to pull out. Moreover, they were mistrusted because of their monopoly as sales agents and none in Cameroon had any way to confirm the financial difficulties of the company. It, therefore, he said, seemed impossible that the company was seriously planning to leave.⁴⁹

The sense that the company had sabotaged the plantations of Bavenga would seem to be a little more accurate. Athanacious Eddia reports being asked to uproot all the young banana plants (the suckers) on Farm 2 so that they could be shipped to the West Indies. Most of the planting, according to Mr. Eddia, on the Bavenga farms was in Poyo, Lacatan or Giant Cavendish varieties, all resistant to Panama disease.⁵⁰ It is not unreasonable to suppose that once the company had decided to leave, they felt free to take out one of their major investments -- the planting material. More recently in the 1980s, John Robertson of the CDC banana estates, has gone up to Bavenga looking for any Lacatan plants which he might use in a collection of banana varieties he has been establishing on the CDC estates. Nothing, he says is now left.⁵¹ All of which does indicate that the "free gift" Mr. Sharples thought they were making was not quite so valuable as it could have been.

In the summer of 1966, the BCUF took over the management of the Bavenga farms, leaving Athanacious Eddia in charge. He was given little of the material or managerial support he had come to expect as an Elders and Fyffes employee. Correspondence in Dr. Endeley's file on the Bavenga plantation provides some idea of the difficulties which were experienced after Elders and Fyffes gave up the Bavenga plantation. In late April 1967 (27th April), Anthancious Eddia wrote to the manager of the BCUF saying: "This is to inform you that the whole new farm operation is delayed now owing to the fact that there is no lorries to carry out the work." On 8 August 1967 the manager of the BCUF wrote to the Registrar of Cooperatives:

From the time BCUF took over Bavenga Farm on 1/3/67 the production has steadily declined. The average production per shipment of 1000 cartons which was before 1/3/67 gradually dropped to 700 and harvesting has been on every other shipment.

This fall in production, added the letter, coincided with a fall in price from 36,000 francs CFA per ton in March 1967 to 15,000 francs CFA per ton in June. Another letter from Mr. Eddia to the President of the BCUF dated the 20 June 1969 reads:

Dear Sir,

Beg to remind you that, last time I wrote you about the state of the farm but, since then I have heard nothing.

In fact, Sir, if something can not be done now in the way of spraying, I should then draw the conclusion here that that is the end of things in Bavenga Farm.

Imagine that an area of 118 acres we could only cut 135 stems. There is no other reason than green ripe, caused by Sigatoka disease which has swept the whole farm. If not of farm II, where we managed to get 235 stems, thereby we were able to make 339 cartons. Our next turn in July, we shall not even make 50 cartons out of Bavenga Farm.⁵²

By 1970, the farms were shut down. Some of the workers from the plantation settled on the land which, according to Mr. Eddia, they "farm like that now", growing mostly subsistence food crops. Farm 1, with its buildings, had been taken over by the Prison Department in July 1967 and is used as a work farm for prisoners. Dr. Endeley, meanwhile, uses one of the manager's houses as his country retreat and has put in coffee bushes and fruit trees in a part-time farming experiment that would require full-time management and attention before it was truly productive. Dr. Endeley is planning to apply for the former Elders and Fyffes' Certificate of Occupancy so that he can develop the land more fully.⁵³

The history of the Bavenga plantations illustrates some of the problems involved in the withdrawal of Elders and Fyffes from West Cameroon. If the loss of the company's presence in Bavenga was felt so keenly, it is probably due to the fact that in Bavenga it was operating very much on its own. The Likomba plantation in the Tiko Plan was eventually absorbed by the CDC, with the exception of a small OCB estate set up in 1967. As of 1982, nearly all of the Likomba land was in palm oil or rubber. Similarly, the BCUF policy of urging crop diversification should have softened the blow to small farmers as the banana trade declined. But Bavenga was an example of company development in an area that was beyond the reach of both the CDC and the BCUF. By the time the company farms were coming into operation, the village water supply was provided by the company, employment was

provided by the company and access roads, although first cleared as timber roads, were maintained by the company. The loss of these things was, therefore, that much more noticeable, as nothing replaced them or replaced the benefits (or ills) that had attended their development.

After the withdrawal of Elders and Fyffes in 1966, only the CDC and the BCUF were still trying to ship bananas. Gradually the smallholders' produce from West Cameroon was being eliminated from the market. Unlike the situation in Mungo, the West Cameroonian producers' earnings were by now based on the actual fruit each producer sent, rather than being based on the undifferentiated shipment of plantation and smallholder production combined. As a result, smallholder earnings were declining faster than those of the plantations and before long no smallholder from West Cameroon was still shipping fruit to Europe. The CDC kept going, but reduced their acreage in bananas to about 800 hectares, which was enough to help the Mungo planters keep the better boats filled and so helped to keep the whole trade alive. However, the uneconomic position in the British market, the decline of production standards generally, the loss of Elders and Fyffes and the lack of any reasonable form of integration with the French-speaking planters all combined to eliminate what had been a very prosperous crop from Anglophone Cameroon.

The answer to why the banana trade from the former British Cameroons has disappeared is usually simplified by saying that "there were no markets". But this statement hides a more complicated situation. If the Southern Cameroons had voted to stay with Nigeria, and by extension with the British Commonwealth, the British market would have remained open to Cameroonian fruit. Similarly, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that if British Cameroonians had been offered the option of seceding from Nigeria, but staying in the Commonwealth, they would not have voted to join the French-speaking Republic of Cameroon; if that had been the case, bananas from English-speaking Cameroon would still have been sold in Britain. Given, however, the fact that the 1962 referendum vote was for reunification, then the fact that there was no market is also due to the unwillingness of French-speaking Cameroon to share their access to the French market with the English-speaking banana producers. This can be even more strongly stated by contending that many of the actions of

the new government's bureaucracy actually served to eliminate the Anglophone trade and the competition it represented.

The extent of the damage caused by this chain of decisions is impossible to measure, but some of the bitterness that it created is reflected in the decision of Elders and Fyffes to withdraw from Anglophone Cameroon and local reactions to it. In terms of the 1982 trade, the loss of the finely balanced business from the former British Cameroons has meant that the management of present affairs has descended from the structure that had been created in Mungo during the 1950s. The importance of that, however, is a matter which is discussed in the following chapter, "The Politics of Independence in Mungo".

CHAPTER 5

THE POLITICS OF INDEPENDENCE IN MUNGO

While the vote to federate with the former French Cameroons had the effect of ruining the banana trade from West Cameroon, the politics of independence in Mungo resulted in the embittering of all working relationships among the participants of the Mungo banana trade, and with that a weakening of almost every aspect of the management of the industry. Exactly how that situation developed is a matter of social and political history, some of the elements of which will be discussed in this chapter. It is a history that has, in many respects, defined the terms of reference used in Mungo in discussing any of the problems of the trade. They are terms which have often obscured the fundamental technical and commercial realities of the business, complicating beyond measure the task of modernising the banana business in the years following the peak of the later 1950s. Moreover, while the politics of reunification in Anglophone Cameroon can be taken as a lesson in the blind impact of a political decision on a commercial operation, the politics of independence in Mungo demonstrate the ways in which the organisation of the trade itself acquired political overtones and consequences which were most violently expressed in 1959-60, but which continued to reverberate for many years longer and which will undoubtedly shape the future of the industry.

In this chapter we will look at four aspects of the politics of independence in Mungo. The first is the social and economic history of the area. The second concerns the actual events that led to a de facto civil war in 1959 and '60. Third, we will consider what effects those events had on the ability of the trade to modernise smallholder operations, and finally we will look at the impact of the civil war on the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers and by extension on the management of the banana business of Cameroon in the 1980s.

Background History

Land

In one of the land tenure files of the Yaoundé National Archives there is a list of planters who had acquired concessions in Mungo by June 1, 1938. The list is only a rough draft, but in the same file with it are other notes relating to this "Relevé complet des planteurs installés au Territoire".¹ This information provides a few clues to the background of the disputes in Cameroon over twenty years later. The list is not much more than an unordered parade of names and next to them the acreage which has been attributed to each cessionnaire or land holder. In trying to regroup this list of names, inevitably a certain element^{of} error has occurred, but has been indicated in the Notes to the following discussion.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Mungo area was only thinly populated, largely by the Mbo and Mbang people. The major immigration began in the 1930s and the figures presented here on land concessions provide some idea of that migration. These figures should be treated with a certain amount of circumspection, however, and cannot be taken as an indication of the distribution of all land holdings in Mungo. What they show is the size and distribution of those land holdings conceded to private individuals or companies by the colonial government. Any land holding, therefore, that was based on customary title, or resulted from a customary form of land transfer, would not appear in these figures. This becomes particularly important when considering the growth of land holdings being developed by Cameroonians from outside the Mungo region, most of whom came into the province as labourers working the European farms.

Table 3
MUNGO LAND CONCESSIONS - 1 JUNE 1938²

	<u>Number of planters</u>	<u>Number of concessions</u>	<u>Number of hectares</u>
European	81 (70%)	147 (77%)	22,773 (94%)
African	35 (30%)	44 (23%)	1,579 (6%)
TOTAL	116 (100%)	191 (100%)	24,579 (100%)

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

As can be seen in Table 3, Mungo Land Concessions - June 1, 1938", nearly all of the land awarded as concession land went to Europeans, with only six percent being granted to Africans. This is not surprising. The policy was designed to assist Europeans in setting up farms to develop the productive potential of the rural areas. Of these areas, Mungo had long been singled out as one of the richest, and of all the regions in the French Cameroons, more land had been conceded in Mungo than in any other area. The land tenure file in the National Archives breaks down by region the amount of land in rural concessions in 1938:

Table 4
1938 RURAL CONCESSIONS ACCORDING TO REGION OF THE FRENCH CAMEROONS

<u>Region</u>	<u>Number of hectares</u>	<u>Percentage of conceded land</u>
Mungo	24,452	34%
Sanaga-Maritime	20,481	28%
Noun	15,043	21%
Nyong et Sanaga	5,071	7%
Haut Nyong	2,158	3%
Kribi	1,721	2%
Benoué	929	1%
N'tan	904	1%
Adamaoua	751	1%
M'Bam	488	.7%
Boumba N'goko	407	.6%
Lom et Kordei	291	.4%
N'kam	190	.3%
Wouri	97	.1%
TOTAL	<u>72,983</u>	<u>100.1%</u>

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

What is of particular interest in this table is that those areas where over ninety percent of the concessions were held -- Mungo, Sanaga-Maritime, Nyong and Sanaga, and Noun (which includes the Bamileke Plateau) -- are exactly the same areas where in the 1950s and early 1960s a guerrilla war was fought out between the government and the supporters of the UPC. This was especially true of Mungo and the Sanaga-Maritime, which account for thirty-four and twenty-eight percent of the concession land respectively. While probably not all of the concession land was held by Europeans, certainly in the case of Mungo, over ninety percent was. Moreover, even given that the land held by concession did not represent all of the land held in these areas, the coincidence between this 1938 record of land tenure and the later political unrest is worth noting.

In the case of Mungo, one can see from Table 3, "Mungo Land Concessions", that although Europeans held over ninety percent of the concession land, they represented only seventy percent of the people holding such land. In fact, thirty percent of the cessionnaires were Africans, even though only six percent of the concession land is in African hands. Given that the programme of granting concessions only began in the 1930s and was designed principally to attract Europeans, this distribution is not surprising. The government's bias in favour of Europeans appears again in the following table, Table 5, on the average size of holdings.

Table 5
AVERAGE NUMBER OF HECTARES HELD ON CONCESSION
Mungo 1938

	<u>Per planter</u>	<u>Per concession</u>	<u>Range of holding size</u>	<u>Range of concession size</u>
Europeans (N = 81)	281 ha.	154.1 ha.	4 - 4730 ha.	.6 - 4730 ha.
Africans (N = 35)	45 ha.	35.9 ha.	2 - 416 ha.	1 - 300 ha.

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

From this table it is clear that Europeans are favoured not just by the fact that they are more likely to be granted a concession, but also by the fact that the concession is likely to be almost five times

as large as an African concession. Moreover, European concessions could be quite large. While no African was granted a concession greater than 300 hectares, and that was done only once, the largest of the European concessions was over 4000 hectares.

Table 6 on the following page, "Size of Concession Holdings, Mungo 1938" details this observation. While there is only one European planter with a holding that is less than twenty hectares in size, sixty-nine percent of the African planters manage concessions less than twenty hectares; the average size of their holdings is nine hectares. While for the Europeans, forty percent manage holdings between 100-200 hectares and thirty-seven percent were working land areas larger than 200 hectares.

This bias in the distribution of concession land is a reflection of several factors. One, certainly, is political. While the British were experimenting with the protection of native land rights first in Northern Nigeria and later in the British Cameroons, the French were enacting a policy of economic development based on the allocation of unoccupied land to European developers. Unlike German colonial policies originating before World War One, the 1930s French concessions were generally on a small scale. With the exception of the 4730 hectares granted to the SPNP in Mungo, another 1,027 hectares conceded to the Soci  t   Niabang, and four concessions between 500-1000 hectares, the vast majority of concessions to Europeans in Mungo was less than 500 hectares. In fact, sixty-nine percent were less than or equal to one hundred hectares.

Table 7
SIZE OF CONCESSION HOLDINGS IN MUNGO 1938
consolidated information

	<u>European</u>	<u>African</u>
100 ha.	101 (69%)	41 (93%)
100- 499	40 (27%)	3 (7%)
500- 999	4 (3%)	
1000	2 (1%)	
total concessions	147 (100%)	44 (100%)

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

Table 6
SIZE OF CONCESSION HOLDINGS IN MUNGO 1938
detailed information

Size	European Planters			African Planters			Average ha. per planter
	Number of planters	Total hectares	Average ha. per planter	Number of planters	Total hectares	Average ha. per planter	
≤ 5 ha.	1 (1%)	4 (.02%)	-	5 (14%)	16 (1%)	3.1	
5-9	-	-	-	9 (26%)	73 (5%)	8.1	
10-19	-	-	-	10 (29%)	126	12.6	
total							
< 20	1 (1%)	4 (.02%)	-	24 (69%)	215 (8%)	9.0	
20-49	6 (7%)	225 (1%)	37.5	3 (9%)	111 (7%)	37.0	
50-99	12 (15%)	925 (4%)	77.1	3 (9%)	233 (15%)	77.7	
100-199	32 (40%)	4,119 (18%)	128.7	4 (11%)	604 (38%)	151.0	
200-299	14 (17%)	3,263 (14%)	233.1	1 (3%)	416 (25%)	-	
300-499	8 (10%)	2,741 (12%)	342.6	-	-	-	
500-999	4 (5%)	2,768 (12%)	692.0	-	-	-	
1000-1999	3 (4%)	3,997 (18%)	1332.3	-	-	-	
> 2000	1 (1%)	4,730 (21%)	-	-	-	-	
TOTAL	81 (100%)	22,772 (100%)	281.1	35 (101%)	1579 (100%)	45.1	

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

Thus, the land concession policy of the French Cameroons in the 1930s as exemplified by the concessions made in Mungo was aimed at encouraging individuals with a small amount of capital to invest in the development of the rural sector of the French Cameroons. The development was geared to cash crops for export, the ultimate market for which was France. The policy does not seem to have taken any cognizance of the indigenous people's rights to the land in Mungo, but was very likely encouraged by the low population of the area and the fact that the customary laws on land use and ownership permitted the use by outsiders of land not required by villagers.

African Immigration to Mungo

The number of labourers required by the Europeans can be estimated for 1938 by the number of hectares in the concessions. If one assumes that every hectare held by Europeans required one to two men to work it, and then multiplies that by the number of hectares (22,773 by 1.5 "men"), one arrives at an estimated 34,160 men working on the European-held land. Even at the rate of one man per hectare (taking into consideration that not all hectares would be worked or all crops require the same amount of labour) one realises that the colonised areas of Mungo along the railway line to Nkongsamba were in need of some 22,000 labourers by the late 1930s.

Not all labourers settled in Mungo. Undoubtedly in the early years the majority returned to their villages once their contracts were finished, or, when recruited by force, simply ran away as soon as possible. But a certain number stayed. One ethnic group which is heavily represented in Mungo is the Bamileke, who originated in the French-speaking side of the highland plateau which also sent labour to the plantations in the British Cameroons. According to Jean-Louis Dongmo's study of Bamileke migration, Mungo was one of the first areas the Bamileke people went to in migrating from the Bamileke plateau. Dongmo reports that many of those who had gone to Mungo as labourers felt unable to return to the Bamileke plateau because a high rate of population growth had limited the availability of arable land.³ Dongmo also points out that the Bamileke inheritance laws are such that a man's heir is not known until just before the man dies. He will then choose from among his sons the worthiest of them to succeed to his position and property. His choice is based largely on the accomplishments and material success of each one of them. Thus, the

sons are encouraged to advance themselves first before they can be considered eligible to inherit the father's estate. As families are often quite large and opportunities within the home community can be limited, an ambitious son will be forced to leave the Bamileke plateau in order to achieve a respectable position.⁴

In Mungo, this resulted in a number of Bamileke labourers staying in the plantation area, but taking up independent farming, either (in the minority of cases, no doubt) by applying for concession land, or through the acquisition, by customary rules, of land under the control of the Mbos.⁵

The other major group of Cameroonians holding concession land in 1938 was the Douala who had been the coastal middlemen to European traders since the days of the slave trade and who had already established plantations along the coastal rivers by the 1920s.⁶ The arrival of the Douala in Mungo probably resulted from an expansion from these plantations although there is little published information about the Douala in Mungo. What is certainly true is that in addition to conflicts between Africans and Europeans in Mungo, there was also considerable uneasiness between those Cameroonians who were native to Mungo and those who had come from outside the region.

La Guerre Morale

The importance to our discussion of this brief land tenure and ethnic history of Mungo is that it forms the basis for many of the post-war conflicts in Mungo and in the banana trade of the area. Not all of the land being developed in Mungo in the 1930s was in bananas. According to a note in the 1938 land tenure file, only about twenty percent of the concessions in Mungo were given over to either bananas or bananas and coffee (see Table 8). This may have represented as much as thirty-four per cent of the concession land, but was still a long way from dominating the export economy of Mungo. The information in Table 8, "Number of Concessions in Bananas", is roughly confirmed if one compares Maps 9 (in Chapter 3) and 14 of the Mungo banana zone in 1937. Unfortunately, the 1937 map from Alistair McLaurin does not show the 1930s development in bananas of non-concession land, much of which would have been held by Cameroonians.

Table 8
NUMBER OF CONCESSIONS IN BANANAS
MUNGO 1938

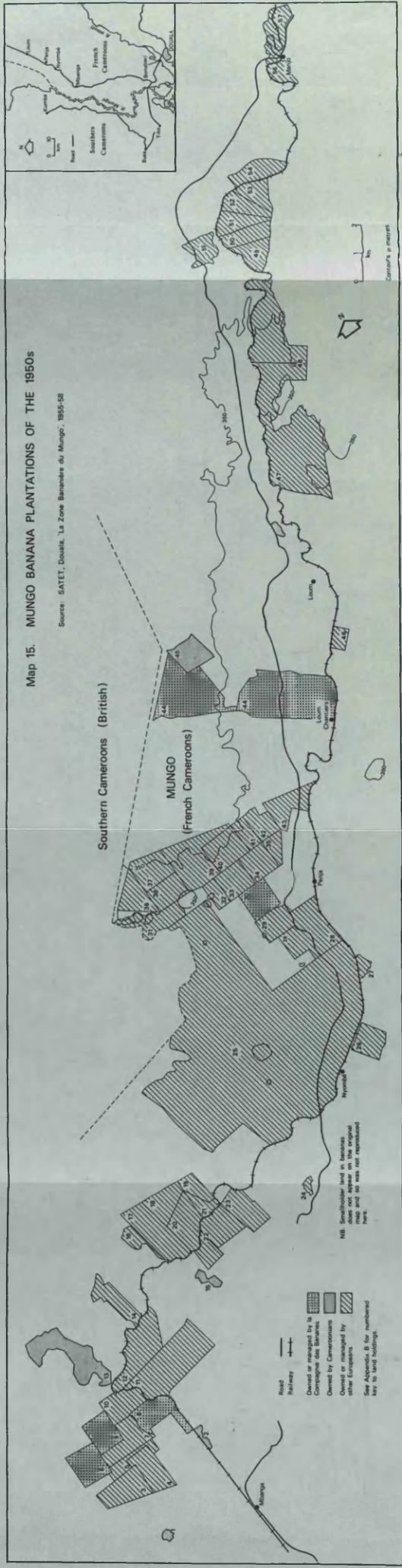
	<u>bananas</u>	<u>coffee/ bananas</u>	<u>total containing bananas</u>	<u>other crops</u>	<u>total</u>
number of concessions	20 (10%)	20 (10%)	40 (20%)	151 (80%)	191 (100%)
estimated hectares	3499 (14%)	4819 (20%)	8318 (34%)	16,261 (66%)	24,579 (100%)

SOURCE: Domaniale 759, Archives Nationales du Cameroun

That bananas were already an important crop in the development of Mungo, however, is hardly surprising. The diseases which later came to plague the banana had not yet arrived in Mungo and the crop was able to produce within less than a year and keep producing on a regular basis after that. This allowed for a fast and regular income which could be used for the development of other crops, e.g. coffee, that might take longer to begin showing a profit. Nor is it surprising that the crop would be taken up by both Africans and Europeans. Its simplicity alone would recommend it as a popular crop. That the crop did expand can be seen in Map 15 of the 1955-1958 banana plantations of Mungo. This map should also be compared to Map 9, which shows the banana plantations of 1937.

The first sign of conflict in the trade came, according to Salomon Mpondo, one of the cooperative presidents, as early as 1935* when several Cameroonians began growing the Gros Michel bananas. This was the beginning of what Mpondo called "la guerre morale" between Africans and Europeans, which lasted until 1948 and the introduction of export quotas. At this time, the Cameroonians were opposed by the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers which was the exclusive union of European banana planters. The issue of Cameroonian exports was eventually taken to the government in the French Cameroons for resolution where the matter foundered intermittent discussions over the next several years. These talks were dropped when banana exports to France were cut

* Mpondo's dates are used here, but all seem to be a few years early. For example, he dates the cut-off of banana exports due to the war at 1938.



Map 15. MUNGO BANANA PLANTATIONS OF THE 1950s

Source: SATEI, Douala, La Zone Bananière du Mungo, 1955-58

Southern Cameroons (British)

MUNGO (French Cameroons)

- Road
- Railway
- Owned or managed by
Cameroonian Bananiers
- Owned by Cameroonians
- Owned or managed by
other Europeans
- See Appendix B for numbered
key to land holdings.

NB. Smallholder land in banana
does not appear on the original
map and is not reproduced
here.

cut off by the war.

M. Mpondo names some of the Cameroonian planters who were involved in this pre-war complaint: Walter Dibao-Kalla, Saint-Miguel Dimithe and Mabolle-Elesa.⁷ What is interesting about this complaint is the fact that it exists at all. To begin with, according to Mr. McLaurin of the Compagnie des Bananes, the pre-war African exports of bananas were handled by neighbouring European plantations, which implies that African production alone was not of a sufficient quantity to be handled separately.⁸ But the complaint that M. Mpondo describes would suggest that at least a certain number of Cameroonian planters saw themselves achieving a rate of production that rivalled the output of the average European banana planter and therefore deserved to be handled on an independent basis. If Cameroonian production, at least in part, was at a "European" level during the 1930s, another hypothesis can be suggested. This is that the 1930s leaders of the Cameroonian planters were not small farmers promoting a collective cause. On the contrary, they had probably arrived in Mungo to invest, or had been able soon after arriving in Mungo, to achieve a position that allowed for investment. It is also not unlikely that as the post-war banana crop developed, these men, and others like them who came into the area in the 1950s, took advantage of the post-war cooperative movement to organise around them the smaller planters who were attracted to the banana boom. If true, this provides the historical basis for the personal hierarchies which formed the core of successful smallholder cooperatives in Mungo, and which were such a distinct contrast to the village-based cooperatives of the British Cameroons.

The conflict between Cameroonian and European banana growers was taken up again after the war. In 1947, according to Salomon Mpondo, a quota of four percent of the exports was given to the Cameroonians. This was clearly insufficient and discussions continued with the mediation of the Overseas Ministry at the rue Oudinot in Paris, and with the colonial government in the French Cameroons. In this same year, the Syndicat had admitted certain Cameroonians, among them Salomon Mpondo, Nguisse, and Louis Wambo, all of whom represented planters' cooperatives, according to M. Mpondo. In 1948, the Commission de la Recensement des Plantations de la Banane was created to provide a census of banana plantations, both African and European,

which provided the basis for revised export quotas. During this same year a meeting was held at the Overseas Ministry in Paris to settle the affair. Four Europeans: M. Penanhoat, M. Pallier, M. Guyot, and M. Caplain attended; five Cameroonians were also there: M. Mpondo, M. Kwa Moutome, M. Kinge Jong, M. Mongo Bell and M. Toubé Esombe. As a result of this meeting, African planters were given thirty percent of the exports from Cameroon with the balance to come from the European planters. This was later in 1949 revised to allow up to sixty percent of the French Cameroons banana exports to come from Cameroonian planters, a percentage that was unchanged, according to Mpondo, until 1955 when Sigatoka disease began reducing production on all sides.⁹

The 1959 Smallholders' Strike

The agreements reached in the late 1940s lasted for about eleven years, during which the prosperity of the banana was unexcelled and much of the land in Mungo was put in bananas. In 1958, the most successful year for the crop, Africans were exporting 51,715 metric tonnes of bananas and Europeans 21,782 tonnes.¹⁰ However, these figures belie an underlying sense of social imbalance which had been created with the land concession policy of the 1930s and which had its most vocal, and successful, expression in the post-war fight for an African export banana quota. As long as the trade was prosperous, these imbalances could be ignored. This became more difficult, however, as the terms of the trade began to change.

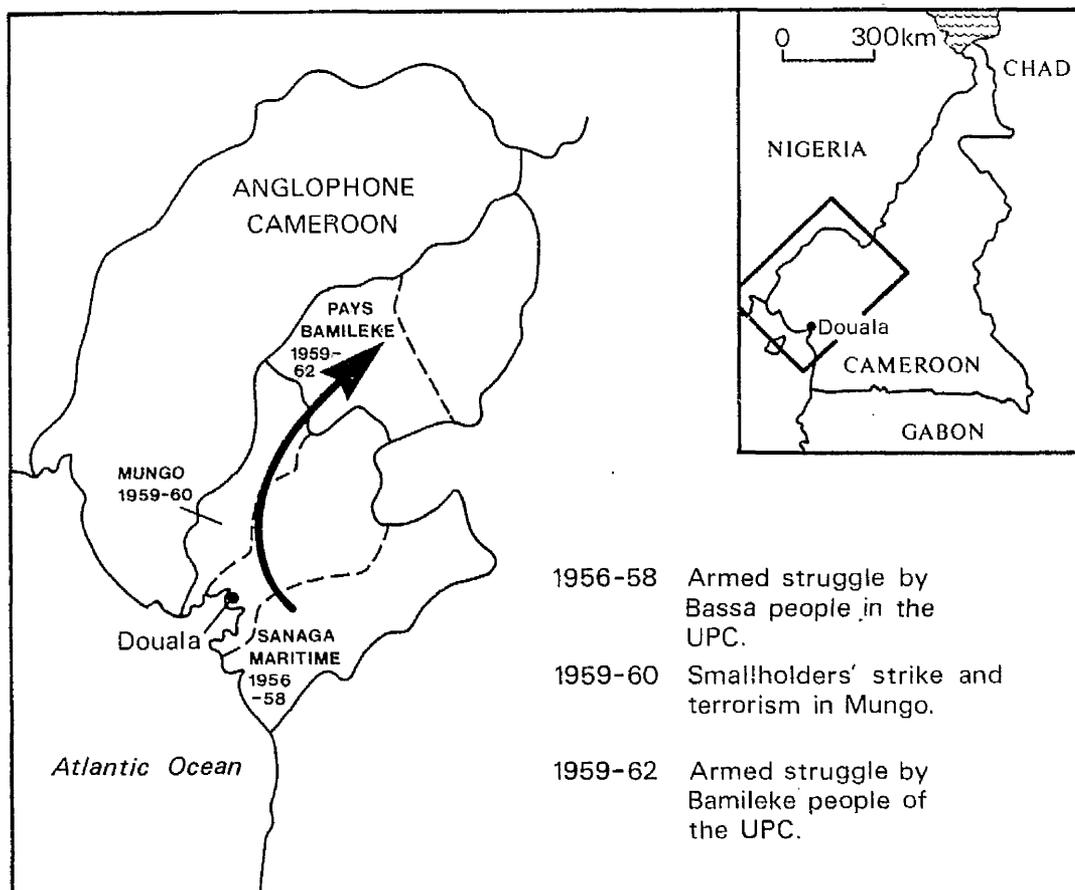
As has already been discussed in Chapter 1, "Markets and Technologies of the 1950s", difficulties in production had begun to set in by the middle of the decade. Sigatoka disease gave rise to the Syndicat's crop-spraying program,^{me} Panama disease was soon to force a conversion to Poyo varieties, while soil exhaustion and the diminution of available virgin land were slowly squeezing the industry and especially the smallholders. Notwithstanding, during interviews in Cameroon in April and May 1982, with the banana industry quite clearly verging on collapse, a number of people, Cameroonian planters in particular, dated the decline of the business not to the mid-fifties, but to 1959 and the smallholders' strike.

The events of that year are difficult to sort out. The civil war, which had begun between the Bassa arm of the UPC and the government in the area of the Sanaga-Maritime, was transferred to Mungo and the Bamileke Plateau around this time.¹¹ (See Map 16.) Here the "troubles" lasted for a considerably longer period than they had in the Sanaga-Maritime. How much the smallholders' strike had to do with the affairs of the UPC and its war with the government, both colonial and independent, it is difficult to say. But the two developments are more than coincidental. One finds, therefore, that most people, particularly Cameroonians, who can remember that time are reluctant to talk about it. The UPC opposition was not only suppressed militarily in the 1950s and '60s but that suppression was accompanied by a significant level of harassment of the greater civilian population. There is, consequently, a continuing fear that even to discuss such matters as the strike is to present one's self as an opponent of the government which is notably intolerant of even verbal opposition. Nor is there much in the way of written documentation. There is a twenty-five year rule on access to the National Archives in Yaoundé which meant that any file more recently dated than 1957 was still closed to research in May 1982. Secondary sources are practically non-existent. Joseph's history of the UPC provides some information, but does not go into any great detail about developments after 1958, while Dongmo's study, le Dynamisme Bamiléké only discusses affairs in the Bamileke region north of Mungo.

In piecing together some sense of 1959 events, therefore, one has had to rely on the meeting minutes for the Syndicat and the clues which did surface in interviews with people still involved in the banana trade. This rather narrows the optic for looking at events that clearly had origins and ramifications far outside the banana trade itself. Still, the relationship between politics and the banana trade, as best it can be understood, is sufficiently intertwined to warrant the use of that perspective.

In discussing the management of the Mungo trade during the 1950s, we have already made reference to the last Ordinary General Assembly of the Syndicat before the strike in 1959. That meeting took place on the ninth of April of that year and was attended by nearly all the planters and cooperatives involved in the Mungo trade. It was, judging by the minutes, an amicable meeting. The annual report and

Map 16. TRANSFER OF UPC STRUGGLE WITH GOVERNMENT FORCES IN FRANCOPHONE CAMEROON: 1956-62



- 1956-58 Armed struggle by Bassa people in the UPC.
- 1959-60 Smallholders' strike and terrorism in Mungo.
- 1959-62 Armed struggle by Bamileke people of the UPC.

budget were presented and accepted, and M. Penanhoat, who had been president of the Syndicat for thirty years, resigned and presided over the election of a new African president. His brief retirement statement, although redolent of a very colonial paternalism, was neither bitter nor pessimistic.

Dès que les africains entrèrent au Syndicat, ils participèrent aussitôt à sa gestion et maintenant l'heure est venue pour les producteurs africains de prendre la direction et je pense que nous devons demander aux africains d'assumer les charges tant que nous sommes là et je continuerai pour ma part à vous apporter mon aide chaque fois que vous en aurez besoin.¹²

Mr Penanhoat's resignation was gracefully accepted and in two efficient ballots, M. Roger Sandjo was elected in his place. His election was followed by equally well-mannered balloting for the Syndicat's central administrative committee which was given eight African representatives and seven Europeans.¹³

"African Planters'" Motion of 10 April 1959

After this polite and well-ordered transfer of power, it comes as a surprise to find a motion dated the next day, 10 April 1959, that was adopted by the "African Planters of Export Bananas".¹⁴ This motion was sent, together with a letter to the President of the Syndicat and another letter to the Director of the CATA, the aerial treatment company, about one week later. The motion is of sufficient interest to present in its entirety in Appendix C. It argues quite simply that banana exports had fallen because of the high expense of staying in the trade. Planters, it is claimed, could no longer afford even the cost of labour. Because of the high price of production, the motion called for the abolition of CATA, which would eliminate further aerial treatment, and an end to the polythene wrapping of all banana stems. The planters also requested a change in the organisation of banana sales and payment. At the time of the strike, the Mungo planters -- like those in the British Cameroons at the same time -- were the owners of the fruit until it was sold in Europe. This left producers exposed to all fluctuations, good and bad, in the market price for bananas, as well as responsible for all the expenses of shipping and handling. The "African Planters" motion rejected this arrangement in favour of a fixed price to be paid at Bonaberi.

In concluding their motion, the "African Planters" of Mungo announced that they would begin an indefinite strike if their conditions were not met. The letters which accompanied the motion asked that the Syndicat discontinue the sales of polythene wrapping (which, it was argued, had been forced on African planters so that the Syndicat could take a commission from the polythene wrapping company) and requested the director of CATA to discontinue aerial treatment as of the thirtieth of April.

Perhaps the most curious aspect of this petition is that the "African Planters" felt required to act from outside the Syndicat. The perception that the trade was suffering from the growing expense involved in producing and shipping bananas was one shared by all the planters in Mungo. No task was mentioned in the Syndicat's annual report that did not also contain a complaint about the cost of the particular operation. But the losses in 1959 were due in part to severe windstorms which would have affected the plantations more than the smallholdings, where inter-cropping tended to reduce damage from wind. It must also be pointed out that 1958 had been an exceptionally good year. The perceived decline in 1959 was, therefore, being measured against a standard that had not been achieved before or since 1958. Nor was the discontent of the Cameroonian smallholders unknown to the Syndicat. Their opposition to polythene wrapping was acknowledged, although the Syndicat's response in making such wrapping obligatory was clearly less than politic and lacked both tact and a real appreciation of the micro-economy of the smaller Cameroonian farms.¹⁵ What is more to be wondered at is that although the management of the Syndicat was dominated by Europeans and the management of the trade was informally in the hands of European companies for the most part, there was still considerable participation by Cameroonian planters in the Syndicat and in the trade. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect that the complaints of the Cameroonian smallholders would have already been presented, either through Syndicat meetings or through the kinds of daily personal encounters that were inevitable in setting shipping estimates and evacuating the fruit from Mungo. How does it happen, then, that the "African Planters of Mungo" felt obliged to take what was clearly a very radical step?

First, it must be remembered that the gap between the market standard and the productive limits of the untreated ecology of Mungo was growing wider. Since producers could do little or nothing to change the market standard, they were forced to begin treating the agricultural environment they depended on and to treat the fruit that was their livelihood. The expense and reorganisation involved in this treatment were resented by all those planters who were used to the early days of the banana. It must be remembered, however, that the treatment being prescribed was based on the assumption that banana production was essentially a plantation affair. This assumption on the nature of required treatment was not noticeably disturbed by the fact that sixty percent of banana exports from Mungo were coming from smallholdings and mixed cropping arrangements. Instead, the pre-strike mentality among those who generally controlled the trade, would seem to have defined the problem not as a matter of adapting treatment to the smallholder, but rather of forcing the smallholder to accept an inappropriate treatment that was not well-understood, not seen as necessary, and certainly perceived as much too dear.

The ability of the smallholders to argue with treatment plans which originated among Europeans was, moreover, seriously undercut by the structure of the cooperative movement. Unlike the BCUF in the British Cameroons, which was able to function both as a unified managerial organisation and a smallholders' union strongly backed by the Government's cooperative department, each cooperative in Mungo functioned more or less independently of the others. This made it very difficult to present, and answer, a coherent smallholders' position on any problem. This was further aggravated by the uneven quality of the management of the cooperatives. To the extent that cooperative presidents in Mungo were juggling the accounts to the detriment of individual farmers, it meant that the farmer was even more likely to feel that the cost of treatment was exorbitant compared with the profit reaching his pocket, and even less able to perceive the real impact of treatment on earnings. To these problems was added an institutionalised mistrust of European behaviour. Both the concession policy and the fight for banana export quotas had left the average African in Mungo with little faith that European behaviour might act in an African interest, nor was it always possible to sort out what European behaviour was motivated by a desire to keep most Africans in a subordinate position and what came from more legitimate

motives. To hear, therefore, the still European management of the banana trade calling on a distant and largely abstract market standard to justify what were at the beginning unusual expenses, was to suspect immediately that some trickery or deception was behind it all. This comes out very clearly in the question of polythene wrapping. The trade worldwide was in transition between selling bare stems of fruit and selling boxed fruit cut off the stem. The interim protective measure was polythene wrapping. While a clear improvement on the naked stem, it still was far short of a commitment to boxing. And yet, to Cameroonian smallholders in Mungo, wrapping was just a trick: "Vous avez obligé les Planteurs Africains d'emballer les bananes pour que vous puissiez avoir la commission à ladite Société."*¹⁶

None of these reasons, however, explains why the planters who signed the motion of 10 April 1959 felt that their own cooperative presidents with membership in the Syndicat were unable to present the case of the Cameroonian smallholders. Corruption among cooperative presidents would undoubtedly increase members' suspicion of them, but there also is the possibility that to a membership faced with growing and largely inexplicable difficulties, the very fact that most presidents were a part of the Syndicat argued against their ability to defend the smallholders. In effect, the presidents' very necessary and hard-won collaboration with the distrusted Europeans alienated them from the membership that was their financial basis.

A couple of clues point to the validity of this conclusion. One is a 1942 report, included here in Appendix D, from Mme. Dugast which describes, albeit somewhat hyperbolically, the process of labour recruitment and the corrupt collaboration of Cameroonian leaders in that procedure.¹⁷

This is not to argue that the administration of African participation in the banana trade followed along the lines of models established during the period of labour recruitment that Irene Dugast describes. But it is cited as an example of the fashion in which the

* The company referred to, although not mentioned by name in the letter, was probably PLASTICAM, which supplied the wrapping and had just begun doing business in Cameroon.

French administration had the effect of dividing the African population against itself. This phenomenon appears again in the minutes of the first meetings which were held after the "African Planters" motion was drafted on the 10 April 1959.

On the twenty-third of April, the administrative committee of the Syndicat, with both its African and European members, met to discuss a number of questions, the last of which was the motion of the "African Planters". Although most of the discussion was taken up with the very practical issues raised by the planters' motion and with ways those issues might be resolved, it is quite clear that the motion had taken most of those present by surprise.

"Quel est l'organisme légalement constitué dont se réclament les signataires de la motion?" asked Monsieur Dewas.

"Ce n'est pas un organisme constitué," said Monsieur Sandjo, the new Cameroonian Syndicat president, "Mais un mouvement qui semble dirigé par Monsieur Epaka qui signe pour le Bureau provisoire."

"Quel est l'organisme qui a convoqué la réunion?" asked Monsieur Monthe.

"C'est Monsieur Epaka," answered the President.¹⁸

Not even the cooperative presidents would seem to have been aware that such a motion was being considered. Salomon Mpondo announced that the presidents had met and drafted a motion of their own (reprinted in Appendix C),¹⁹ but one cannot avoid the suspicion that if the April 10 motion had not existed the cooperative presidents would not, on the twenty-third of April, have been meeting to write statements that, belatedly, covered the same ground. This feeling that the cooperatives were threatened by a movement somehow independent of the cooperative presidents is reinforced by a statement from Monsieur Monthe, a Bamileke economic advisor attending the meeting. "Il faut que les Coopératives soient appuyées, car elles représentent l'élément stable de la profession," he said, thereby suggesting that the motionnaires were somehow uncontrollable. There were, in addition, several suggestions, ususally from Europeans, that the whole affair was caused by outside agitation: "J'ai assisté à la première réunion tenue avec les motionnaires," stated Monsieur Gilliot, "Je pense que les planteurs obéissent à un sentiment de crainte et ils cèdent à la menace il y a des éléments étrangers à

la profession, ce qui donne à ce mouvement un aspect politique et syndical."²⁰

What these remarks point to is a sense that the Syndicat, which represented the ruling class of the banana trade, both African and European, found itself faced with a threat of rebellion from within the trade, particularly from the small members. Since before the war, the major conflicts had been on the issues of European versus Cameroonian rights. Here, however, one senses a very different conflict, namely smallholders versus the African and European leaders of the profession and the decisions taken by those leaders in the name of all planters large and small. Monsieur Peroneille, sales agent for many of the African planters, pointed out: "Ils demandent ce que le Syndicat aurait dû demander depuis longtemps."²¹

On the fifth of May a meeting was held between the Syndicat and the Chamber of Agriculture, a body comparable to a national Chamber of Commerce. At the meeting, both the "African Planters" motion and the motion from the Cooperative Presidents were put forward for discussion. Once again, the discussion -- to which none of the signatories of the April 10 motion was invited -- reveals a split between the Syndicat and the planters involved in the motion. Monsieur Peroneille opened consideration of the two petitions by emphasizing "que c'est la motion des Planteurs arrêtée par un Bureau provisoire désigné lors de la réunion à Loum le 10 Avril 1959 de 2,500 à 3,000 'planteurs' qui a provoqué la motion des Présidents de Coopératives." To which Monsieur Wambo, vice-president of Syndicat, asked that "... on n'emploie pas le term de 'planteurs' pour désigner les signataires de cette motion, car tous ne sont pas planteurs."²² Both remarks only emphasize the split between the presidents and their members.

By far the greatest part of the meeting, which seems to have been quite long, was taken up with a discussion of the "African Planters" specific complaints and remedies to them. But that sense of distance returned when Salomon Mpondo asked "... s'il n'est pas possible que la Chambre d'Agriculture établisse dès maintenant une circulaire aux planteurs disant qu'elle étudie toutes les questions posées et donne la garantie de réponses favorables ..."²³ Monsieur Mpondo's circular was not approved, but Monsieur Lucot, comptroller of the

government cooperative movement, also argued that "... il faut avant tout avoir une explication franche avec les planteurs africains car beaucoup de faux bruits circulent."²⁴ What is of interest about both remarks is that they come -- one from a Cameroonian and one from a Frenchman -- in the name of the leadership to the masses with whom they are in danger of losing mutual understanding and cooperation. More to the point, despite all the meetings and belated efforts of the cooperative presidents, the smallholders' strike began, as scheduled in the 'African Planters' motion, on the third of May.

Role of Outside Pressure

The economic position of the banana trade in Mungo was unquestionably difficult at this time. Monsieur Peroneille noted at the meeting of the Syndicat on 23 of April that expenses were running at 57 francs CFA the kilo while the market in France was paying only 60.65 francs CFA the kilo for the fruit.²⁵ This represented an unusually steep fall in prices and served to exaggerate the expense involved in treating the banana crop so that it could stay competitive. It was a situation in which smallholders in particular were bound to suffer, while the cooperative presidents, who were among the richer members of the African community, and the Europeans were able to continue meeting the cost of the trade.

But it is a legitimate question whether the combined effect of these commercial problems and of the economic divisions within the African community would have had sufficient weight to launch a rebellion against the Syndicat and its African and European leaders without additional outside pressure. The presence of outsiders has already been suggested by several of the preceding quotations and, at this point, one returns to the role of the UPC in the political life of the French Cameroons at this time.

The party had been outlawed in 1955, but was not without supporters and was still in 1959 looking for ways to assume a recognised position in the politics of an independent Cameroon. In this respect, the situation in Mungo was tailor-made for both the ambitions and ideology of the UPC. One of their principal disagreements with the RDA, Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, was over the question of economic independence from France, which most of

the other parties in the RDA were willing to sacrifice in return for the more visible political independence of the 1960s. Thus, the UPC had decided to hold out for a complete political and economic break with the metropole, a policy that anticipated the neo-colonial critiques of the late 1970s, and which was specifically directed against the "colon who exploits wealth and men".²⁶

As a policy, it undoubtedly forced the annihilation of the UPC as a recognised political party in the French Cameroons. But in Mungo in 1959, the dominance of the banana trade by French interests can only have exacerbated the sense of grievance caused by the decline of the smallholder and made the idea of expelling French businesses and planters that much more attractive. Moreover, it would have been a relatively simple matter to portray many of the cooperative leaders as corrupt collaborators holding lucrative positions in the Syndicat where they were hand-in-glove with French interests and had left the concerns of their Cameroonian countrymen behind.

To what extent these arguments were used or believed is difficult to judge. One cannot help suspecting that they helped tip the balance towards the "African Planters" motion of April 10 and that political training received with the UPC may well have supplied some of the leadership of the original April movement. That it was a popular cause, however, was initially the most important factor. This is reflected in Monsieur Peroneille's report of two and a half to three thousand people attending the Loum meeting on April 10. The popularity of the motion also comes through in a communiqué dated 25 May from the Minister of Economic Affairs in Yaoundé, Monsieur Fouda, who had been in Mungo during the first week of May, and reported that, "Trois réunions furent tenues le 2 Mai à Mbanga, Loum et Nlohé, auxquelles les planteurs assisterent en foule."²⁷

Many of those who are still in the banana trade and were also involved in 1959 now say that the strike was only successful because the participation of many smallholders was coerced by terrorism and violence. This is a convenient interpretation in that it acknowledges that many people withheld their produce from export, but excuses their protest on the grounds that it was coerced and, therefore, cannot be considered a rebellious action. In spite of the latter-day convenience of this interpretation, there are grounds for believing

that coercion was an important factor. The initial popularity of the protest forced the Syndicat, the Chamber of Agriculture and ultimately the government to review the terms of the banana trade in greater detail than had occurred since the 1948 census.

The results of this review were published in the communiqué sent out by the Minister of Economic Affairs, M. Kouda, on 25 May. It argued that the problems of the trade were rooted in a dramatic fall in the price of bananas in France, and that the only way to cope with this reduction was to reduce the expenses of production and export from the French Cameroons. The communiqué then announced eight measures designed to reduce expenses, many of which, as the government noted "... vont au-delà des désirs exprimés par les planteurs." These measures were worked out in meetings held in Yaoundé on the 8, 12 and 14 May 1959 between the shipping companies, the railroad, the aerial treatment company and the forwarding agents, and had followed the earlier meetings during the first week in May with the planters of Mungo.²⁸ It is of interest to compare the communiqué with the original strike demands, and, for the purpose, the communiqué appears in Appendix C.

It is first clear that although the strikers' specific demands for the abolition of the aerial treatment company, wrapping and sales on commission were not met, the overall request that expenses be reduced was seriously considered and answered. The tax which had gone to pay for CATA was abolished and a number of other expenses were also eliminated or reduced. Thus, although the provisions for wrapping fruit continued, the practice of selecting fruit at the portside after the expense of wrapping and shipping had already occurred, was changed so as to permit inspection and selection in Mungo. Altogether, the government reasoned that if the exports continued at "normal" levels, the compensation to planters should rise by 280-300 million francs CFA for a year. The only issue raised by the strikers which was not covered by the communiqué was that of sales on commission versus fixed price sales in Bonabéri.

One is forced to conclude from this communiqué that a serious attempt to meet the planters' demands had been made and that the grounds for protest had been substantially undercut. It is not unreasonable to assume, therefore, that a number of planters would

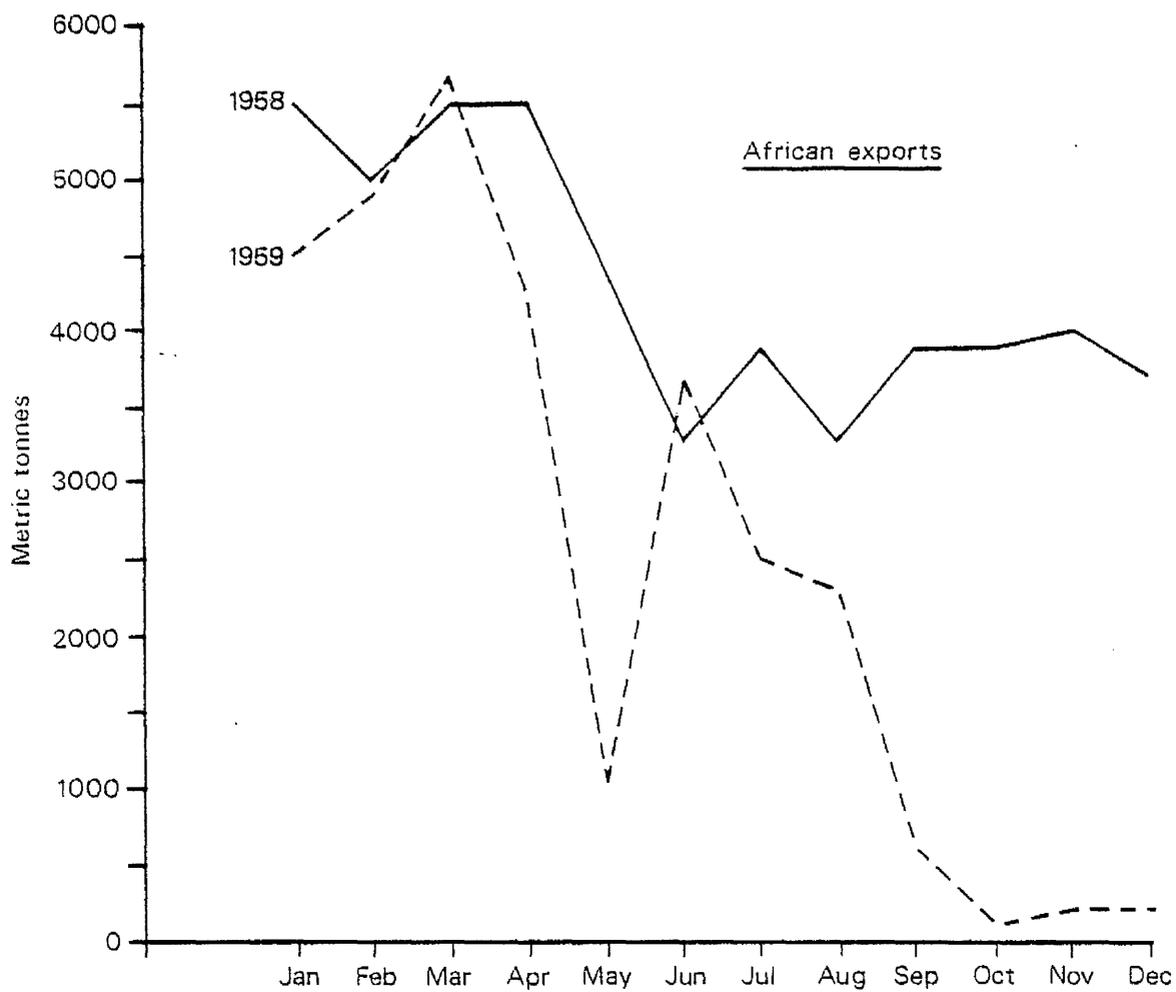
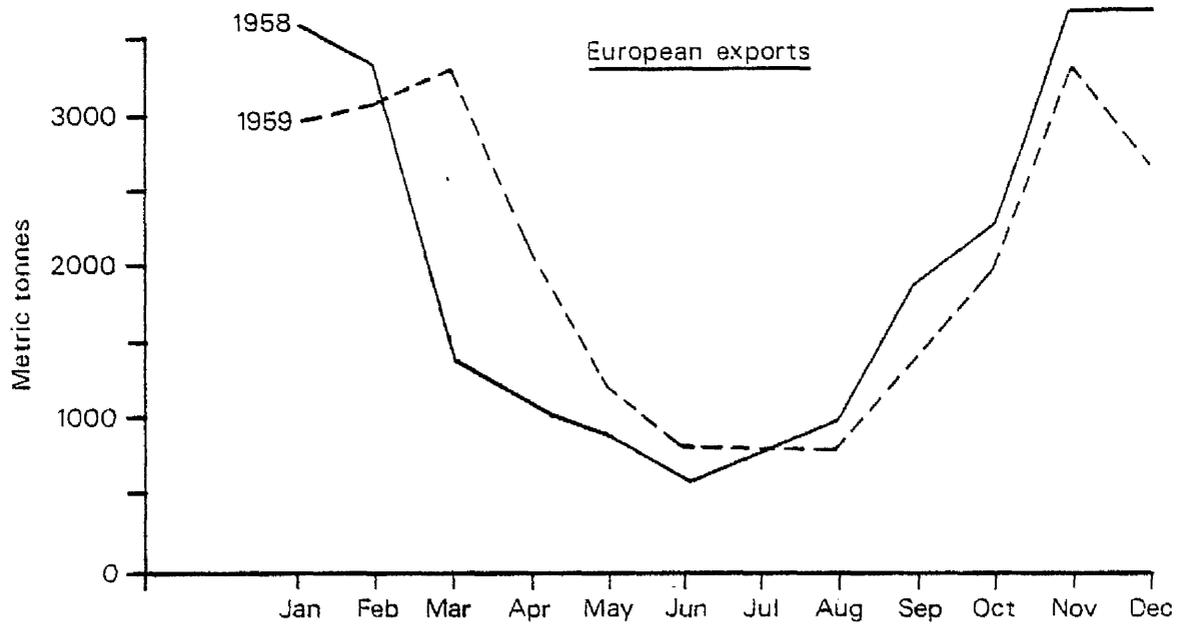
have been willing to discontinue the strike, begun during the first week in May, and to return to a normal exporting schedule.

This impression is confirmed by the monthly export statistics for 1958 and 1959, which compare African and European tonnages and which appear in Figure 8, "European and African Banana Exports from Mungo in 1958 and 1959." One sees that the 1959 figures for Europeans are consistently equal to or greater than those exports in the previous year for every month from March to December. The African statistics, however, show the effect of the protest. The exports for May 1959 are less than a quarter of the exports shown for the previous year. In June, however, exports are slightly higher than previous years, showing what would seem to be a willingness to accept the government's proposals for a reduction of expenses. By July African exports are down again -- thirty-seven percent lower than July exports of 1958 -- and in August a thirty percent drop is seen, compared to the 1958 figure. The really dramatic fall, however, comes from September through December when African exports for those four months are fourteen, three, six and five percent of the amounts exported in the previous year.

There is little in the minutes to explain the fall in African exports. A meeting on 23 May, anticipating the end of the tax which had hitherto paid for the aerial treatment, was held to determine which planters were willing to continue spraying at their own direct expense. Both European planters and Cooperative Presidents subscribed to the treatment, but the Africa Cooperative Presidents were committing only their personal holdings on the grounds that they would have to meet with their "adherents" before speaking for them as well.²⁹

The only other meeting of note was held on 18 May, again before the Minister's communiqué, between the signers of the motion, the sales agents and members of the Syndicat's administration committee.³⁰ The meeting is of interest in that clearly many of the Minister's final proposals were already rumoured to be coming and, therefore, a number of the motion's complaints were likely to be defused. The only outstanding issue was that of sales on commission which was the main topic of this very brief meeting. In part, the meeting hoped to clarify what the motion had actually asked and often

Figure 8. EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN BANANA EXPORTS FROM MUNGO IN 1958 AND 1959



Source: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, 'Bilan 31 Decembre 1959'

took the form of schoolroom questions and answers. Monsieur Job (of la Compagnie des Bananes): "Vous voulez être payés lorsque la marchandise est arrivée à Bonabéri ou bien lorsqu'elle est sur le bananier?"

Monsieur Epaka: (strike leader): "Lorsque la banane est embarquée."

Monsieur Peroneille: (sales agent): "C'est donc une vente FOB."

M. Peroneille and M. Job sales agents, argued against FOB sales and were supported by President Sandjo, one of the cooperative presidents as well as the new president of the Syndicat:

"Vous voulez que la banane soit achetée FOB, mais vous ne savez pas ce que c'est. Avant la guerre les Européens vendaient FOB mais ils ont demandé la vente à la commission, car c'est le mode de vente le plus avantageux pour le producteur. Pour ma part, je continuerai à vendre à la commission."³¹

The meeting ended in a discussion of what would be an acceptable FOB price, during which Monsieur Epaka stated that they were asked for thirty francs CFA FOB per kilo. At which, Monsieur Job, who had been showing considerable signs of impatience, suggested that the protesting planters had better look for other sales agents since the best price that had so far been received in France was only sixteen francs the kilo, in 1958.³²

Monsieur Epaka's proposal for thirty francs per kilo may have been nothing more than an opening bargaining position from which compromises could be made. But it is also tempting to imagine that those who helped initiate the "African Planters" motion of April 10 sensed that they needed an issue to keep the protest going. In the end the sale of bananas on commission was the only issue they could claim had not been satisfactorily met by the government communiqué of 25 May. In fact, it was a matter that was repeatedly discussed and finally reformed during the next several years.

As an issue, however, it is not very dramatic and cannot explain the almost complete lack of exports from African farmers that began in September. Moreover, in the light of the return to normal levels of exports in June, and the costs reductions of the communiqué, it seems unlikely that the strike would have continued over the matter of sales on commission. But can one then say the Cameroonian planters were

forced by terrorism to discontinue the shipping of fruit in July, August and afterwards?

There are no meetings in the files between the dates of 2 June and 10 November 1959.³³ When the Syndicat does meet again on 10 November, Monsieur Penanhoat, honorary president, is presiding and only one of the Africans who had attended the Spring meetings is present, M. Mangwa, secrétaire adjoint of the Syndicat. In opening the meeting, M. Penanhoat recalled the "événements douloureux" of the past few months and argued that "Néanmoins malgré l'attentat dont notre Président* a été victime, notre Syndicat doit se réunir, prendre des décisions et les appliquer". There were two points: the African planters were no longer exporting, and crop spraying treatments had been discontinued. During the discussion that followed on the reasons for the halt to African exports, M. Mangwa acted as spokesman for the absent cooperative presidents. In the course of the discussion, M. Mangwa stated that exports would only resume if a system of FOB payment were introduced, and in any meeting with the presidents they would ask for the FOB system. M. Moulende, treasurer of the Syndicat, had already suggested that the "... planteurs ont peur d'être assassinés s'ils chargent". This point was repeated by M. Sulla, one of the sales agents, who asked M. Mangwa "... si l'arrêt des chargements est dû à la peur ou au fait que les bananes ne soient pas payées comptant." M. Mangwa replied that both reasons motivated the lack of exports, adding that the cooperative presidents wanted to ship.³⁴

This meeting is of interest on several counts. One is that violence had become a part of daily business, and it was a terrorist's form of violence, as exemplified by the attempt on the life of M. Sandjo. He, it will be remembered, had been in favour of continuing with the system of sales on commission and, as the first African president of the Syndicat, was in a position to moderate the differences between the African and European planters. Second, the meeting shows that the issue of payment had indeed become the formal hardline argument for continuing the protest. Finally, the most important feature of this meeting is the virtual absence of the cooperative presidents.

* Monsieur Sandjo, the first Cameroonian president of the Syndicat.

With the effective rejection of the communiqué from the Minister of Economic Affairs, the position of the cooperative presidents became more difficult. They had been party to and supporters of those Yaoundé meetings which had led to the Minister's proposals. And yet, it was the radical elements within their own cooperatives which were rejecting the measures proposed. Therefore, the presidents had to choose between siding with the Minister of Economic Affairs and, by extension with the French planters in Mungo, or siding with the radical element within the cooperatives and by extension the rest of the cooperative membership. Judging by the comments at the 10 November meeting, their choice was partially influenced by the climate of violence then prevalent in Mungo which, according to one report, encouraged several presidents to retire to Europe until conditions had improved.³⁵ But clearly by November 1959, the majority of cooperative presidents had decided that unless they could present themselves as siding with their membership rather than with the French planters, their own positions would not be tenable. In this sense, they were in direct competition with the radical left-wing individuals in the banana trade for the loyalty of the mass of small planters.

This shift of the cooperative presidents, whose motion dated 23 April had conspicuously avoided any support of the call for FOB payment, was probably vital if the presidents wished to retain any influence within their own community. However, their choice also undoubtedly distorted any realistic analysis of the problems of the Mungo banana trade in 1959 and 1960. As has been repeatedly mentioned, these years, in both the British and French Cameroons, were critical not just for the politics of independence, but for the fact that the banana trade had reached a crucial turning point in its development from a "mined" crop to a managed crop. One would like to believe that in a more pacific political climate it would have been possible to reconcile the difficulties of smallholder cultivation with the standards demanded on the world market, or least to have effected a diversification programme that would have lessened the impact of losing the extraordinary prosperity of the 1950s. And yet, when the cooperative presidents chose to take sides with the strikers, whose cause they had only partially shared in April and May, it became much easier to interpret the entire disruption as a quarrel between French and African producers rather than as a legitimate crisis in the long-term economic survival of both plantation and smallholder production.

In the years that followed, therefore, there was no discussion of the reform of the banana profession that did not carry an implicit colonial/anti-colonial element. In this sense, many of the cooperative presidents, who had grown up with "la guerre morale" from 1935-1948, were probably more comfortable with the simplistic analysis of the radical anti-colonial opposition than with the difficulties of modernising the trade. It is also undoubtedly true that among the cooperative presidents were those who would have enjoyed gaining access to the land held by Europeans, and who may have hoped that the radical opposition would win. Finally, those presidents who had been reappropriating the cooperatives' earnings in their own favour rather than overseeing the equitable distribution of earnings to all members were in danger of having the opposition turn on them, a situation they could best avoid by assuming a unity of cause against the Europeans which had not really existed in early 1959.

Guerilla War and Government Reprisal

From July 1959 onwards, the region of Mungo was in a state of persistent guerilla war. By this time, the question of the modernisation of the industry and the more complicated issue of the survival of smallholders had been completely pushed aside. By December and January, the European plantations had been reduced to armed camps operating under seige, while the Cameroonian planters did not even pretend to be able to continue producing and exporting. The Syndicat, from its 1958-9 identity as the organisation which contained all the elements of the trade, had become a rump caucus of Europeans repeatedly petitioning the new government to bring the situation under control. Letters sent from Antoine Decré, vice-president of the Syndicat, to the Prime Minister between the 8th and 28th of January 1960 detail the level of violence experienced at that time.

Letter dated 8 January 1960:

Des bandes armées circulent librement dans la région, de nuit comme de jour, semant des tracts, menaçant les travailleurs et exécutant lâchement ceux qui continuent à travailler.

Letter dated 16 January 1960:

Au mois d'Octobre, un planteur avait été attaqué, en plein jour, par une bande forte d'au moins vingt assaillants; grâce à son sang froid, il avait pu mettre ses agresseurs en fuite. Le 30 Novembre, un planteur de Manengoteng était assassiné. Début Décembre, un village de manoeuvre était attaqué; grâce à la courageuse défense de quelques travailleurs armés, les bandits

étaient mis en fuite. Quelques jours après, une nouvelle agression se soldait, sur deux plantations gérées par des européens, par des cases brûlées, des camions incendiés et détruits, des installations saccagées. ...

La plantation Nassif incendiée, la gare de Loum-Chantiers brûlée, un garage de Penja détruit par l'incendie, les cases des manoeuvres de la C.A.M., plantation du Haut-Penja en bordure de la frontière, entièrement détruites par le feu. L'assassinat de six manoeuvres, le 5 Janvier, sur la plantation Nassif Loum-Chantiers entraîne le départ des cinq cents travailleurs de cette plantation. ...

Le 10 Janvier, l'incendie ravage le village de la plantation du Boubou à Penja située en bordure de la frontière du Cameroun sous tutelle britannique.

Letter dated 28 January 1960:

Le 18 Janvier la totalité des ouvriers de la S.P.N.P. à Nyombé refusait de travailler obéissant à un tract qui avait été repandu dans la nuit. Ce sont 1,154 manoeuvres qui ne travaillant pas vont se trouver rapidement dans le besoin et devenir la proie des trublions.

Le 18 dans la soirée les hors la loi incendiaient de nouveau la C.A.M., plantation située à la frontière du Cameroun sous tutelle britannique.

Le 21 un ancien combattant était assassinée et son corps déposé sur la route de Tombel, en face du village de la C.A.M. Depuis ce jour aucun manoeuvre ne travaille plus sur cette plantation.

Les planteurs de bananes du Mungo emploient en temps normal près de 5000 manoeuvres. L'effectif actuellement au travail est de 700 manoeuvres.³⁶

In addition to these letters, a delegation of planters from the Syndicat went to Yaoundé in order to inform "Monsieur le Premier Ministre et le Gouvernement Camerounais de la gravité extrême des événements dans la Région du Mungo et de faire ressortir les conséquences catastrophiques qui en découleraient si des mesures rapides et efficaces n'étaient pas prises pour ramener le calme."

The visit resulted first in a tour of inspection of the banana zone of Mungo by Général Briand, Colonel Laurière and Lieutenant Colonel Richard, commandant of the Cameroon Gendarmerie. On 29 January 1960, an arrêté was published which, according to the Syndicat's report of that visit, put into effect those "mesures préconisées afin de renforcer le maintien de l'ordre dans la région bananière." The Syndicat's report, which is undated, but would have been written perhaps in early February, notes finally that: "Nous

sommes également heureux de constater déjà les effets salutaires de ces dispositions qui ont permis de reprendre le travail d'une façon satisfaisante sur les plantations."³⁷

Return of Pressure to Modernise

It is important to remember that in 1958, seventy percent of the Mungo banana crop was coming from smallholders. Moreover, as shown in Figure 8, "European and Banana Exports from Mungo in 1958 and 1959", it was the smallholders who had suffered most from the effects of the de facto civil war. The war had not only prevented them from exporting for the latter half of 1959, but had destroyed most of the cooperative structure that had supported those exports. This occurred just when the industry, and particularly smallholder production, needed to be modernised purely on commercial grounds.

Thus, it is not surprising that the principal concern of the next six or seven years was the reform of the smallholders' banana trade. For the Europeans, once they had won the right to stay in Mungo through their own defiance of the terrorists and the more important military intervention of the French forces who were sent to act in the name of the new government, the problems of modernisation were fairly straightforward. Their businesses were already being run on the style of monocrop plantations covering relatively large units of land. The process of converting to Poyo and setting up boxing stations would be expensive, but for those who had fought to stay in the trade it was reasoned that the expense was worth making. Moreover, the practice of scheduling routine treatment, whether of Sigatoka disease, weevils or nematodes, had finally been accepted as a necessary evil. This does not mean that the Europeans were consistently successful modern plantation managers, or that the period of most acute violence had not affected their shipments. A meeting on 15 April 1960 in Douala, reported on a trip to le Havre. In the meeting, the fruit of five plantations -- one of them the IFAC researchers' plantation -- was described variously as "fruits en marmelade; régimes pourris, très mauvais; les régimes ont été jetés; les Gros Michel sont arrivés complètement mûrs; mûrs."³⁸ These were all, however, problems susceptible to careful plantation management, a rigorous selection procedure, and the availability of investment capital which does not seem to have been too difficult to obtain.

The smallholders, however, were faced with a different dilemma. As was recognised in a report prepared by the Syndicat for an economic commission sent to Mungo in February 1961, the trade was sending out two classes of bananas: fruit coming from the industrial plantations was classified as first choice and could be sold for more than seven French francs per kilo, whereas the stems called "ordinaire" or "tout venant" which came from the Cameroonian planters were selling for less than seven francs. The difference, said the report, was due strictly to the difference in quality. "... Deux principaux problèmes ... nous préoccupent et dont découlent tous les autres ... Tout d'abord le mécontentement général des planteurs camerounais dont le pouvoir d'achat, les revenus et les moyens d'existence sont nettement insuffisants. Ensuite le mécontentement de nos acheteurs européens qui, à juste titre, critiquent la qualité des fruits qui leur sont expédiés à certaines époques de l'année ..."39 The Syndicat's report goes on to argue that with the example of quality production in the European plantations which neighbour the African growers, "Il paraît donc facile de dire aux paysans camerounais: copiez, transformez vos plantations pour faire le même travail et exporter les mêmes fruits que vos voisins."⁴⁰

The effect of this argument was that the smallholder should give up his practice of mixed cultivation. Cameroonian farms at the time were returning only three to four tonnes per hectare, earning anywhere from 40-50,000 francs CFA per year. According to the Syndicat's report, with one labourer per hectare paid roughly 37-40,000 francs per year, the Cameroonian farmer could barely meet labour expenses, let alone the cost of improvements.⁴¹ The coffee crop, said the report, brought in some income just when the banana earnings were at their lowest each year, but even that had failed recently and the Cameroonian planters were in very poor shape. The report finished by suggesting a number of measures, many of which echoed the arrangements which existed before the strike and civil war of 1959-60, or which were on the verge of being made.⁴² Like their predecessors, the assumption behind these measures was that banana cultivation was to be directed towards an industrial plantation model rather than the mixed holdings held by the majority of Cameroonian farmers. The problem with much of the advice offered was that it meant nothing because it had little or no relation to the situation in which the vast majority of Cameroonian smallholders found themselves.

Smallholders' Response

The Geographic Service of ORSTOM undertook a study in 1966-'67 entitled "Enquête sur la situation du planteur dans les zones de reconversion bananière". It was completed as part of a much larger study under the direction of M. Jeanteur at the Nyombé research station of IFAC, the Institut Français de Recherches Fruitières Outre-Mer (predecessor of IRA).⁴³ This large study became the basis for the plan which resulted in the creation of the OCB banana plantations in Mungo and Tiko. Most of the work involved the identification of large sites with good soils, near enough to a source of irrigation water, which could be converted to an intensive form of plantation production. The study contains several maps, one of which has been simplified for presentation here as Map 17, "Banana Cultivation in Mungo - 1967 Smallholders and Plantations". A companion report argues the merits of the OCB plantation plan and a third study entitled, "Etudes Financières", considers the range of earnings that could be expected from the reorganisation. But only the study from ORSTOM considers at all the situation of those farmers whose land would be used and whom the reorganisation intended to benefit.

The ORSTOM study was done in three areas of Mungo and covered a sample of thirty-six families (see Tables 9-12). There were, on average, seven people in each family, nearly half of whom (forty-three percent) were less than fifteen years old. The majority of families cultivated less than seven hectares of land -- for eighty-nine percent of the families the average was 3.4 ha per farm. Ninety percent of this land was used to grow some export crops, usually bananas, coffee, and cocoa, but these plantations were intercropped with food, principally macabo. In fact in two of the three areas studied, the three export crops accounted for only sixteen percent and eleven percent of the crops represented in these mixed fields. In the third area they represented fifty-five percent of all crops (see Table 12).

Perhaps the single most interesting feature of this study, when the data for the three areas are analysed collectively, is the very small proportion of the agriculture which is committed to the banana crop in 1967; on average, seven percent. On average, seventy-three percent of the species in mixed fields were of food crops, with the

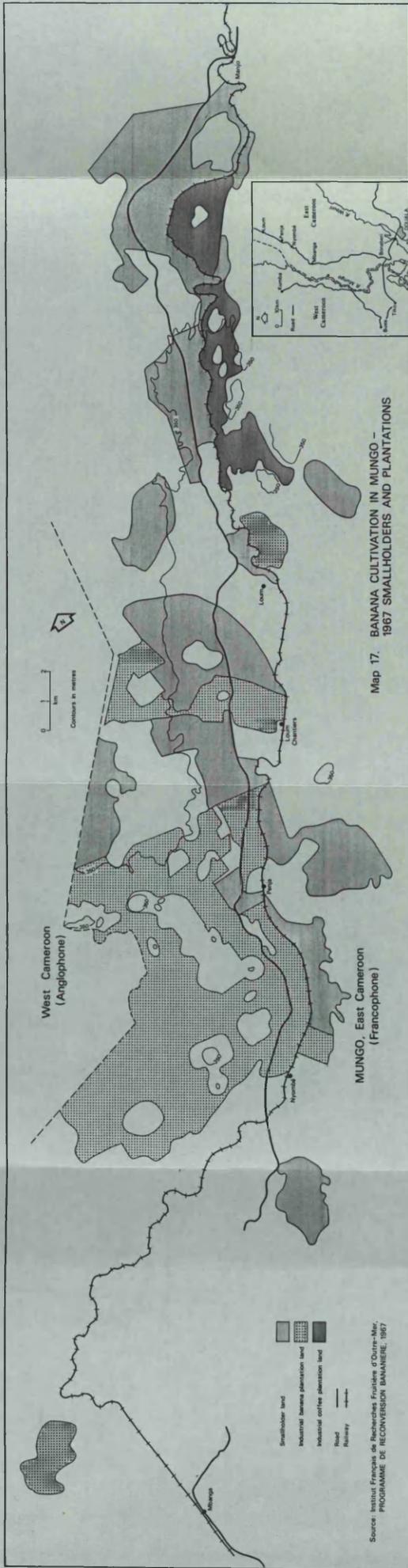


Table 9
1967 ORSTOM SURVEY OF SMALLHOLDERS
demographic information

	<u>Mpoula</u>	<u>Mangamba</u>	<u>Etam-Ebonyi</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
sample size	11 families	10 families	15 families	36 families
average family size	8	5.3	7.2	6.8 people
percent less than 15 yrs old	49%	28%	51%	43%
sex of population	44% male 56% female	53% male 47% female	51% male 49% female	49% male 51% female
ethnic origin of	7 - local 6 - Bamileke	7 - local Bakaka	7 - Bakossi 4 - Bamileke	20 - strangers (55%)
head of household	3 - Douala	3 - strangers	3 - Yaoundé 1 - Banyangui	16 - local (45%)

SOURCE: ORSTOM "Enquête sur la situation du planteur," 1967

Table 10
1967 ORSTOM SURVEY OF SMALLHOLDERS
size of family holdings

	<u>Mpoula</u>	<u>Mangamba</u>	<u>Etam-Ebonyi</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Less than				
1 ha.	2 holdings	2 holdings	3 holdings	7 holdings
	18%	20%	20%	19%
average size:	.8 ha.	.24 ha.	.75 ha.	.6 ha.
<hr/>				
1-5 ha.	5 holdings	4 holdings	4 holdings	13 holdings
	45%	40%	27%	36%
average size:	3.2 ha.	2.9 ha.	3.2 ha.	3.1 ha.
<hr/>				
5 - 10 ha.	3 holdings	3 holdings	6 holdings	12 holdings
	27%	30%	40%	33%
average size:	6.8 ha.	6.9 ha.	6.0 ha.	6.6 ha.
<hr/>				
over 10 ha.	1 holding	1 holding	2 holdings	4 holdings
	9%	10%	13%	11%
average size:	17.6 ha.	32.1 ha.	22.6 ha.	24.1 ha.
<hr/>				
average size:	5.1 ha.	6.5 ha.	6.7 ha.	6.1 ha.
<hr/>				
N equals:	11 holdings	10 holdings	15 holdings	36 holdings
	99%	100%	100%	99%
<hr/>				

SOURCE: ORSTOM, "Enquête sur la situation du planteur", 1967

Table 11
1967 ORSTOM SURVEY OF SMALLHOLDERS
style of planting

	<u>Mpoula</u>	<u>Mangamba</u>	<u>Etam-Ebonyi</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
only in food crops	8.2 ha. 15%	4.1 ha. 6%	9.6 ha. 10%	21.9 ha. 10%
mixed food and export	47.6 ha. 85%	60.9 ha. 94%	90.2 ha. 90%	198.7 ha. 90%
TOTAL	55.8 ha. 100%	65.0 ha. 100%	99.8 ha. 100%	220.6 ha. 100%

SOURCE: ORSTOM, "Enquête sur la situation du planteur", 1967

Table 12
1967 ORSTOM SURVEY OF SMALLHOLDERS
percentage of crops in mixed fields

	<u>Mpoula</u>	<u>Mangamba</u>	<u>Etam-Ebonyi</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Export	55%	16%	11%	27%
coffee	28%	6%	5%	13%
bananas	16%	6%	2%	7%
cocoa	11%	6%	4%	7%
Food	45%	84%	89%	73%
macabo	28%	41%	49%	39%
others	17%	43%	40%	33%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

SOURCE: ORSTOM, "Enquête sur la situation du planteur", 1967

balance going largely to coffee and cocoa. At best, sixteen percent of the crops in the mixed fields of Mpoula was some variety of bananas, while in the two other areas studied the banana crop accounted for only six and two percent of the mixed plantings. In the study's figures for farmers' incomes, which appear only for the third area (sample size fifteen families) where the banana crop was two percent of the crops grown on mixed plantations, bananas accounted for only six percent of the farmers' income: 3,802 francs CFA out of a total earned of 66,363 francs CFA. In contrast, coffee and cocoa each made up about one third of the family's income.

What these figures demonstrate is that the average smallholder, as represented by this sample of thirty-six families, had already converted his holdings out of the 1950s involvement with the banana and had taken up cocoa and coffee as the principal cash crops. Given that it takes several years for coffee and cocoa plants to mature, it is interesting that the farmers were getting an income from these crops in 1967, indicating that the process of conversion had begun soon after the strike, if not even earlier. The study does not discuss whether the income and standard of living represented by these figures and the pattern of cultivation shown, were an improvement or decline from the days of the bananas. What the figures in the study do suggest, however, particularly with the income being received from the long-term coffee and cocoa crops, is that smallholder agriculture in Mungo had stabilised in its organisation around a model which relied heavily on the production of food crops for home consumption (although more than fourteen percent of the income came from food crops), with cash needs being met largely by the income produced with coffee and cocoa.

The fact that this stabilisation has occurred by 1967 very pointedly illustrates the complete failure of the banana trade to modernise the smallholder's operation. It is not surprising that this should be the case. Modernisation, as defined after the events of 1959 and 1960, was a process of industrialisation. As such, it could only operate if all attachments to mixed farming were completely abandoned. And yet, as shown in the ORSTOM sample, the practice of mixed cultivation was deeply engrained and one suspects that the risk involved in committing land to the monoculture of the banana was too great for farmers supporting half a dozen dependents on less than

seven hectares of land to consider it a serious option. Moreover, the price swings of the industry had probably done much to frighten off participation, and were not likely to be overcome by any modification in the payment schemes for export bananas. Better, may have been the reasoning, to leave the banana behind than to risk all in what had become a very expensive enterprise. It is, therefore, not surprising that among the thirty-six families studied by ORSTOM, only one homogeneous plantation of bananas existed on some eight and a half hectares of land.⁴⁴

There is another very fundamental reason why it would have been difficult to modernise the smallholder's banana operations, namely, the size and location of land holdings which comprised any single farmer's total holdings. Over half of the household heads in the thirty-six families represented were from outside of the Mungo area, twenty-eight percent from the Bamileke plateau. This, according to the study, had an impact on the land tenure arrangements in the area. For locals, the property they worked would have been acquired through inheritance. For most of the others, however, their land was either bought or acquired as collateral for a loan. The ORSTOM study does not give any figures for different kinds of land tenure arrangements among the families represented. But it does explain that a man might acquire land by lending money to an owner who needed the cash more than he needed the land. The lender would then acquire the use of the land for varying periods of time depending on the size of the loan.⁴⁵ It is unfortunate that no indication is given of the number or percentage of holdings involved in this kind of an arrangement. But if the numbers were very large, and if the periods of the loan were very short, then a problem of security of tenure arises which might well affect a farmer's interest in making the kinds of long-term investments that some modernisation would require. More importantly, the holdings -- at least as represented in Figure 9, "Three Small Holdings in the Banana Zone of Mungo, 1967", -- were not at all consolidated. Rather, a man might have three hectares in one location, three in another and a small field for food crops in yet a third area. This posed logistical problems in the efficient organisation of work, particularly work done on the model of industrialised agriculture. To industrialise land under cultivation in small scattered plots would have been a problem outside the resources of any smallholder who did not have the means to create a consolidated holding.

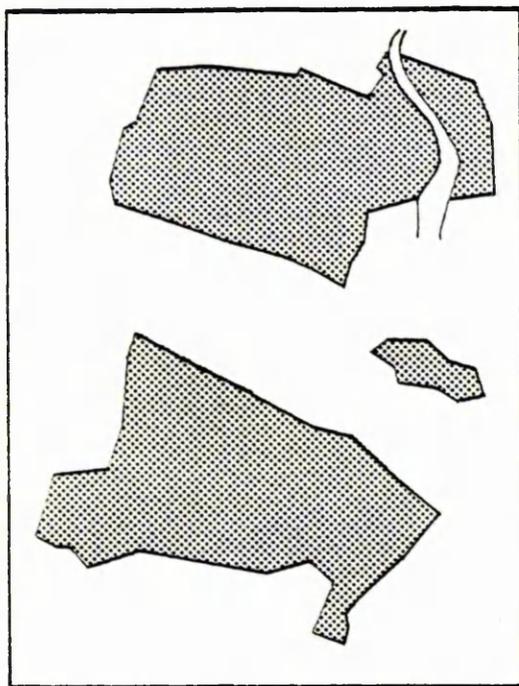
From 1959 to 1966 there were at least five organisations (the Syndicat, UNIBACAM, FEBACAM/UGECOBAM and the OCB) who were charged with the reorganisation of the smallholders' banana cooperatives. And yet, by 1967, the smallholder himself had largely abandoned the banana as a cash crop. How much his shift was caused by the disorganisation of the trade in general and the cooperative movement in particular is difficult to judge. What is more likely is that the farmer perceived, sooner than the rest of the profession was willing to admit openly, that with affairs structured as they were and with the fall in prices from France, no smallholder could reasonably expect to achieve a living off the fruit which had been such a boom crop in earlier years.

Creation of the OCB Plantations

The Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane (OCB) was first formed in 1964 as one of the efforts to reorganise the trade and the cooperative movement. In 1968, it was given responsibility for implementing the plantation plan which had been surveyed and designed by IFAC. It is interesting to look at this IFAC program in light of the response smallholders had already made to the condition of the banana trade in the early 1960s, but one thing is quite clear about the IFAC Conversion Program: it answered the needs and structures of the banana trade, and the industrial agricultural requirements of that trade, far more than it adapted either to the real condition of the smallholders of Mungo or even to the more privileged position of the cooperative presidents. In a simplistic fashion, one might say that in the same way that the Europeans had won the terrorists' war, they had also won the underlying argument over agricultural style.

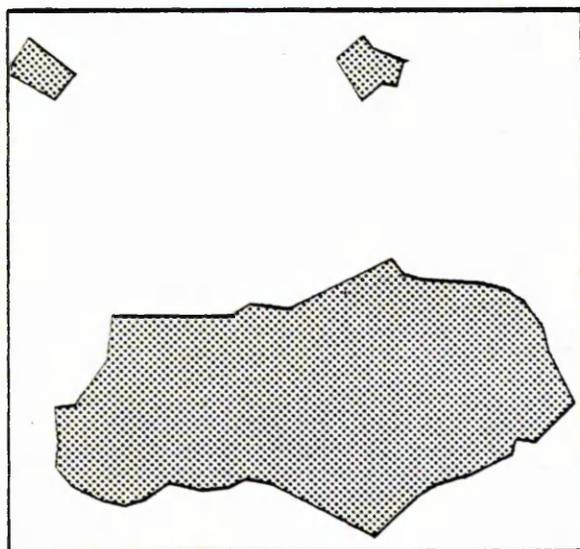
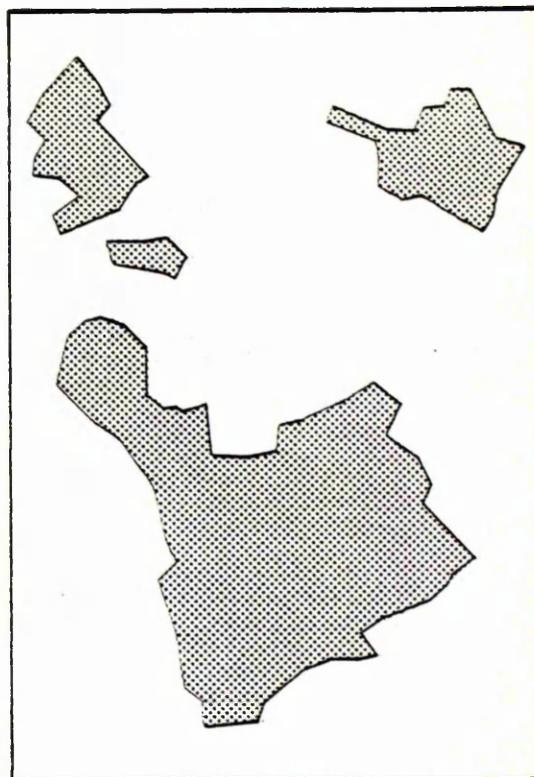
The single best illustration of that accomplishment is in the reorganisation of agricultural land taken over by the OCB. The conversion plan called for the establishment of consolidated one-hundred-hectare blocks which had suitable soils and were close to a source of irrigation water. Some of these blocks were taken over from European planters who had left Cameroon either because of the economics of the trade, or because of the terrorism which persisted in outlying areas even after the military entered in 1960. The single OCB plantation in English-speaking Cameroon is on land in Tiko that had been part of the Elders and Fyffes plantation in Likomba.

Figure 9. THREE SMALLHOLDINGS IN THE BANANA ZONE OF MUNGO, 1967



Holding of Martin MOUKETTE at Ehom.
Total holding: 6ha +
Crops: cocoa, coffee, macabo, plantains,
bananas, food crops.

Holding of Jean NTECK MBUEMI at Mpoula.
Total holding: 6ha +
Crops: coffee, banana, plantain, avocado,
mango, palm, kola, oranges and food crops.



Holding of Joseph METIKIE at Mangamba.
Total holding: 5ha +
Crops: coffee, plantain, bananas, macabo,
manioc, oil palm, mangos, cocoa, raphia
palm, food crops.

Source: ORSTOM. 'Enquête sur la situation du planteur dans les zones de reconversion
bananière', 1967

However, apart from these holdings which came from previous European plantations, the majority of the land now held by the OCB came from the smallholders of Mungo.

In comparing the ORSTOM description of smallholders' scattered land holdings and land use to the plan drawn up by IFAC for monocrop one-hundred-hectare blocks, one is immediately aware of the radical change in the life style of the smallholders this new arrangement imposed. Today, these blocks function along the lines of plantation management, with a hired labour force, a hierarchical structure of supervision and an industrial schedule of work. However inadequately observed, this still represents a considerable departure from the working habits of the independent farmer holding less than seven hectares of land. It is, therefore, of interest that so many planters were willing to cooperate with this plan.

This would seem to have been based on two factors: first, according to the "Etudes Financières" which was done as a part of the Conversion Program, the actual situation of the smallholder was deteriorating rather than improving.⁴⁶ The report cited the fact that, in the ORSTOM study, the active population was really quite small -- less than three people per family -- because of the number of young people who had emigrated to town in search of work or for their education. In addition, the state of the coffee and cocoa plantations was less than adequate. Many were old, badly maintained and afflicted with disease. According to the IFAC financial study, the smallholders' safest investment would have been in food crops for the Douala and Victoria markets. Even here, however, it would have been necessary to intensify cultivation practices in order to cut down on the amount of time required, under the traditional shifting pattern of agriculture, for fields to be left fallow.

What this points to is a condition in which the natural resources of Mungo were being increasingly strained under the dense population and cultivation that had grown up since the land was first being cleared in the 1930s. The point of shift from "mined" to "managed" agriculture had been reached in the banana trade in the late 1950s. What the IFAC financial study suggests in addition, is that by the mid-1960s that same point had also come for the other crops being raised in Mungo. This put the smallholder under the pressure of

diminishing returns and must have made the proposals from IFAC and the OCB seem fairly attractive.

Only two documents have given us any idea of the exact nature of those proposals. The most important is the signed account, amounting to something like an option contract, of a meeting held with the planters of Npaka. The account was signed by thirteen planters or their representatives as well as by the Secretary of the Loum sous-prefecture, and M. Jeanteur, author of the IFAC study and chief of the FED (Fonds Européens du Développement) mission which was paying for the implementation of the plan. The meeting had been called, according to M. Jeanteur, in order that the Planters of Npaka could give their final agreement, "leur accord définitif", to the plan being proposed by FED. The document goes on to explain that this plan involved the creation of a one-hundred-hectare banana plantation block and would include the construction of an access road into the Npaka region, the building of a packing station and a hangar for materials. "Ces cultures seront réalisées par le planteur, qui sera conseillé par des techniciens." The first clearing and planting, however, would be the responsibility of the organisation (later the OCB) in charge of the programme. In spite of M. Jeanteur's description of the meeting as an occasion for the planters to give their final agreement to the plan, the planters more cagily noted that they were agreed in principle, on the condition that they were compensated for any shrub crops (i.e. the coffee and cocoa) which were cleared off the land. M. Jeanteur replied that "il sera recommandé par la mission qu'une indemnité d'arrachage soit étudiée," but added that with all the foreign aid being used for the benefit of the planters, some "effort" might well be required from them.⁴⁷

This problem of compensation comes up again in the second document: the signed minutes of a meeting on 7 May 1967 of nearly sixty Cameroonian planters who were worried about the destruction of their holdings under the conversion plan. The opening resolution of this meeting is a good illustration of the hopes of what the plan would bring as well as the more easily imagined fears of what would be lost:

...Nous acceptons de bons coeurs la reconversion bananière dans notre secteur de Mangamba, mais à condition que:

...Le planteur soit dédommagé des plants arrachés dans ses plantations à savoir:

Caféiers - Bananiers - Banane-Plantain - Macabos -
Taros - Igbame - Pruniers - Noisetiers (Caso) -
Kolatières - Cocotiers - Palmiers à huile - Palmer
Raphia - Légumes etc...

Ceci pour assurer la vie du Planteur selon les difficultés du temps à savoir:

Frais de maladie - Frais de Scolarisation des enfants
- Le Paiement de l'Impot - Frais de vivre
(Nourriture) - Frais d'habillement etc...

The resolution continued with a request for the improvement of roads in the area and mentioned a number of other worries, among them that only the indigenous people of Mungo were going to be affected by the plan: "A considérer que: la reconversion n'a arrêté que toutes les plantations autochtones." There is no indication whether 'autochtones' referred to all Cameroonians in Mungo or only to the original ethnic groups, but the fear of being tricked was quite large. So, too was the fear of losing their homes. "A savoir, nos cases ne seront jamais déplacées. Nous demandons aussi de laisser 25 à 30 mètres nos cases avant de faire les plantations bananières."⁴⁸

Altogether, the terms of agreement with the planters would appear to have been extremely vague for a plan that was to result in such great changes. Nor does there seem to have been any sense that it was a plan for smallholders, although their difficulties had been one of the motivating factors in the design. Instead, judging from the resolutions of the planters of Mangamba, the plan was seen as a European exercise. "La reconversion doit être basée sur un contrat par écrit entre les européens traitants et les planteurs propriétaires dans terres prises."⁴⁹

However, the very vagueness of the terms of agreement must have left room to imagine greater benefits from a share of the plantations than from continued smallholder agriculture. Certainly the idea of a permanent income from the land in the form of rent or profit-sharing must have had considerable appeal. It is also possible that after a decade of economic disruption, terrorism and military reprisal, a large number of people were more than willing to turn over the

management of their affairs to a larger organisation. On the other hand, it is said that the terrorists continued to interrupt normal business in Mungo until the early 1970s, and one cannot help but ask how many of those terrorists were farmers who disagreed with the OCB plan or who were survivors of the early 1960s who may even have still believed in the smallholder causes that had originally been proclaimed.

By and large, however, and for whatever reasons, the OCB plantations were accepted. In the process, the original idea that the crops would be raised by the expropriated planters working with the advice of technicians, had become by 1982 little more than a standard labour/management structure. The major difference is that among the plantation labour pool are those who, instead of receiving a share of the profits of the plantations as Michel Foyet of IRA argues they will do once profits are made,⁵⁰ are receiving (albeit irregularly) rent payments for the land they once worked themselves on an independent basis.

The establishment of the OCB plantations clearly marked not only the end of the massive participation of smallholders in the banana trade, but for a certain number of planters the conversion, not from Gros Michel to Poyo, but from independent small producer to wage labourer, with perhaps a smallholding on the side for the production of home-consumed foods. The irony of this development is that however much the banana trade itself required the conversion to a plantation style of production, the OCB plantations represented the complete abolition of the hopes for smallholder participation which were so vehemently expressed in the early days of the strike in 1959.

Collapse of the Syndicat

The other casualty of the 1959 strike was the leadership position of the Syndicat. While the responsibilities of the Syndicat itself were never that great, it did serve to legitimise managerial decisions made informally and did function as a very effective lobby both in the colonial government of the French Cameroons and with the government in France. During the year of the strike and the civil war, however, it became once again an organisation representing only the European interests in the banana trade, a polarisation it was never able to shake off in the following years.

In May 1960, there was a General Assembly meeting of the Syndicat, which was the first meeting since the cooperative presidents first stayed away that was attended by representatives of both the European plantations and the African Cooperatives. The Assembly observed a minute of silence in memory of "... des planteurs et présidents de coopératives qui ont trouvé la mort sous les coups des terroristes," and approved unanimously the reading of the annual report. Notwithstanding this appearance of reconciliation, the meeting broke up a few moments later on the grounds that some members wanted to examine the balance sheet of the Syndicat before approving that as well.⁵¹ By mid-July, however, an ordinary general assembly met to elect a new president and administrative council composed again of Cameroonians and Europeans. This time, Salomon Mpondo was elected president, a position he continued to hold for most of the next ten years and from which he exercised a curiously disruptive authority.

The minutes for the next ten years are sketchy and not always very well-written or well-organised. Still, in reading through them both for the Syndicat and the FEBACAM/UGECOBAM organisation of planters' cooperatives, one is struck by the sense of an industry which is unable to function coherently. Numerous reforms are proposed, some are adopted, and some either fail immediately or are replaced before they have had enough time either to succeed or fail. The Syndicat meetings are dominated less by the problems of organising the trade than by the problems of organising the Syndicat itself, whose constitution is written, rewritten and at times completely put aside. The plight of the smallholders does not improve, no matter what organisation is put into place, violence continues to break out sporadically, and where planters -- usually Europeans -- eventually succeed in converting to Poyo and enjoying a fairly steady income, it would seem to have been as much in spite of the overall management of the banana profession as because of it. There is a sense, finally, that the rebellion, which grew in part out of a desire to eliminate the French presence in Mungo, had not only failed to do so, but had destroyed the fragile manners of consensus which had made that presence constructive. In the resulting distrust and disorganisation, it was impossible to bring about an equitable reform of the banana trade that would have taken into account the difficulties of bringing smallholder production into an economic framework that was becoming more and more subject to the special constraints of the industrial plantation ideal.

This breakdown of consensus is clearly evident in meeting minutes of the Syndicat. It is also quite clear, although impossible to detail from the sketchy clues of the meeting minutes, that within the Syndicat a considerable struggle for control was taking place. Countless meetings discuss the question of membership, in particular whether membership and voting rights should be based on export tonnage, which in the days after the strike would give a clear advantage to the European planters, or on the number of planters involved in the trade, which would weight the balance towards the cooperatives. Many efforts were made to eliminate those members who had participated before the strike, but who had not paid any dues since then. There is also a revealing exchange in the minutes of the finance committee in late March 1962 in which the president of the Syndicat, Salomon Mpondo, tried first to move that members of the administrative council could be reimbursed "... les dépenses de déplacements et autres frais fait au cours de l'année dernière," and then more pointedly claimed reimbursement for various expenses of his own. The treasurer, Madame André, answered him by observing that the statutes of the Syndicat had no provisions for reimbursing the members of the administrative council and that it was outside the power of the finance committee to decide the question. As for the president's own expenses, Mme. André argued that those were covered by the payment of a chauffeur's salary as of June 1961 and that any other expenses should have been included in the budget for the year beginning in June 1961 if M. Mpondo wanted to be reimbursed. The president made a third attempt in the same meeting to change the nature of the financial control of the Syndicat by proposing to prepare the budget for 1962. This suggestion was also rejected by the treasurer on the grounds that the outgoing administration did not prepare the budget for the next. "A mon avis," said Mme. André "c'est au nouveau Conseil d'administration à le faire."⁵²

The next general assembly of the Syndicat elected a provisional administrative council charged with drawing up the new rules of membership, dues, and administration. On 16 July 1962 another general assembly met to vote on the proposed changes, but "Après diverses interventions en particulier de Monsieur Mpondo, les modifications proposées par le conseil provisoire ne sont pas approuvées."⁵³

On 18 August 1962 an extraordinary general assembly was held with M. Decré of the provisional council acting as president. This meeting was also unsuccessful and broke up after only an hour. Although Monsieur Decré stated there was a quorum, Monsieur Mpondo moved to adjourn on the grounds that too many people were absent. In the resulting stand off between Monsieur Mpondo, former president of the Syndicat, and Monsieur Decré, the provisional president, the assembly refused to take sides. One of the European planters, M. Pallier then took the floor and said that "Les obstructions continuelles faites par certaines personnes pour les raisons personnelles ne peuvent pas mener à bien notre action. Il est impossible de vivre dans une atmosphère de méfiance, et je constate avec regret que chaque séance est systématiquement boycottée." This led to "vives discussions," people walking out of the room, and the adjournment of the meeting to a date ten days later.⁵⁴

A meeting on 28 August 1962, moved in the end to eliminate all membership dues on the grounds that the Syndicat's role had been taken over by the new federation of banana cooperatives, FEBACAM, which included both Cameroonian and European planters. In the vote for a definitive Syndicat administrative council, however, the first round of voting left M. Mpondo in a poor second place at which he and his adherents left the room and the second round of votes was abandoned.⁵⁵

There are no more meeting minutes until the middle of 1963 when M. Mpondo appears again as president, although there is nothing to indicate how he achieved his position. Another general assembly meeting was held at the end of December 1963 in which the question was raised by M. Mpondo whether the survival of the Syndicat was necessary or "must it be dissolved?" The assembly was unanimous for continuing, but failed to elect a new president and decided to continue with the administration of 1961 with Monsieur Mpondo as president and Madame André as treasurer. In asking for the dissolution of the Syndicat, Monsieur Mpondo observed that the organisation since the last General Assembly of August 28, 1962, had "resté en sommeil à cause des divergences de vues," a state of dormancy the Syndicat has largely maintained ever since.⁵⁶

It would seem that after the disagreements of 1962, only one other attempt was made to revive the Syndicat as a professional organisation. This occurred in 1971 under the chairmanship of the Sous-Préfet of Loum, Monsieur Nicol Njilla, who also held the position of l'Inspecteur de Travail et des Lois Sociales, Nkongsamba. In a series of meetings held 20 and 21 October and on 18 November, the Syndicat was dissolved and restructured with a new administrative council of Cameroonians and Europeans. It was not a success. In the October discussions, two of the Europeans who had been elected to the administrative council resigned in disagreement over the new statutes. Monsieur Alain Moreau, of the SPNP plantations, was one of them and announced that he would not continue "à siéger dans les réunions où il y a trop de discrimination. Il suffit qu'un planteur européen émette une idée qu'elle soit automatiquement combattue. Tout ce que j'ai suggéré a été refusé."⁵⁷

His objections were finally reduced to a request that of the four vice-presidents in the administrative council, the first vice-president should be a European. During the next meeting of the administrative council the Sous-Préfet made several attempts to smooth things over, observing: "... on a l'impression qu'il^y* a une lutte entre Camerounais d'origine et Camerounais d'adoption; il faut que la profession soit unie et qu'il n'y ait pas de frictions entre les planteurs. L'objectif principal doit être la sauvegarde des intérêts de la profession bananière. Je vous demande donc d'éviter les tiraillements et d'étudier tous les problèmes dans le sens de l'intérêt général."⁵⁸ His words had no visible effect, any more than did the reassurances of the new president of the Syndicat, Michel Njaleu, who had been elected under the new statutes which the European planters felt discriminated against them. "Je prie tous mes collaborateurs de travailler la main dans la main avec moi. Il faut éviter la lutte d'influence préjudiciable pour la bonne marche du Syndicat et de la profession en général. Je ne suis et ne serais influencé par personne. C'est le devoir et les conseils éclairés qui me guideront. Le désordre ne résoud aucun problème sérieux."⁵⁹

While it is impossible to work out the details of manoeuvring, factions and argument which lay behind the many tensions which surface in these meetings, it is clear that a major struggle for the control of the industry was taking place. It is a struggle that began with

the smallholders' strike in 1959 and which continues to this day, distorting any sustained concentration on the organisational needs of a very disorganised industry. At a recent meeting in May 1982, one of the Cameroonian planters accused one of the European sales agents of a corrupt collaboration with the buyers in France to discriminate against Cameroonian planters' fruit. It is an accusation that obscures the real issues of low quality production and sours any attempts at improving the overall performance of the trade. Even had the accusation been true, which is unlikely, it is better attacked through the concerted action of all planters, than through an unsupported allegation aired in the course of other discussions at a general meeting.

And yet the concerted action of all planters is exactly what is missing. The unity and the consensus of the profession --historically under considerable strain and exceedingly fragile -- would seem to have been permanently damaged by the events of 1959 and the ensuing struggle for control. This history continues to interfere with all other considerations of the well-being of the profession and of the planters and workers who earn their living from the banana.

CHAPTER 6

THE CAMEROON BANANA TRADE OF 1982

The banana trade of Cameroon in 1982 still confronts the same issues that faced the trade in the 1950s. The nature of the market being supplied is still critical in defining production standards as well as in determining the price to be received by farmers. They, in turn, still struggle with the same technological problems of disease control, soil fertility and packing stations. Similarly, the managerial structure of the trade, although in some respects quite different from the structures of the 1950s, is still just as influential in determining the efficiency of the trade and the working relationships between participants. In effect, the 1982 business is still organised around the same components of market, technologies and managerial structures which have already been discussed for the 1950s trade.

What is clearly not the same in 1982 is the near collapse of the business. What were two young and fairly healthy agricultural industries in the 1950s have become by 1982 a single trade which can no longer afford to pay its own bills, let alone clear a profit. This difference offers considerable scope for analysis and theory and some of the political explanations of change have already been presented in Chapters 5 and 6 on reunification in Anglophone Cameroon and the politics of independence in Mungo.

In this chapter, however, we concentrate on the other important elements of the trade which have been considered in this thesis: the nature of the market, the field technologies planters employ, and the managerial structure of the 1982 trade. In looking at these aspects of the business, we focus on some of the operational differences between an optimum effective working of the trade and the actual functioning of affairs in 1982. What emerges from this examination is that the economic collapse of the industry in recent years has not resulted from any single cataclysmic event, but instead from a slow accumulation of small mistakes, misjudgments and ignored investments.

In the end, it was in all these internal details of the industry that the transition from a "mined" to a managed agricultural resource, one of the top priorities of the late 1950s and early 1960s, was not effectively accomplished. While one can blame the loss of Anglophone production on the decision to reunify and can show how the politics of independence in Mungo soured many working relationships, the trade has also suffered from a high level of mismanagement on the part of nearly all the participants in the business. It is this mismanagement which has affected the profitability of the trade in 1982 and which will, regardless of political history, destroy what is left of the flourishing business of the 1950s.

In studying the 1982 banana business of Cameroon, we look at the same components of markets, technologies and managerial structure which have already been examined for the 1950s trade. However, we begin with a discussion of the markets open to Cameroon, since, as was true during the 1950s, the nature of the market will determine both the quantity and quality of fruit that Cameroon must produce in order to stay in the trade.

The Nature of the Market

Nearly all bananas from Cameroon in 1982 are sold in the French market. It is a controlled market, and has been so in one form or another since the 1930s when any bananas from outside the franc zone were prohibited from entering the French market. The undisguised purpose of these controls has always been to protect the banana industries of Martinique and Guadeloupe from competition. This protection was further refined in the early 1960s when the Comité Interprofessionnel Bananier (CIB) found itself unable to negotiate the conflicting claims on the French market that were coming from the Antilles (Martinique and Guadeloupe) and the newly independent African states of the Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Madagascar. The issue was finally resolved in favour of the (pro-de Gaulle) Overseas Departments, Martinique and Guadeloupe, on the fifth of January 1962 when President de Gaulle shared the market between the two groups of producers. By his decision, the Antilles were allowed to supply two-thirds of the French market and the African producers were limited to the remaining third.¹

Table 13
JANUARY 1962 PARTITION OF FRENCH BANANA MARKET

	Percentage of French market	Percentage of Antilles quota	Percentage of African quota
Martinique	35%	53%	
Guadeloupe	31%	47%	
(sub) <u>total</u>	(66%)	(100%)	
Ivory Coast	17%		52%
Cameroon	13%		40%
Madagascar	3%		8%
(sub) <u>total</u>	(33%)		(100%)
TOTAL	99%		

SOURCE: Gravellini, Contribution à l' étude de la production et de la commercialisation des bananes antillaises, camerounaises et ivoiriennes, p 45-6.

According to a December 1980 report on the banana trade of the Antilles, Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, this quota system was designed not only to arbitrate the conflict of interests between the African and Caribbean producers, but also to "adapt volume to prices and not prices to volume".² Thus, it was reasoned, the producer would always receive a fair price for his fruit since supply would never exceed demand and thereby drive down the price of the fruit to the farmer's loss. The same system was expected to control the price to consumers.

The organisation for administering these arrangements was, and is, the Comité Interprofessionel Bananier (CIB) which consists of roughly sixty people who represent planters, importers, ripeners, retailers and shippers as well as the Ministries of Agriculture, Competition and Commerce, and the French Overseas Departments and Overseas Territories. There are two administrative sub-committees, the Comité Restraint Interprofessionel Bananier, and the Groupment d'Intérêts Economiques Bananiers (CRIB) and GIEB respectively.³ The first of these, the CRIB meets once or twice a month to estimate the coming market demand for bananas and from that determine the

amount of fruit to be supplied by each country. The GIEB meanwhile is more concerned with maintaining for the fruit an average annual price that does not fluctuate too greatly. Towards this end, the GIEB fixes an annual average price based on Antilles monthly prices and weighted to include shipping and landing expenses.⁴

In those cases when the combined production of the franc zone fails to meet the market demand and thereby starts to drive up the price of the fruit beyond the fixed annual average, the GIEB steps in again. At such times, they are responsible for buying bananas on the open market at the lowest possible price and reselling it at prices fixed by schedule. Any profits made on this transaction are deposited in the State Treasury. Between 1970-79, the Treasury received some 53 million francs (about £5 million), fifteen percent of that amount having resulted from the 1978/79 business.⁵ The manipulation of the entry of non-franc zone fruit is designed to ensure that demand never exceeds supply and that there is a fairly level price nearly all year round, both for the consumer and the planter.

Before the advent of the fixed market quotas in 1962, the bananas entering the French market were forced to compete with the fruit from other franc-zone producers. Thus, for example, the fruit from Cameroon had to be able to meet the standard set by the Antilles, and the Antilles had to be able to match the low costs of Cameroon. As the Caribbean islands found their costs rising faster than the cost of growing bananas in Africa, and their competitive position thereby undercut, pressure from the Antilles for a quota system was increased.⁶ Since 1962, therefore, all franc-zone producers have been able to count on a guaranteed price for their fruit and a guaranteed quantity of sales.

Although this system has protected growers from extreme fluctuations in market prices, it has also allowed franc-zone banana producers to ignore pressure from the more competitive world market to raise production standards. In 1977, for example, the FOB (free on board) price of bananas from Martinique was \$350 per metric tonne and bananas from Cameroon were \$278 per tonne when sold in France. In contrast, Jamaican bananas were selling for \$185 in Britain and bananas from Central America were at \$160 in Italy.⁷ While such comparative figures are never exact given fluctuations in rates of

exchange and similar problems, it is still roughly correct to say that in 1977 bananas from Central America were half or three-fourths the price of fruit from the Antilles and Cameroon respectively and, generally speaking, of a better quality. However, as long as the French market did not admit bananas from the dollar zone of Central America and Ecuador, this difference in the price and quality of fruit could have no real influence on the stability of the French banana market.

That situation began to change with two serious hurricanes in the Antilles in 1979 and 1980, David in 1979 and Allen in 1980. The figures for 1978 and 1979 show that banana exports from the Antilles to France fell by nearly 118,000 tonnes between 1978 and 1979. As a result, other producers within the franc zone were under pressure to make up the loss from the Antilles, and together the Ivory Coast and Cameroon managed to increase their exports by slightly over 11,000 tonnes. However, a more important 58,000 tonnes from the dollar zone was admitted to France in 1979, 46,000 tonnes more than had come in the year before. Thus, over thirteen percent of the French banana market of 1979 was being supplied from dollar-zone fruit coming from Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador.⁸

While this represents a significant proportion of the French market for that year, what was even more important about the entry of these bananas was that the quality of the fruit was consistently superior to bananas from the franc zone and the price was, on average, 360 francs cheaper per tonne or about £37, an eighteen percent reduction of the franc-zone price.⁹ Much the same turn of events hit the French banana market in 1980 when hurricane Allen again destroyed a large proportion of the Antilles banana crop. Moreover, the fact that it was the second year running made the losses from the franc zone that much greater and the resulting invasion of dollar-zone fruit that much more important again.

There had been an additional change in the nature of the French market which only emphasizes the differences of quality and price. Writing in 1973, Ardagh said that:

"After a slow start, the supermarket movement has made something of a breakthrough in France in the past six years. ... The number of supermarkets, nil in 1957, rose to over 1,000 by 1969 and over 2,200 by 1972. Their share of the total retail trade in food rose from a mere 4 per cent in 1969 to 20 per cent by 1972..."¹⁰

This trend has continued into the 1980s when a sizeable percentage of the bananas sold in France are sold through the large retail stores and retailers cooperatives which could foreseeably come to dominate the trade.¹¹ With this change from the épicerie du coin to the supermarket has come an increased sensitivity to price.

Again, quoting from Ardagh:

After the war the housewife grew so used to the steady rise in prices that she ceased to question them, and in a land so snobbish about quality, anything cheap came to be regarded with suspicion. Soon after the war the Government carried out an experiment that consisted in cutting cheeses in identical halves in a number of shops, and giving them different price-tags: most people chose the dearer halves. With price-fixing so widespread, the notion of a valid 'bargain' never really developed. In the past few years, however, the influence of Leclerc and the new competition has helped to make the housewife more price-wise, at least for ordinary goods.¹²

In the case of the banana, this process was much accelerated by the appearance in 1979 and 1980 of more dollar-zone bananas at a cheaper price and higher, more even, quality. It thus became harder to justify the high fixed price for franc-zone bananas and became more difficult to get ripeners to buy franc-zone produce when they knew they could get a better quality fruit for less from the dollar zone.¹³

There is a third factor which is increasingly important. When the Common Market was established in 1958 by the Treaty of Rome, special provisions were made to guarantee protected access to at least the French market for the produce of the former French colonies. However, as more countries have joined the EEC and more overseas producers have shared in the protection offered to the ex-French territories, the protection has begun to lose some of its meaning. The entry of Britain was particularly significant in this respect and forced the rewriting of the Lomé Convention to include selected members of the British Commonwealth. However, the general policy of

protected access for associated territories is becoming more difficult to sustain in the European Economic Community and the arrangements which have protected the Antilles and French-speaking African producers of bananas so far are in danger of being seriously modified. This is even more the case since the election of President Mitterand, a number of whose policies run counter to accepted Gaullist wisdom, and who is less likely to see any advantage in protecting the special interests of the very Gaullist voters of the departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Thus, for a number of reasons, the 1962 system of banana quotas set up by Charles de Gaulle is becoming more and more fragile. The simultaneous and seemingly irreversible decline of the Cameroon banana trade makes that fragility even more pronounced. Of the four major producers -- Martinique, Guadeloupe, Ivory Coast and Cameroon -- the last is in the weakest position. But none of the others is without problems and it is debatable whether they could make up the difference if the Cameroon banana trade failed completely. This would then leave the French market with a permanent deficit of franc-zone bananas and would open the way for permanent participation of superior dollar-zone fruit.

Exactly how the remaining French-speaking producers would react to that competition remains to be seen, as is the nature of the Socialist government's reaction to appeals for support from the Overseas Departments. Not surprisingly, there is considerable pressure from the Comité des Intérêts Bananiers on Cameroon. In May, 1982, the President of the GIEB spent nearly a week in Cameroon speaking to planters, the government in Yaounde and the Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane in order to press for a higher standard of production and the maintenance of Cameroon's share of the market. The fact that Cameroon has not been able to respond effectively to this pressure requires some explanation, and leads us into an examination of the major components of the business in Cameroon in 1982 and of the production and export standards the business should be meeting in order to survive through the 1980s.

Technologies of 1982

The photographs in Figures 10 and 11 provide a rough idea of the different qualities of bananas coming from different countries. All photographs were taken in English and French supermarkets or groceries in September and October 1982 and are meant to show what the fruit looks like when it reaches the retail market. Bananas from three locations are shown here: one photograph shows the fruit from the dollar zone and the others are of fruit from the Antilles and Cameroon. The lower quality of the fruit from Cameroon represents several weaknesses in the chain of activities from field to ship, some of which we shall examine here. We shall also consider the different responses to technical problems which have been made by various producers. In doing so, we shall suggest some of the considerations that may have affected producers' decisions.

Those banana planters still operating in Cameroon are not numerous, but are extremely diverse (see Map 18). Their plantations and farms differ significantly in their size, productivity, management, size and capitalisation. Of the thousands who joined the banana trade in both Cameroons in the 1950s only a handful are left. There are four private French companies controlling about 3000 hectares of land, and an equal number of major Cameroonian producers, but with about one tenth the land surface. Together they represent the whole of the private sector of banana planters and manage about sixty percent of the total land still in banana production.

The balance is controlled by parastatal organisations. The Cameroons Development Corporation, one of the few institutions in the former British Cameroons to have survived reunification, manages roughly 800 hectares of bananas. The Organisation Camerounaise de la Bananes (OCB), which was created in 1964, works another 1200 hectares. Finally, showing the highest productivity per hectare (forty-two tonnes), there is IRA, the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques, which is part of the Cameroon government, but which began as part of IFAC, now known as the Institut de Recherches des Fruits et Agrumes (IRFA), in Paris. IRA has about forty hectares in a demonstration plot at Nyombé in Mungo and provides the management and technical advice to the OCB plantations, often using personnel from the Paris office of IRFA.



Chiquita, 'dollar zone' bananas from Panama in a Safeway supermarket
London, November 1982



Bananas from Cameroon in a small neighbourhood grocery
Paris, September 1982

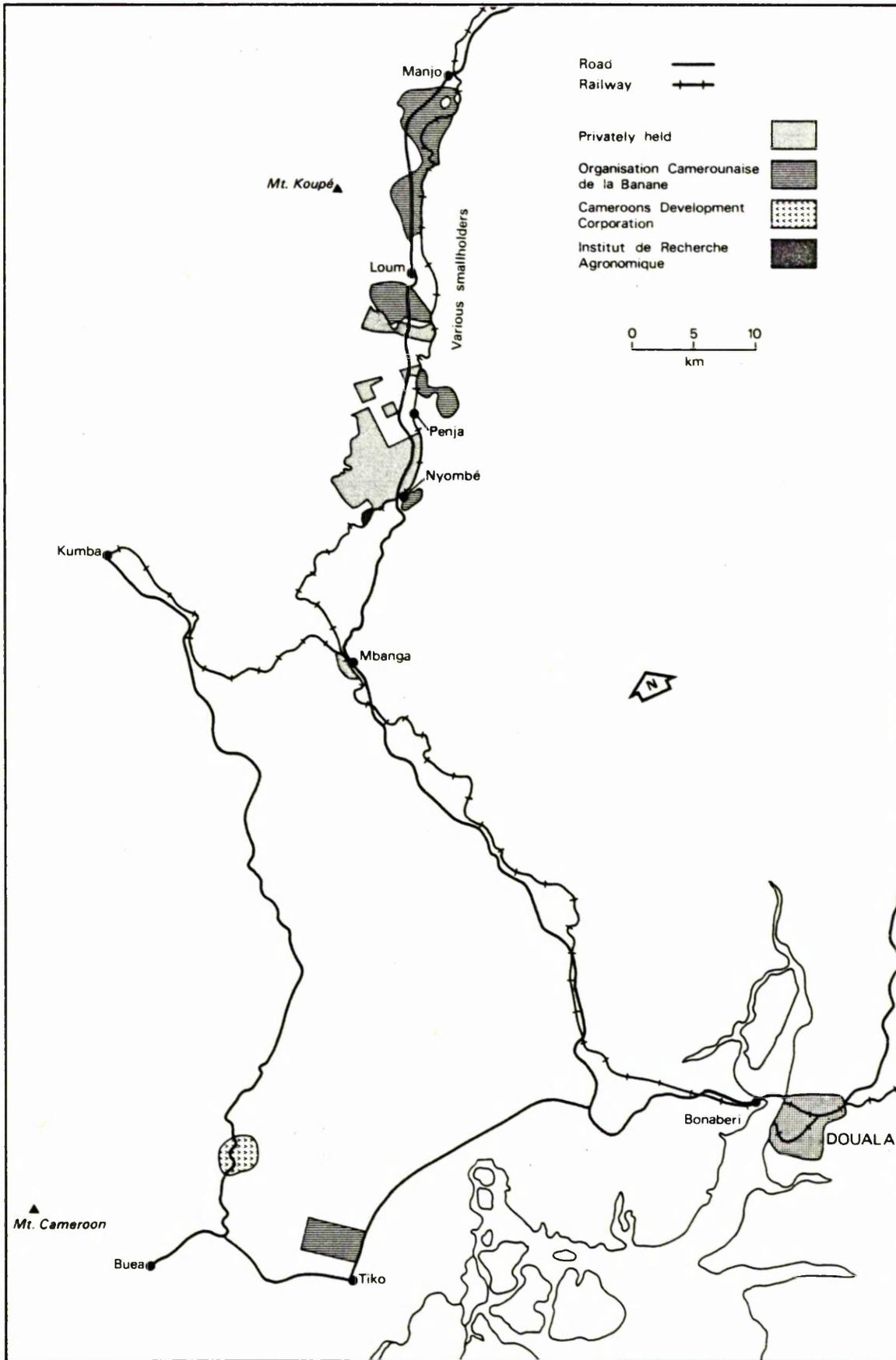


Antilles bananas in a covered market,
Paris, September 1982



Cameroonians bananas in a Paris supermarket,
September, 1982

Map 18. ESTIMATED CAMEROON BANANA LANDS, 1982



Sigatoka Disease

Certainly one of the most revealing points at which to study the efficiency of the banana industry is in its treatment of Sigatoka disease and many of the weaknesses in the Cameroon trade show up here. As banana cultivation became more widespread, particularly in the 1950s, the disease became more entrenched and less easily controlled with occasional treatment. In the earliest days of the disease's appearance when bananas were still being raised on small more widely separated parcels of land, it was possible to treat Sigatoka with seven to eight treatments a year of a fine mineral oil spray. Beginning in 1965-66, however, as many as thirty to forty applications of oil were required, with spraying occurring every week or ten days. This much treatment itself became counter-productive as the oil was so thickly laden on the leaves that the plants were unable to function normally. At this point it became advisable to use a fungicide mixed with the oil. However, in order to avoid the development of a strain of Sigatoka resistant to treatment all of the recommended dosage should have been used and, when possible, alternated with another fungicide. These treatments should have been applied at regular intervals in calm weather in order to achieve maximum effectiveness.¹⁴

The treatment of the disease in Cameroon has been consistently less than optimum. There was considerable reluctance among planters to spend money on aerial treatment. Thus, the decision to use a fungicide was postponed as long as possible and then it was used invariably, without any alternation with another product. This was largely a matter of cost. The fungicide, Peltis, which was used first, costs about 400 francs CFA (80 pence) a litre while the alternative, Imazalim, costs 15,000 francs CFA (£30) a litre. The decision to use only Peltis, while clearly economic in the short term, caused long term problems as the Sigatoka fungus developed a resistance to the fungicide. This resistance was hastened on those plantations where a lower than recommended dose of Peltis was applied. The problem of resistance was further aggravated by a four to five-year lag between the time the resistant strain was first reported by M. Gaudin, then the manager of the privately-held CAM and Boubou plantations, and the time it was recognised by the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques at Nyombé.¹⁵ By this time it had become

imperative to use the more expensive treatment, Imazalim, and there was no longer the time available to do any research into cheaper alternative sprays.

Both the lack of research and short-sighted economising were considerably aggravated by extremely uneven applications. According to Lassoudière, an IRA technical advisor, the following treatments were provided in the following years and between them demonstrate the lack of any coherent, regularly scheduled spraying based on a far-sighted policy of disease control:

Table 14
TREATMENTS OF SIGATOKA DISEASE, MUNGO
1968-1981

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of treatments per year</u>	<u>Type of treatment</u>
1968	10-12	mineral oil alone
1969	40	mineral oil alone
1972	14	mineral oil alone
1978	7	mineral oil plus Peltis
1980	14	mineral oil plus Peltis
1981*	20	mineral oil plus Imazalin

SOURCE: Institut de Recherches Agronomiques, Nyombé.

The importance of regular treatment is emphasized on a chart in John Robertson's office at Ekona showing the monthly production figures from the CDC plantations in Ekona, for the period from February 1981 to April 1982. After achieving a plateau of regular yields averaging about thirty tonnes per hectare in each month in early 1981, there were two sprayings missed in July and August of that year. Roughly six months later the average yields had fallen to eighteen to twenty-two tonnes and required four months to recover the earlier high levels.¹⁶

Soil Fertility

A similar problem which crosses the boundary between routine treatments and agricultural research concerns the soil fertility. It

* M. Lassoudière did not have information for all years, although the plantations would have been treated in every year. The figures here only represent the degree of variation in treatment.

was Lassoudière's contention that long-term cultivation of bananas does not alter the soil structure in any way or introduce hazardous elements in the way, for example, that manioc will fix cyanide in any soil where it is allowed to grow for long periods. Therefore, the only soil problem to consider, in his opinion, was that of fertility which, he implied, was fairly simple to adjust.¹⁷ According to several of the plantation people, however, there were considerable problems with the soil and one suspects that the long-term effects of banana cultivation on soil fertility in this area have not been adequately studied. Ronald Senfftlenben, whose company, Agrichim, is a major owner of the Nassif plantation in Mungo, found that nothing he could do in the way of disease-control improved yields on the plantation. He then turned to adjustments in the fertilizer treatment being applied and found results were much better.¹⁸

John Robertson found himself with a similar situation on CDC land in the Southwest Province. The land he manages in Ekona has been in bananas off and on since the area was first cultivated by the Germans. Part of the land is old volcanic soils, and part of it new, the latter being considerably more fertile and less mixed with clay than the former. And yet even on new volcanic soils, the fertility of the soil is not producing the yields it should do and by 1981 John Robertson asked the Ekona research station to look into the effects of long-term banana cultivation on soil fertility.¹⁹

It was Ronald Senfftlenben's contention that the fertilizer treatments used to date have been inappropriate to the soil and have been used in an inflexible formula by at least all the private European managers in Mungo.²⁰ According to Lassoudière there is no detailed soil map of the banana growing areas of Mungo, and so there is no way of knowing whether the fertilizer applications are indeed appropriate.²¹ Such maps do exist for much of the land in Ekona, in Anglophone Cameroon, but these were done at least twenty years ago and there is no recent research to show how cultivation patterns may have changed soil fertility and structure, at least not until John Robertson's request to the Ekona research station.

What both the problems of Sigatoka disease and soil fertility suggest is a lack of timely research by scientists in the area as well as a rather insouciant attitude on the part of the planters, who often

failed to take a long-term view of land and crop management. By several accounts, planters were able to earn sizeable profits through much of the 1970s. It is, therefore, not surprising that they felt no compulsion to produce a greater quantity of better quality fruit which was not yet required. Their short-term perspective was mirrored in the behaviour of the research station at Nyombé which does not seem to have anticipated and tackled in timely relevant detail the kind of operational problems planters were bound to confront. One also senses a lack of pragmatic interaction between planters and the research station. There is, for example, more than a suggestion from planters that IRA's research was often directed away from planters' problems to field trials of competing products, none of which was clearly superior. Since, however, researchers may have had financial interests in one product over another, it was to their advantage to spend time "proving" the benefits of one treatment. As rumour, there is no way to test the validity of such a claim. That the rumour exists, however, points to an unhealthy estrangement from and suspicion of the research station by the planters who should instead be exploiting the scientific group as a valuable managerial tool.

Irrigation

The failure to invest in constructive operations research has been a failure of one kind of long-term capital investment, but the responsibility for that failure lies in part in the way IRA has chosen to define its role in the industry and in part with the banana growers themselves who do not seem to have pushed for more relevant research. The other failure of capital expenditure at the level of field production has been in irrigation. Irrigation was not a serious problem in the 1950s when the market was less competitive but by 1982 it had become a necessity. Here, however, the decision to put in irrigation or not has been made by the individual planters themselves. In this respect, it is of interest to note that those plantations operating within a parastatal structure are the only ones to have made any effort to put in irrigation. The private planters, both French and Cameroonian, have no irrigation at all.

That irrigation makes a difference to productivity is undisputed. It can also make a considerable difference to profits as the best time to sell bananas in Europe is during the European spring and summer

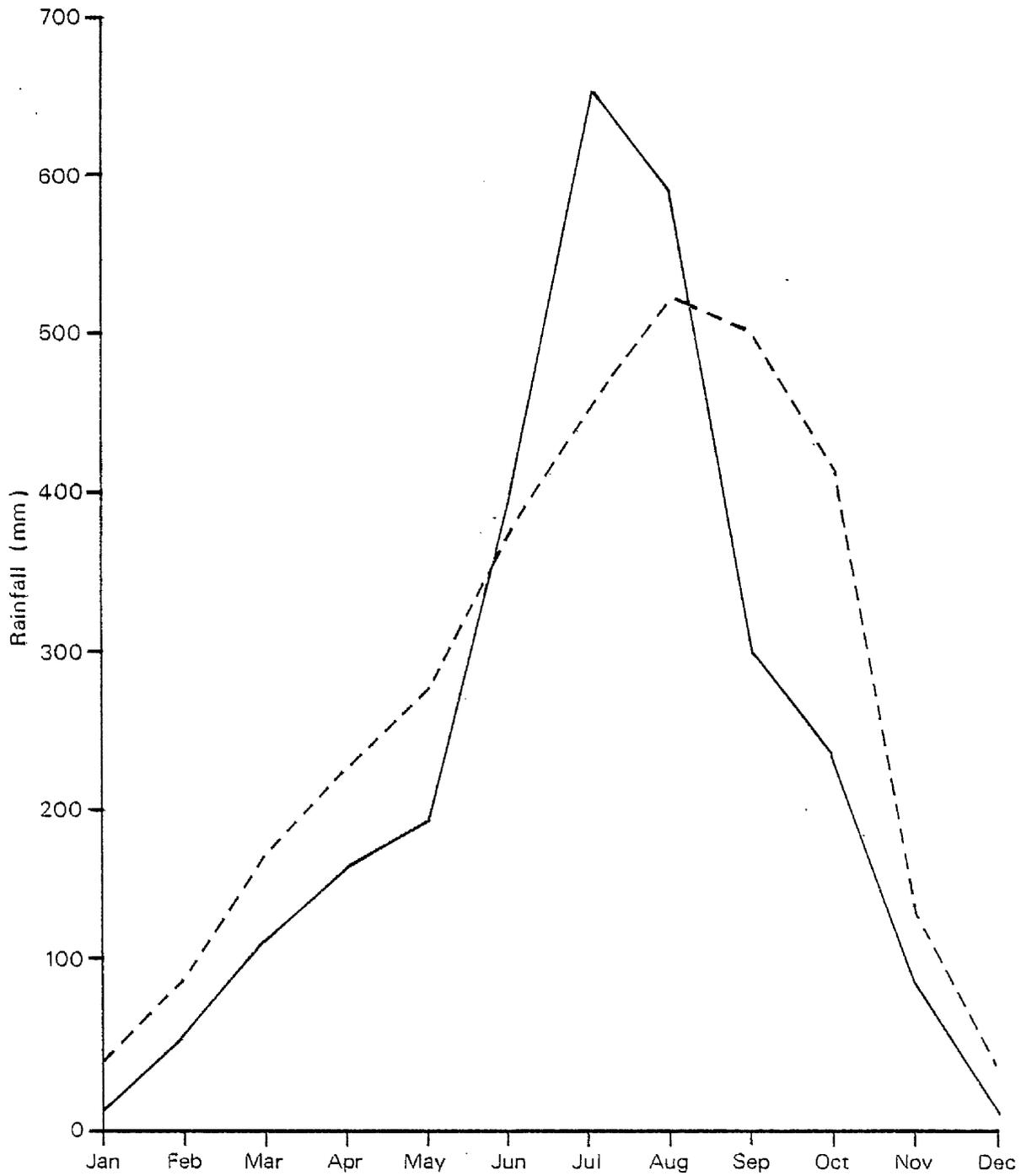
months.²² Unfortunately, it is exactly during these months that Cameroon banana production is at its lowest.²³

The dry season in Cameroon in the banana zone begins in November and starts to break only in March and April (see Figure 12). Because of the dry weather, the growth rate of the banana plants is much lower and the plants are considerably weaker. They are also less resistant to disease and to the windstorms which usually accompany the first rains. Moreover, because of the lower growth rate, the leaf coverage is reduced and, at the first rains of the season, weeds spring up in the sunshine between the banana plants and further slow down development. Where the plants have been inadequately treated against Sigatoka disease or any of the other pests, such as weevils and nematodes, they offer even less resistance to any sudden shock. The plant which has not had enough water, with a bulb riddled with the tunnels of weevils, and with roots partially destroyed by nematodes is more likely to be pushed over in a sudden stormy wind and will produce fruit of a lower than standard size even if the plant remains standing. Taken altogether, the full effects of the dry season accumulate to produce more than usually substandard fruit at precisely the moment when the market is most open and lucrative.

The value of irrigation has been known for a long time and, in the late 1950s, Elders and Fyffes had installed a system on their Likomba plantations. This has since been moved by John Robertson to Molyko, one of the last CDC estates in bananas. Together with the partial irrigation of the OCB estates and the complete irrigation of IRA's demonstration forty hectares, these works represent all the irrigation that exists. On a rough calculation, 750 out of a total of 5500 hectares in bananas are irrigated -- an insufficient fourteen percent.

None of these irrigation systems is complete, however, with the exception of the minor acreage at IRA. In the case of the CDC, senior management at Bota has not changed its long term policy of eliminating bananas from the crops under their increasingly vast management, and does not plan to continue in bananas for much longer. Their involvement rests on the repeated request of the President of the country for the CDC to stay in the trade.²⁴ That being the case, it is not surprising that the CDC does not want to make any long-term

Figure 12. AVERAGE MONTHLY RAINFALL IN TIKO AND LOUM



———— Tiko (Anglophone Cameroonian); 25-27 years of records; 1949-8

- - - - - Loum (Mungo); 34-46 years of records; 1936-81

Source: Climatologie et Statistiques, Direction de la Météorologie Nationale, Douala, Cameroon.

commitment to irrigation that would only be required for bananas. They would prefer to save the money and look forward to the conversion of the CDC banana land to simpler tree crops.

The OCB's dilemma has been somewhat different. The Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane was set up in 1964 to help in the conversion of smallholders' farms from the Gros Michel to Poyo banana varieties. By 1967, these efforts had failed and an alternative plan was drawn up for developing industrial banana plantations on blocks of consolidated smallholder land. It would seem that in the early years of these plantations' there was never sufficient investment money available to establish the plantations at a profitable working level.

There are also accusations of corruption and diversion of funds to private pockets that should have gone into plantation development. Moreover, the organisation has been chronically plagued by an inability to synchronise the arrival of government financing with the exigent and rigorous schedules of banana plantation management. Thus, for example, during a week when fertilizers, or pesticides needed to be applied it might be that none of these products was available because there had been no money to buy them two weeks before. Or, as one planter expressed it, the plane, the fungicide and the pilot might all be ready, but there would be a shortage of petrol for the plane and so no treatment was possible. With this kind of systemic mismanagement and bad timing, the OCB has never been able to generate any profit from its plantations and has continued to rely on the rather uneven delivery of government money from Yaoundé just for operating expenses. The resulting hand-to-mouth financing seems to have left little room for consideration of long-term investments based on savings from earnings or on loans that might be mortgaged against a good record of production.

The situation of the French planters is of a different order. Most of those still working on privately-held French plantations in Mungo do not believe that any of these company plantations will survive. Although every Cameroon government official interviewed during this study denied strenuously that there was subtle, piecemeal attempt to force the French companies to leave Mungo, no Frenchman working in the area felt that his position was secure. Some thought they might last another five years, others perhaps ten or twenty, but

the general sentiment was that the time left to them in Cameroon was really very short.

This attitude of living always on the edge of departure seems to have originated in the de facto civil war of Mungo that began in the late 1950s and lasted for five to ten years, deteriorating into unpredictable brigandage during the late 1960s. Many of the French planters who had been active in the trade during the 1950s left at this time.

For those who remained and survived the financial losses of both the war and the conversion to Poyo and boxing stations, the 1970s offered spectacular returns. It was during this period, according to Ronald Senfftlenben of Agrichim, that money could have been set aside for capital development.²⁵ Most of the earnings, however, were sent to France, and some may also have gone to repay debts incurred during the disruption of the civil war and the conversion to Poyo. That money was not put into long-term investment and that operating expenses were repeatedly short-changed reflects the attitude of a people who did not expect to reap any of the rewards of durable investments or be able to pass on these benefits as they saw fit.

Instead, there is a belief among French planters that Cameroon's export agriculture is going to be increasingly managed by parastatal organisations along the lines of the CDC in Anglophone Cameroon. There is, therefore, no point in investing in a plantation which might well be nationalised without sufficient compensation being paid to the owner. Nor is there much faith that, once nationalised, the value of the plantations would be maintained. Instead, there is a fear that equipment would deteriorate, routine sprayings would be missed, and the whole level of care and management of the property would dramatically decline. It is difficult to believe that such fears are completely justified. Yet it seems to be the combined worries of being dispossessed and of seeing their plantations unable to survive their own time that has encouraged managers and owners in a radical short-term exploitation of many of the private French plantations in Mungo.

That Cameroonian growers, who are clearly planning to stay in the country, have not invested in irrigation is due to slightly different

circumstances. Like the European planters, they were badly affected by the civil war of 1959-60, and even more so by the decline of the Gros Michel. Of those planters who survived and who were not incorporated into the OCB, none of them controls more than seventy-five hectares of land, the average being somewhere closer to fifteen or twenty hectares for each farmer. It is doubtful whether any holding that size in Cameroon can be earning its way from the banana crop alone and one suspects that a number of hidden subsidies have kept these banana plantations going. The single most important form of subsidy that has maintained these more marginal producers in the trade exists in the way banana shipping and sales accounts are kept.

One of the legacies of the transition from the Gros Michel to Poyo was a decision made around 1963 that each planter's earnings would be based on the amount of fruit shipped and not on the actual fruit he sold in Europe. Thus, the lower quality fruit from the more marginal producers was sold with the fruit of better growers and a single quantity of earnings was then distributed according to the various proportions of the shipment that had been contributed by each planter. This arrangement meant that lower quality producers could share the earnings of better quality fruit and, in effect, acted as a subsidy to the smaller and less professional growers.

It is also argued, though not proven, that many of the agricultural supplies intended for the OCB plantations find their way on to private fields, and some growers, both French and Cameroonian, are suspected of offering either stolen or rejected fruit from other plantations as their own. Both practices, if actually occurring, would tend to minimise the real losses of marginal holdings and further obscure their real viability. A third factor, which may be of considerable importance, is that many of the Cameroonian producers have financial interests in several different areas and the earnings from the non-banana operations may be pooled with those of the bananas in such a way as to obscure the real accountability of the banana plantation. Of the Cameroonian banana planters in Mungo, one has a small trucking business, another is a full-time government bureaucrat and party secretary for Mungo, a third has a hotel in Yaoundé and a coffee plantation and factory in Nkongsamba to the north, and Michel Foyet, who has twenty hectares, is also head of IRA's agricultural research station at Nyombé.

It is impossible for an outsider to know the real profitability of any of the private holdings, large or small. What is true, is that for two operations which are less than one hundred hectares, the IRA demonstration acreage (forty hectares) at Nyombé and la Compagnie des Bananes' sixty hectares at Penja, the latter is admittedly unprofitable in today's market²⁶ and the former, IRA, is in a position to benefit from the Cameroon government's research budget as well as aid from its former parent and founder, IRAF in Paris. That being the case, it is very likely that the bananas on similarly-sized Cameroonian holdings do not earn their expenses, let alone find the finance for an investment like irrigation. For many of the smallholders, in fact, one of their first steps in developing from marginal smallholders to more professional producers has been to borrow money from their sales agent to set up their own packing stations, thereby avoiding dependence on the inferior government packing stations at the railway. As these debts have often not yet been cleared, and are considerably lower than the cost of irrigation would be, it is likely that Cameroonian failure to invest on such a scale is based on hard economic fact.

Packing Stations and Shipping

It has always been true that field production was only partially responsible for the quality of the fruit that reached the retail market. The balance lay firmly with the handling and shipping. Today these factors are just as important -- if not more so -- than they ever were at the beginning of the trade. And, as has been true of other factors, Cameroon's standard of achievement is considerably lower than it should be for their exports to be competitive in the 1980s.

The responsibility for this state of affairs and for the failure of the industry generally to modernise its handling and shipping is widely dispersed. The Mungo planters are in control of events only until the fruit has been boxed and is ready to be loaded onto the train going to the docks at Bonaberi. The CDC fruit stays under plantation management a while longer, being sent down by lorry from Ekona to Bonaberi because there is no train that runs into Bonaberi from that area of Anglophone Cameroon. Either way, it is up to the planters to see that the fruit is out, graded, disinfected and packed

with the greatest efficiency and the least amount of bruising to the fruit. As a planter's responsibility, the packing stations show considerable variation in design and quality and supervision. Some of this variation is a reflection of the amount of capital available for investment in a packing shed. The balance is more accurately a managerial problem and, therefore, one notices that the standard achieved depends heavily first on the individual supervisor in charge and secondly on the style of the management of each plantation.

The accompanying photographs in Figure 13 provide a rough idea of the many small ways in which the work of the packing station can vary from one planter to another. Only two stations are shown here: 1) the OCB station at Manjo and 2) Maurius Talla's packing station near Loum Chantier. Both the private French plantations and the CDC plantations will have slightly different arrangements again, but the two represented here provide a very important comparison between what the smallholder can afford to achieve, as represented by M. Talla's operation, and what even a badly-managed industrial plantation like the OCB aims to accomplish in its arrangements.

There are a number of similarities in the two stations. Both hang the fruit by the stem so the hands can be cut off and graded. Both also have a series of three separate tanks for sorting the fruit, washing it and finally disinfecting it. In addition, both have drying tables at the end of the tanks: round swivelling tables at the OCB packing station and rectangular fixed tables at Talla's station.

What is clearly different about the two stations is the scale of the operation. Talla's station has only one set of tanks and tables which are about half the size of the tanks used by the OCB where four or five rows of tanks can be operated simultaneously. It should also be noted that Talla's station has no running water. Instead, the water is collected from the roof and run into the tanks along the gutters shown on the left of the photograph. Finally, something which is not visible, is the level of supervision of the work. Partly because of size, and partly because of IRA influence, the OCB station has several people specifically charged with overseeing the quality of the work; at Talla's station no one seemed to be fulfilling this role.

Figure 13. PACKING STATIONS OF AN OCB PLANTATION AND A MUNGO SMALLHOLDER, 1982



OCB packing station



Smallholder's packing station

What the photographs do not show is that neither station meets the standards of packing equipment and supervision of work which are normally achieved in the other franc-zone countries. While, for example, the OCB station has provision for running water into the tanks, there is no equipment for circulating the water in the tanks, either to keep the water clean or, in the case of the disinfectant tank, to make sure that the chemical disinfectant is well mixed and not sinking to the bottom where it cannot affect the bananas floating on the surface. Nor is there any provision for cooling the fruit once it is packed in containers. This means that any delay in the shipping schedule exposes the packed bananas to high heat which encourages ripening and thereby reduces the freshness of the fruit on its arrival in Europe.

One could go on criticising the standards of the two packing stations and the work which is done there. The actual packing, however, is only part of the problem of the evacuation of Cameroon bananas in 1982. It should also be mentioned, although there is not enough space to elaborate here, that the train running from Nkongsmaba to the port at Bonaberi can no longer maintain the kind of schedule that the evacuation of bananas requires. Despite a concerted effort in many other areas of the country to both upgrade and introduce rail transport, the Nkongsmaba to Bonaberi line has not been substantially improved or even properly maintained since the 1950s. The subsequent deterioration in service -- both in terms of scheduling and in the quality of goods wagons used to transport the fruit -- has been one of the most significant causes for the decline in the quality of Cameroon fruit from Mungo. Here it should be noted that the generally higher quality of fruit from the CDC Ekona plantations in Anglophone Cameroon is widely attributed to the fact that the CDC trucks its own fruit down to the port and does not have to depend on anything so unreliable as the Nkongsmaba to Bonaberi train.

Similarly, the ships, which during the 1950s were either supplied regularly by Elders and Fyffes in the British Cameroons or by Chargeurs Réunis in the French Cameroons, are no longer arriving regularly, or departing directly to Europe, or even sailing with the proper refrigeration units to transport bananas. Instead, the trade is depending on the uncertain commissioning of ships which are hired one at a time to transport bananas to France after, in some cases, arriving in West Africa to deliver fish.

There is, in fact, no better illustration of the need for disciplined, vertically integrated management in the banana trade. Briefly, the chain of events that led to a decline in shipping began with the widespread failure of planters to contain Sigatoka disease by regular treatment. This decline in production and in the health of the plantations was so serious that the OCB management decided to uproot a large proportion of their estates and replant. The temporary loss of production that this represented meant that the planters in Cameroon were no longer producing enough fruit to fill a ship that could then afford to sail directly to France. The previously predictable shippers for the Cameroon trade discontinued carrying bananas on a regular basis and in the meantime planters have been forced to depend on the much inferior service of ships unsuited to the banana trade. The loss of income to the planters that this represents -- particularly if it is to be a state of affairs which continues for very long -- is enough to destroy completely the viability of the trade.

What is striking about all the "technical" failures of the Cameroon banana trade in 1982 is that they do not seem to be due to a lack of understanding about the technical requirements of the trade. Instead, the failure seems to be caused by the absence of a coherent, unified management which is able to coordinate the many pieces of the central chain in such a way that the different producers and participants can each operate at their most efficient level. Exactly how that management has failed is discussed in the following section.

Managerial Structure of 1982

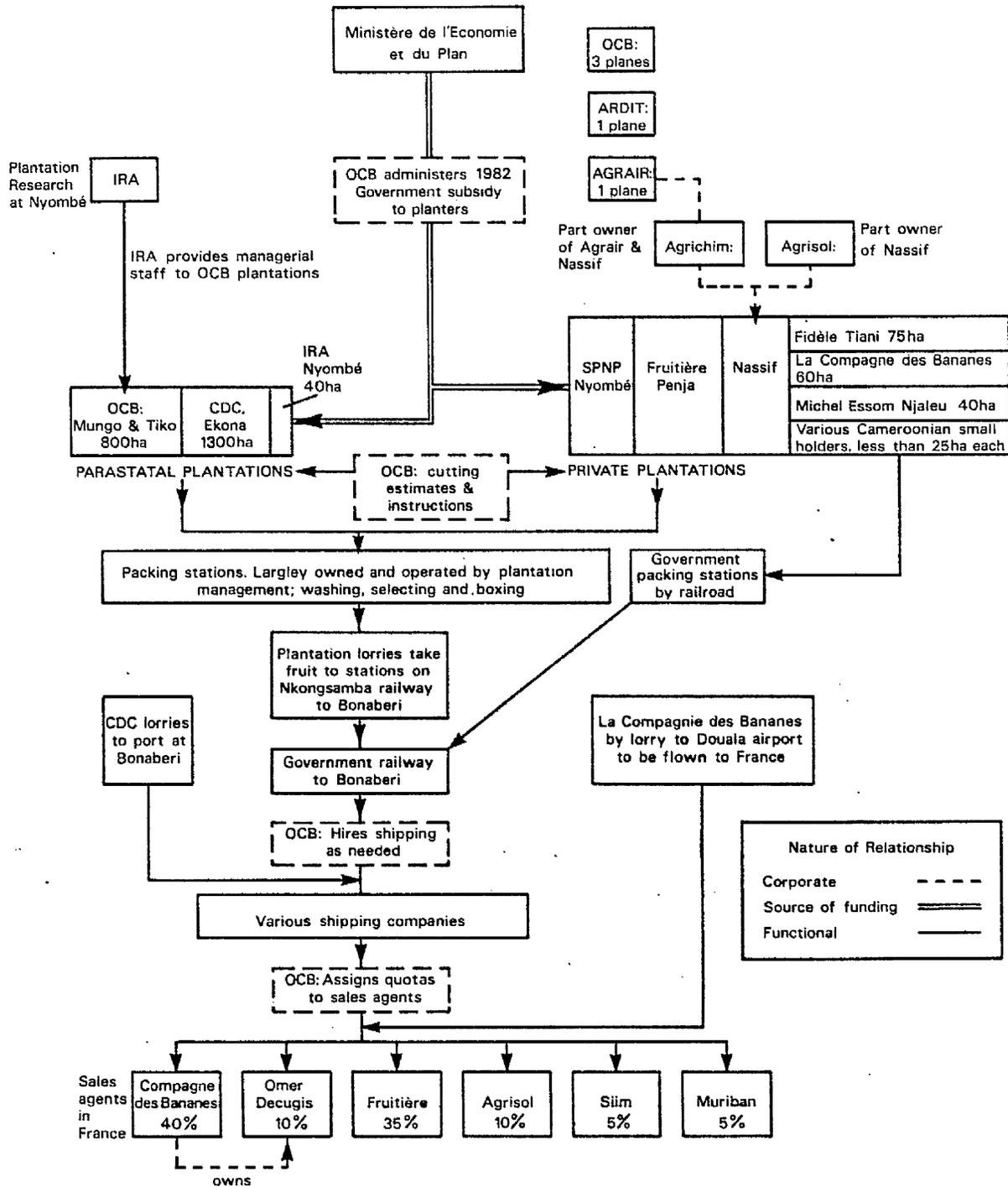
The management of Cameroon's banana business in 1982 is the direct descendant of the managerial structure of the Mungo trade in the 1950s. Despite the continued participation of the Cameroons Development Corporation as a producer, none of the triangular balances that had existed between the CDC, the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, and Elders and Fyffes survived reunification. Instead, the CDC plantations have been grafted on to the Mungo business as a slightly anomalous, but mostly successful, outsider. Their status in Mungo does not have the same force within the 1982 Cameroon banana trade that it did during the 1950s industry in the British Cameroons; although they remain the dominant economic force in the Southwest

Province of Anglophone Cameroon, very little of that prestige influences their position in the Mungo-based banana trade. Moreover, since the mid-1960s and the pull-out of Elders and Fyffes from Cameroon, the trade has been almost exclusively with the French market, a fact which further strengthens the dominance of the Francophone management of the trade, and the weakening of Anglophone elements.

There have, however, been several critical mutations in the Francophone management since the 1950s, as well as some rather unfortunate continuities with the earlier managerial structures. One of the most obvious continuities of affairs is the continued pluralism of participation, as shown in Figure 14, "Managerial Structure of the Cameroon Banana Trade, May 1982". Although the greater number of cooperatives and expatriate planters is gone, there are still more than a dozen planters functioning with a fair amount of independence from each other and representing three very different styles of ownership and management: parastatal, French and Cameroonian.

Moreover, since the destruction of the Syndicat's airplanes during the civil war, there have been three separate operations formed for the purpose of providing aerial treatment: Ardit, Agrair and most recently a three-plane service set up by the OCB with some new government subsidy funds. A similar multiplication has taken place among the sales agents. Where it used to be in the 1960s that la Compagnie des Bananes handled ninety percent of all sales including most of the expatriate planters' production -- and all of that coming from the CDC and OCB -- there are now five separate companies operating. There has been a comparable, although in principal more temporary, multiplication of the number of shipping companies ever since the trade has been obliged to take whatever shipping is available. Thus, ironically, just when the number of producers and volume of production is at one of its lowest points since the Second World War, there are more auxiliary, service organisations than have ever before attended the banana trade of Cameroon. There is a logical inefficiency in these arrangements which have grown up haphazardly over the past few years and which, one fears, are not easily corrected.

Figure 14. MANAGERIAL STRUCTURE OF THE CAMEROON BANANA TRADE, MAY 1982



During the 1950s, several arrangements in Mungo served as a counterweight to the pluralistic nature of affairs. There was, however inefficiently organised, the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers. The regular meetings of the Syndicat and its defined objective of serving the interests of the whole industry provided a forum for the discussion of problems and an important lobby that formally represented the trade to outside interests. Beyond that, there was what appears to have been a fairly effective informal network of arrangements. This functioned largely on the basis of overlapping French commercial interests and a small rather in-grown social structure among Europeans that provided easy informal contact between different segments of the chain of activities from field to final sale. Finally, there were the efforts of la Compagnie des Bananes who, like Elders and Fyffes in British Cameroons, managed to coordinate the routine efficiencies of shipping estimates and cutting schedules to the satisfaction of most all of the planters.

None of these arrangements has survived into the present. The Syndicat never fully recovered from the Mungo smallholders' strike of 1959 (as discussed in Chapter 5) and, although many attempts were made to substitute various other organisations more suitable to the post-independence and post-strike climate, nothing was ever created that had as much stability or authority as the Syndicat. The informal network of French interests lasted much longer, and even survived the creation of the OCB whose terms of reference have always been broad enough to include the management of the whole trade. During the early years of the OCB it seems to have been informally understood that so long as the trade was able to make money, the OCB would worry more about its own plantations than about the coordination of the whole chain of activities. That tacit understanding became more difficult to maintain as the banana industry became less profitable and recently it has completely broken down. The OCB had a new director appointed in 1982 who has been more determined than the last administrator that the OCB should take on all of its mandated responsibilities. As one planter expressed it, the previous director knew everything about the business but did nothing, while the present director knows nothing, but is willing to take on everything. Unfortunately, his activities have not earned him much praise from any of the planters.

The position of la Compagnie des Bananes has not been maintained either. While the OCB has abrogated some of the functions which had fallen to the company, they were much more seriously affected by the arrival of Fruitière, who not only managed to take a third of their business as sales agents, but also acquired the management of the Nassif plantation which had been under the administration of la Compagnie des Bananes since the 1930s when the land was first converted from a timber clearing to a plantation. The loss of Nassif, one of the largest plantations in Mungo, combined with the loss of their command of Cameroon banana sales in France, not only demoralised the company staff in Cameroon, but also reduced the company's prestige from that of a company that had always been a leading figure in the trade to a group with historical importance only. Although they carry a certain diplomatic weight in the trade and are widely respected, they are no longer in a pivotal structural position and have thereby lost much of their force. In the process, much of the coherence they brought to the business has also been lost.

By law, the gap left by the decline in these arrangements should now be filled by the OCB. One of the earliest decrees written in late 1964 to set up the OCB, stipulated in its first articles, albeit rather vaguely, that the organisation was to represent, coordinate and defend the professional interests of the banana industry.²⁷ Much of the balance of its definition at that time, however, was taken up with particular problems of the period: e.g. the search for new markets after the loss of access to Great Britain for West Cameroonian fruit, and the conversion to Poyo, here referred to rather vaguely as the "plan de rénovation bananière". It is also clear in looking at this 1964 decree that the organisation was originally conceived as a planters' group, much in the same way the Syndicat had been during the 1950s. Article 4 called for a Comité de Gestion (management committee) of eight planters' representatives and 5 government bureaucrats from one service to another. While this did not go so far as to include, as did the structure of the 1950s Syndicat, any representation of the shipping lines or sales agents, it still weighted the balance in favour of the planters and represented a variety of important interests through the government services.

Where the 1964 statutory definition of the OCB again departed from the Syndicat, however, was in the organisation's firm links to

the central government administration and to the President's office. Thus, where the Syndicat's membership consisted of nearly all those involved in the trade and the organisation was managed by a sub-committee of elected representatives who, in turn, hired a full time manager, the OCB had no provisions for the total representation of all participants in the trade, other than through the Comité de Gestion, the mechanism of whose appointments was left disappointingly vague.²⁸

Nor was the day-to-day administration of the OCB to be left in the hands of the planters or their representatives. Instead, the organisation was, and is, administered by an administrative director assisted by a technical director, both of whom are presidential appointees.²⁹ This close tie to the government was further reinforced by the presence on the Comité de Gestion of "un Commissaire du Gouvernement" who, acting with the approval of the Ministry of the National Economy which had to confirm his actions, could veto any measure proposed by the Comité de Gestion.³⁰ Finally, the OCB was to be funded by a combination of a tax on banana exports and government subsidies and grants, with some income to be generated rather vaguely from "la rémunération de services rendus".³¹ In many ways, this financing of the OCB largely through government money has only weakened the organisation and with it the trade. As one informant put it, "the banana has no time for politics",³² and yet clearly under this arrangement many ordinary operational decisions could become politicised or at least subject to expensive bureaucratic delays. It also, together with the changes in the composition of the administrative committee, removed the organisation further from the planters' control, and in so doing seems to have made the organisation less responsive to the needs of the trade than it is to the requirements of bureaucratic survival.

In spite of these problems, the OCB was clearly in a position to fill the need for an organisation which could survey the needs of the whole trade, represent those needs to the government, and organise the solution of those problems which exceeded the capacity of any individual participant in the industry. This view of their role was further strengthened with a 1968 law under which the OCB was specifically charged with the modernisation and conversion of the banana culture, as well as with the campaign against disease and

finally with the "organisation des circuit commerciaux et de la profession bananière".³³ This trend was well exemplified by an Arrêté dated May 13, 1975 by which the OCB was given the authority to assign quotas to sales agents involved in the commercialisation of Cameroonian bananas.³⁴

Notwithstanding the clear legal basis for the OCB's role, they are widely acknowledged to have failed at nearly all the tasks assigned to them by law and position. This is, no doubt, in large part due to the difficulty any state organisation has when confronted with time-constrained commercial tasks. Nor can it be ignored that none of the administrative directors of the OCB had had previous experience in the banana export trade, although some of them have been clearly very able at picking up a basic knowledge and understanding of the trade. But it should also be remembered that the OCB was only created four to five years after the smallholders' strike in 1959 and the first great difficulties of both the Mungo and Anglophone banana trades. In the interim between 1959 and 1964, many attempts were made to reorganise the banana trade from within, none of which was successful. It was this fact, as much as any other, which forced the direct participation of the government and the close bureaucratic control evidenced in the 1964 decree and it should not be overlooked in any criticism of the OCB, legion though their problems may be.

It should also be remembered that when the OCB was finally set up, they were not in a position which was likely to endear them to the planters in Mungo. There is nothing written about the transfer of smallholder land to the OCB. But it followed an eight-year attempt under stress of a local guerilla war to modernise smallholdings, convert them to Poyo varieties and make them competitive in the 1960s. As is shown in Chapters 1 and 5 it is debatable whether this modernisation was possible even in the best of times, let alone in a period of severe social unrest. But the fact that the attempt was made repeatedly raised the hopes of farmers that some solution was possible that would allow them to remain as small independent producers. This hope was transformed by the second conversion plan of the OCB, which was not just a plan for changing over from the Gros Michel to Poyo, but involved the more traumatic change from smallholdings to industrial plantation. One senses that for many people the opportunity to give up their land for a promised regular income

was sufficient inducement to join the second OCB plan. This should not imply that those farmers holding land in sites chosen by the IRA design team had any particular choice in the matter, but it does mean that an otherwise bitter pill was made easier to swallow.

But that does not imply, either, that the plan was soundly endorsed by smallholders, and it is not inconceivable that it functioned in much the same way that the British enclosure acts did in creating an industrial working class from the rural population. Certainly, a number of smallholders became workers on the OCB plantation and others may have left the area entirely. What is also true, however, is that as long as the OCB is unable to meet the rental payments, the dissatisfaction of the smallholders grows; thus, during fieldwork in 1982 there were rumours of the desire to take the land back from the OCB.

If this problem of land may hold the seeds of any smallholder resentment of OCB, it is no less true that the organisation has not been greeted with open arms by the European planters. The trade, with all of its problems and in spite of heavy pressure from Cameroonian planters, has continued to rest largely in European hands. Thus, the OCB is inevitably a threat to European control. In this respect, it is of interest that one of the European planters characterised the OCB's actions as having "déresponsabilisés" the planters, which in turn enervated the planters to the point where they are now disinterested in looking after some of the critical points in their own affairs.

The OCB's acquisition of responsibilities is, however, not nearly so deeply resented as is their inability to carry out their acquired tasks with any efficacy. It is widely admitted among the planters that there is a need for some organising body to keep the many different tasks and timings of the banana industry well-coordinated. Nor is there much criticism that a state body like the OCB should be the one to accomplish that coordination. What is resented, and resented universally by European, CDC and Cameroonian planters alike, is the failure of the OCB to manage the industry wisely and efficiently.

In this respect, no action of the OCB's has been so carefully watched as their handling of a 1982 government subsidy for the industry. As was pointed out in one interview, the subsidy is designed to support the planters while they recover from a fall in production due to the untimely mismanagement of Sigatoka disease control. It is a large sum of money, and to the planters who have been running up debts for the past two years it is extremely important if they are to survive at all. There was, therefore, much praise for the OCB's decision to buy large stocks of fertiliser and pesticides to be placed at the disposal of the planters who no longer had the operating capital to buy such supplies for themselves. On the other hand, the fact that the OCB chose to invest in three new aeroplanes, when two companies already existed, was considered foolish and wasteful. So was a rather expensive refurbishing of the offices in Douala and the acquisition of a new fleet of Suzuki jeeps for the OCB plantations. The fear among planters is that money which should have been directly subsidising private planters' operations is instead going into the public image of the OCB itself.

The OCB has also taken over the responsibility for arranging shipping, where their performance has been no less bleak. La Compagnie des Bananes, in fear of losing all their limited production on slow ships, slow trains and the general inefficiency of fruit evacuation, decided to start flying fruit out of the country, which is more expensive than shipping and only highlights how much the mismanagement of the transport has affected the profitability of the trade. For example, on one occasion, the OCB had notified planters of the arrival of two ships, had said nothing while the cutting was done, and only when it was finished did they announce that the ships were no longer due to arrive. Only when the planters complained were new ships brought in, but the delay in their arrival meant that nearly the entire shipment was too ripe to be sent.

It has been episodes like that which give planters today little confidence in the OCB, and yet with the decline of all other formal and informal managerial structures, there is nothing left but the OCB to accomplish the very vital organisation of the trade. It is this dilemma combined with all the other weaknesses of the business in 1982 which most perplexes the industry. Nor is it plain, in a country where parastatal operations are more and more powerful and in which

criticism of the state and government is not regarded lightly but as an incipient form of rebellion, how the industry is going to reconcile the position of the OCB with the exigencies of the banana trade. It is not impossible that more and more planters will simply give up on the trade. But there are pressures coming from the delicately balanced French market which make abandonment an uncomfortable option. Whether the government, having endorsed and supported the OCB, and no doubt being under pressure from French diplomats to keep the trade alive, will continue to subsidise the banana crop remains to be seen. It is not impossible, but it is to be feared that subsidies without a reorganisation of the trade will only continue the pattern of wasteful inefficiency that has been responsible for many of the industry's failings in the past few years.

It is a tedious but essentially revealing process to look at the operational details of a failing export trade. While each inexpert and half-completed task can be explained on the grounds of its own particular failure, these many individual losses of competence suggest in sum a wider lack of confidence in the Cameroon banana business or its future. One cannot help but feel that this larger lack of confidence is due not just to the changing nature of the banana trade worldwide, but also to the particular local history of Mungo and Anglophone Cameroon in the post-independence period.

In a sense, however, both of these histories are now over and the industry needs to be reexamined on the basis of its fundamental advantages and disadvantages in order to postulate the future course of events. In the next, and final chapter, "Choices, 1982", we discuss some of the prospects for the future from the points of view of the government of Cameroon and the United Brands Company. It is hoped that in this discussion the many ideas presented in this thesis have been summarised and examined, not so much for their abstract qualities, but for what they imply for the Cameroon export banana trade of the 1980s, and for the local society and region on which that trade is based.

CHAPTER 7
CHOICES, 1982

Development is the process and direction of change over time; agricultural development is such a process as judged not only by the changing amount of a given commodity which is produced, but also by the transformation of the social structure upon which that production is based. In this thesis we have seen not an increase in banana production from the 1950s to 1982, but a decline in production. Moreover, that decline has been accompanied by a narrowing of the social base upon which banana production is founded. This has been caused in part by the slow elimination of smallholders from the trade, and in part by the loss of nearly all production from Anglophone Cameroon in the early years after reunification in 1962. These two factors have been further compounded by a growing and systemic mismanagement of the surviving elements of the business.

The loss of smallholders can largely be explained by the transformation in the worldwide nature of the trade. From being an easy, "goldrush" crop sold to a very tolerant and undersupplied post-war market, the banana has become in the 1980s a very industrial crop serving a highly competitive and limited market. Simultaneously, the elimination of production from Anglophone Cameroon was the economic consequence of first the political decision to reunify, and second the implementation of that decision in the process of reunification. Finally, the mismanagement of the surviving elements of the trade has resulted from many of the social contradictions inherent in the development of Mungo under French administration and which were most violently expressed in the civil war period of 1959-60.

The banana trade of Cameroon has now reached another turning point which resembles in many ways the crisis of 1959 and the early 1960s. It is a time when, if the trade is to continue, many of the fundamental questions about agricultural development, the export banana trade and the role of a multinational company, need to be

considered again, and it is the purpose of this chapter to go through that analysis.

In doing so, it is useful to compare the crisis of the late 1950s and early 1960s with the situation in 1982. In both periods, the trade had reached a point at which existing standards of production and export were no longer adequate for the demands of the European market. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the brunt of this incompatibility fell on the smallholders and some of the more traumatic features of that period concern the difficulties of the smallholders in coming to terms with the economic squeeze that confronted them. It was also possible in the early 1960s to define the weakness of the trade in terms of its adherence to the Gros Michel and the need to convert to the more resistant varieties. For this reason, the modernisation of the Mungo banana industry is almost always, throughout the 1960s and even now, referred to as the "Programme de Reconversion". This faith in the modernising properties of the Poyo variety was justified through the mid-1970s by a return to profitable business and economic well-being. The failure of the trade in 1982, however, is much more systemic and cannot be remedied by any straightforward technical manipulation comparable to the conversion from Gros Michel to Poyo varieties. Even if field production could be brought closer to the French market standard set by Antilles fruit, the degradation of the selection, packing and transportation sectors is serious enough to counteract many of the improvements that could be made on the agricultural side. In this respect, the crisis of 1982 is fundamentally different from that of the 1960s.

The danger of the business collapsing has been widely recognised since the middle of 1980 when Michel Essom Njaleu, as president of the other otherwise moribund Syndicat, distributed a five-page summary of the state of the industry and of the consequences of its failure.¹ Although a number of reports had already^{been} circulated on various aspects of the industry, this was the first to speak openly of the destruction of the trade and the first to have reached the office of President Ahidjo. Within a year, the management of the Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane (OCB) had been replaced and substantial subsidies from the government were being forwarded to the industry.

Despite the spectre of the industry failing, there has been no thinking done as of May 1982 on what might follow. This next section, therefore, considers some of the choices that are now open. In doing so, it has been decided to argue first from the perspective of the government of Cameroon with its responsibilities for the wider interests of the country, and second from the perspective of la Compagnie des Bananes and United Brands as an international business which has been involved in the trade since it began. The kinds of choices facing the other participants are either discussed in the context of these two or, in the case of the private firms and individuals, resemble the choices faced by la Compagnie des Bananes. What is true of all those currently involved in the banana industry, is that until the government makes the fundamental decision on whether or not to stay in the export banana trade and how to do so, no other participant can clearly see what his options might be.

Cameroon Government

In reviewing the future of the banana trade of Cameroon, the government will also be deciding the nature of the development of Mungo for the next twenty or thirty years. Most of the banana crop comes from Mungo with only a small OCB plantation in the Tiko Plain and the CDC estates in Ekona in Anglophone Cameroon. The OCB Tiko plantation could easily be absorbed by existing CDC operations while the Cameroons Development Corporation would in fact prefer to put the Ekona land into simpler crops such as rubber and oil palm. Thus it is the future of the banana trade and the development of Mungo which are the key issues here. In considering these two issues, there are several questions which arise. One of the first returns to the central dilemma of this thesis, namely the conflict between the commercial pressures to depend on an international industrial style of plantation agriculture and the local social pressures coming from a long tradition of diversified smallholder agriculture.

One could argue that in the case of Mungo this question has already been resolved through the creation of the OCB plantations. Yet the memory of the "troubles" in Mungo is still too recent for the government to feel confident that smallholder discontent is at an end. There is also always the possibility that disagreements could

again surface if the OCB plantations fail to compensate Mungo land holders punctually for the territory now incorporated in the plantations. There might also be objections if it is eventually decided that Cameroon would be wiser to drop out of the banana trade, in which case land holders could presumably ask to have their land returned to them. More fundamentally, there are basic questions of social values and organisation involved. Since the 1930s, Mungo has been a pluralistic immigrant society containing social forms and values inherited from several African and European cultures. To the extent that industrial plantation agriculture has been practiced in Mungo it has been a largely European phenomenon. Given the very good and necessary possibility that European management is going to be increasingly withdrawn from Cameroon and from the plantations in Mungo, is it, therefore, advisable to continue with plantations? Or would a more enduring form of development evolve from a pattern of smallholdings that might come closer to reflecting Cameroonian habits and values?

In many respects, this question poses a false dichotomy. As we have seen, the history of Mungo in the past fifty years has been the history of plantations, around which most of the present population has gathered, either as workers or smallholders or a mixture of both. The plantations in Mungo are, therefore, a feature of the landscape which is by now taken for granted. It is argued by some that without the salaries coming from the plantations, the quality of life and in particular the quality of food eaten in Mungo would decline. While the women are still managing "chop farms" to raise local foods for the family and occasionally for sale, the men are working on the plantations and using the money to pay for "luxuries" like meat and eggs and clothes.²

It can be argued, in fact, that the relationship of the smallholdings and the plantations in Mungo is as much one of mutual dependence as it is of conflict. One could say that the small farms subsidise the plantations by providing food that does not, therefore, have to be paid out of wages which can then be kept low.* On the

* (As of Spring 1982, workers were earning about 15,000 CFA or £30 per month.)

other hand, if one considers that the centre of a family's life is in fact the farm, then the plantation earnings enable a family to prolong the viability of a marginal holding which by itself cannot support the family. Without microeconomic studies at family level in Mungo, it is impossible to know what the plantations mean for workers, smallholders and their families. It should be remembered, however, that when the smallholders went on strike in 1959, they were not initially asking for the dismantling of the plantations but for the chance to maintain the kind of smallholder economic growth that the banana boom had offered. When that became impossible, the OCB plantation alternative was accepted with relatively little protest.

The Cameroon government's Fifth Five Year Plan for the Agricultural Sector, published in 1981, places its emphasis on "Integrated Rural Development" and seems to be imagining development as the process of transforming the economy of pure African villages.³ It does not directly address the problems of those regions where both African and European styles of agriculture exist side by side, as they do in Mungo. As a result, the Fifth Plan does not confront the kinds of dichotomies and interdependencies one finds in Mungo and elsewhere. The Plan does, however, open with a summary of the results of the last Five Year Plan which chose to emphasize both the role of export agriculture and of "agro-industrial complexes". One of the top four priorities of the Fourth Plan is given on the first page of the 1981 report: "Procurer des devises pour l'acquisition de biens d'équipement et de consommation que le pays ne peut produire." This is followed in the next paragraph by a list of seven more specifically agricultural objectives, the first of which is: "La création et l'extension des grandes plantations modernes et des complexes agro-industriels."⁴

This emphasis of the Fourth Plan on industrial agriculture and by implication its ability to produce foreign exchange earnings, is not made in the Fifth Plan, but it is also not specifically contradicted. More importantly, as of 1982, the Littoral and Southwest Provinces were showing signs of the continued expansion of plantation agriculture, particularly of oil palm and rubber. There is, therefore, in addition to the government's more recent support for "integrated rural development" and the advancement of village

agriculture, considerable continuing development of industrial plantations.

Given, therefore, that such plantations already exist in Mungo, it is unlikely that these plantations will be eliminated even if the banana industry collapses in the next six months or a year. The plantations are an accepted part of the Mungo economy and government policy supports the development of industrial agriculture. What one does find, particularly around the CDC in Anglophone Cameroon, is a recent emphasis on smallholder participation in industrial schemes. These are, for the most part, projects based on rubber and oil palm in which an existing industrial installation -- for processing rubber or producing palm oil -- contracts to receive the raw material grown by smallholders on their own farms. Such a scheme is designed to reduce the dichotomy between plantations and smallholders, and to integrate the two systems. While the same problems of quality standards, disease control and soil fertility that affect bananas also affect products like oil palm and rubber, the greater differences between smallholder production and plantation production of these latter crops can be minimised through industrial processing. It is also true that the time constraints which affect a fresh fruit like the banana or pineapple are not as important with agricultural products awaiting processing. This fact reduces the management costs of including smallholders and is one of the reasons why one finds a return to smallholder/plantation partnership in the oil palm and rubber tree crops long after the successful partnership of the two agricultural systems has disappeared from the banana industry.

This fact raises the second question: given that the plantations in Mungo are likely to continue, should they be used to grow bananas or be put into other crops? The arguments in favour of continuing with bananas are considerable: when well managed and producing regularly, the banana produces a year-round income and with it regular foreign exchange earnings. It can also be brought into production, even with a massive replanting programme which might not even be necessary, within a year. There is, in addition, the force of habit. Bananas have been an important crop in Mungo for fifty years. This means not only that there are several related companies in boxing and aerial treatment dependent on the bananas, but that there already

exists a work force which, although it may not have achieved a high level of efficiency, is conversant with the requirements of the crop. Nor should it be forgotten that the fruit rejected for sale in Europe can still be sold in Cameroon. Although this sector of banana plantation production has not been fully exploited, it might well be that banana plantations could contribute to food requirements in Cameroon. Already the banana is known as "le riz du Mungo".

There is also the fact that Mungo offers some of the best banana land in the world. Much of that land could be irrigated and although production levels would probably never match the peak production found in Ecuador and Central America, they might well approach those standards. Nor should it be forgotten that, in the foreseeable future, the French market will continue to be protected and offer a price for bananas which is higher than the world price on the open market. Moreover, since the entry of Britain to the Common Market, Cameroon once again can sell fruit in Britain, and in fact did so until the quality of bananas from Cameroon became so unacceptable that they were refused. Reasonably, therefore, if the quality can be improved, Cameroon bananas might well expand their markets beyond the limits of the French consumer. To these arguments should be added the fact that Cameroon is considerably closer to Europe than either the Antilles or Latin America and can therefore expect to pay less than its competitors in transportation costs. Labour is also cheaper in Cameroon than elsewhere although it is argued by some that the low wage levels are responsible for the poor performance of workers on the plantations. Nonetheless, taken together, all these factors argue that Cameroon could produce competitive fruit at a reasonable price and benefit from the trade. It should also be remembered that it is more than likely that the Comité Interprofessionel Bananière in Paris would prefer to lobby for the survival of the Cameroon banana trade rather than face a long-term invasion of dollar-zone fruit that would jeopardise both the Ivory Coast and more especially the Antilles' ability to compete.

There are several inter-related arguments, however, which do not support the continuation of the banana crop in Mungo, most of which refer, in one way or another, to the quality of fruit now required in a highly competitive market. To begin with, it should be realised and accepted that at this stage in the development of the banana market

anything less than highly structured industrialised agriculture with a high level of capital investment and managerial expertise will probably not be able to meet the requirements of the trade over the next ten to fifteen years. This is particularly true if the French market loses its protective features and franc-zone producers are forced to compete with dollar-zone fruit in a saturated world market. However, industrial agriculture means, among many other things, that the kind of smallholder participation found in the 1950s banana trade is unthinkable now. Not even the more serious developments undertaken by those farmers, both Cameroonian and European, who are attempting to manage less than one hundred hectares of land are likely to be viable in today's market. Nor is it likely that the kind of partnership between plantations and smallholders now being tried with oil palm and rubber could succeed in the comparatively inflexible banana trade. Therefore, if one wants to continue with the banana crop in Cameroon, it should be recognised that no form of smallholder participation, even at the larger limits, is likely to find a way of surviving in the industry. If it does, it will be at a loss, that will either be subsidised by the state, by the more viable industrial plantations or by the kinds of chicanery now rumoured to be rife in Mungo.

The quality of fruit required by today's banana market in Europe forces producers to adopt the investments and disciplines of industrialised agriculture, particularly if Cameroon wants to market bananas outside of France. It also means that the management structure of the banana trade which has evolved in Cameroon since the 1930s is no longer adequate for the task at hand. Even now it is clear that not only is the OCB incapable of meeting the managerial requirements of the trade, but so too are the informal arrangements between Europeans which had previously substituted for a strong coordinated management. Thus, if the government decides that it wants to continue with the export banana crop it must also decide how and by whom that crop should be managed. This points up another serious disadvantage of the export banana, namely the sheer managerial complexity of timely production, shipping and sales. Here again, the single fact which separates the banana from tropical products such as coffee, cocoa, palm oil and rubber is the fact that it is a fragile fresh fruit being sold several thousands of miles away, which cannot be stored for any length of time and is susceptible to very little

processing. This characteristic of the banana, which it shares with other fresh fruits and vegetables grown for export, is what makes it such a difficult and expensive crop to manage.

It is, therefore, a legitimate question to pose at this point whether there are in Cameroon the managerial resources to meet the requirements of the banana trade. If so, can they be spared for work on this particular plantation crop or are they better employed elsewhere? If not, is Cameroon willing to import the managerial expertise needed to make Cameroon's banana industry competitive in the European market until such time as local managers can be trained?

It is of some value to recall again the major issues of the 1959 strike and the civil war which followed. When the strike began in April 1959, it began as a desire among smallholders to retain their viability in the banana export trade. As matters developed, however, first in the events of the civil war and then in the politics of the Syndicat, a corollary desire was created to expel the Europeans from their plantations in Mungo and from their positions of authority in the banana industry. As has been shown, neither objective was entirely met. What is of interest in recalling these events is that many people fear today that the collapse of the banana trade in Mungo could force a return to the brigandage and guerrilla war which bedevilled the area throughout the 1960s. And yet clearly, when the industrial demands of the banana trade are looked at closely, they might, in an extreme development, force a return to some of the issues of the civil war. Smallholders can no longer be expected to participate in the trade, and most people in Mungo have long accepted that fact. But there is still a very evident resentment and mistrust of European influence in the Cameroon banana business. Thus, if there is not the managerial capacity in Cameroon to organise a revitalised trade, which there does not seem to be, then a frank return to some form of expatriate management, if only for the time needed to train indigenous personnel, will be inevitable. Given the history of Mungo, are these developments which the government is willing to risk? Can one trust that enough time has passed since the events of independence so that the reorganisation of the banana trade on industrial lines can be accomplished? Or can such a reorganisation be achieved in a fashion which resolves the "expatriate" issues of the 1960s?

How those questions are answered greatly depends on what management is chosen to handle the remaking of the banana industry of Cameroon. Of the possibilities to be found in Cameroon, first consideration must be given to the OCB. However, the question must be asked whether the OCB in its present form can handle the rebuilding of the banana industry of Cameroon. Unfortunately, the record of its performance to date would argue that it cannot. No one in the OCB has ever received the kind of skilled training that most workers in the banana trade possess. The employees are, by and large, bureaucrats whose salaries depend on government funding rather than the success or failure of their trade. "The banana," said John Ngu of the CDC "has no time for politics."⁵ Yet, the OCB is a political creation which makes its decisions as often on political grounds as on any commercial or agricultural criteria. It is unlikely that unless the OCB can build up a staff of people from the banana industry and in some structural fashion free itself from its dependence on decisions made in Yaoundè, it will never be able to create a banana trade which is commercially sound and self-sustaining. Nonetheless, it is a point of pride that a Cameroonian organisation does exist as the official head of the Cameroon banana trade. Therefore, in any reconstruction of the management of the industry, the OCB would have to have some kind of a place.

The agricultural parastatal with the best reputation in Cameroon for efficiency and economic stability is the Cameroons Development Corporation, the CDC. Although most of the CDC's production is in rubber and oil palms, they have 800 hectares in bananas which are considered to be among the most productive in the entire banana trade. The CDC's success in bananas, which is still below market requirements although higher than other producers in Cameroon, is largely attributed to their management. Moreover, in the years following the war, the CDC had most of its cultivated acreage in bananas and has had considerable experience of the trade. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to consider the CDC as a possible management team for a rebuilt Cameroon banana trade.

It is unlikely, however, that the CDC would consent to take on the job. In the mid-1950s, the Cameroons Development Corporation made a very conscious decision to stop producing bananas. This was partly

due to the problems of Panama disease, but also because of the high cost of running banana plantations efficiently, mostly in managerial terms, but also in terms of routine operating expenses. Since then, the CDC has stayed in the trade only at the request of the government and has shown every willingness to get out. Moreover, within the past few years, the CDC has taken on heavy commitments to expand existing acreage in rubber and palm oil. With these new commitments, and the debts they have raised, it is unlikely that the CDC will have the resources of personnel and finance which would be required in any revived banana trade.

A third group in Cameroon which might consider taking on the trade, but which would be ill-advised to do so, is the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques. They have so far provided the management for the OCB plantations, but again, given the bad record of OCB plantation production, one would hesitate to expand the responsibilities of the IRA personnel. More importantly, they are by definition an agricultural research organisation and have never had professional management experience in putting together not just the agricultural pieces, but also the full coordination of events from field to final sale.

In May 1982, Alain Moreau, manager of the SPNP plantations, said that the multinational banana companies were waiting "like cats at a mouse hole" to see what happened to the Cameroon banana trade.⁶ While there is an element of exaggeration in his statement, there is also a certain amount of sense. Certainly, compared with the muddled and diffused management of the trade over the past ten to twenty years, the idea of a single professional management team is not unwelcome. Moreover, the commercial and agricultural advantages of Cameroon are easy to add up and account for the fact that even as the banana industry is dying, there are still companies who have been willing to invest in the business: Agrichim, Agrisol, Fruitière, SIIM and la Compagne des Bananes, among others. Significantly, however, most of the investment has come from companies which are principally sales agents. Apart from the United Brands Company, which has historical reasons for being in Cameroon, none of the major multinational banana companies (Standard Fruit, Geest or Del Monte) has shown any interest at all in Cameroon. The major advantage of

these companies is their experience in every aspect of the whole chain of activities from field production to final sale. In contrast, the sales agents who have invested in Cameroon make most of their profits from commissions alone. They may be conversant with matters of production or transport, but will not have had to manage these affairs themselves.

If, therefore, Cameroon finds that it needs to turn to the private sector for help in resuscitating the banana trade, it will have to decide what they expect the private sector to handle. Would sales in Europe and the commissions from them still be apportioned among five or six agents as they are now? Would the chain of responsibilities from field to final sale continue to be divided up among several managers and owners both private and parastatal as has been the case since independence? Or should a single company be given responsibility to manage most of the chain of activities between the Cameroonian fields and dockside sale in Europe?

The history of the banana trade in Cameroon, particularly French-speaking Cameroon, has been one in which responsibilities have been divided and diffused. It is the pattern which, if followed, could conceivably be the least disruptive to existing interests. Yet it is a managerial pattern which has conspicuously failed in recent years. Arguably, a more efficient and productive banana industry would be achieved under a single, unified management which could only be provided by those companies which have that kind of experience: i.e. the major multinationals involved in the production, export and sale of tropical fruit.

It is not at all clear, however, that the situation in Cameroon can be made attractive to any of these larger companies. Land ownership by expatriates is becoming increasingly problematic, although Thomas Ekaney, Director of Lands, states that there is nothing in the law to prevent it.⁷ Would any company be interested if it did not own land? There is also considerable pressure on companies not just to employ Cameroonians, but also to employ Cameroonians in correct ethnic proportions.⁸ While there are good political reasons, based on the extremely complex ethnic balances of Cameroon, behind such a rule, it is one which makes ordinary

administration considerably more complicated. Qualified people are already hard to find; qualified people of the required ethnicity are even more difficult to find and hire. There is also the fact that any large multinational company coming into the banana trade of Cameroon would be faced not just with the task of building up an industry, but with the more delicate assignment of building it up out of an existing set of interests and commitments. How those are negotiated under any new management could make considerable difference to the profitability and efficiency of the new administration. There is also the question whether any of these larger companies have access or can get access to the French market. If they do not and would be looking to Cameroon to negotiate that entry, would the Comité Interprofessionel Bananière in Paris be willing to let a new group into an equation which is at best only delicately balanced?

These questions do not make the options open to Cameroon any easier to judge. Most fundamentally, the government must decide whether or not to continue in the trade. If they do continue, which is not necessarily the best choice, then they must decide how they can go on, and under what kind of management and ownership they think they can succeed.

United Brands and la Compagnie des Bananes

Throughout the politics of independence in Mungo and the somewhat haphazard reorganisation of the industry in the early 1960s, la Compagnie des Bananes never figured as anything more than one of the leading figures of the European community. In that capacity, they did as much as any of the other Europeans to defend the interests of the European plantations of Mungo. From the time of the strike in 1959 (and as they had been before) they were routinely a part of every major meeting, negotiation, and delegation to Yaoundé. When the "rump caucus" of European planters in the Syndicat petitioned the central government in Yaoundé for a military presence in Mungo, Mr. Denis Brown, president of la Compagnie des Bananes in Cameroon, was one of the men who took the petition to Yaoundé and saw the government ministers involved.⁹ What the company conspicuously did not do, was to behave in the more conspiratorial style adopted by the United Fruit Company in Guatemala in 1954 and in Honduras by Samuel Zemurray in

1905.¹⁰ There was, in fact, no need to do so. The central government was as eager as the European planters to suppress the guerrilla activity in Mungo and behaved, at times brutally, in that interest.

The fact that the company lined up firmly with the European interests in Mungo during the civil war is not surprising. The continuation of the strike forced a polarisation of the African cooperatives and European planters which the Syndicat had previously managed to avoid. In that polarisation, it was inevitable on social grounds alone that the company would have cast its lot with the other Europeans. Even today, looking at the relations of Africans and Europeans in Mungo, it is clear that outside the issues of the trade, the two groups have little in common. As one African planter put it: "La profession n'a jamais associée avec les originaux de la région."¹¹ However, it was also evident, even in 1959, that the economic viability of the smallholder in the export banana trade was extremely limited and that any future achievements in the trade would be based on plantation production rather than the small farm. This must also have affected the company's judgement on where to throw its support during the civil war.

In the twenty years since "The Troubles", the company in Cameroon has followed a policy of more or less increasing passivity, which has resulted in a significant reduction of its authority and position. For much of that time, there seemed to be little reason to take an aggressive posture. Until 1975, the company maintained its ninety percent share of all sales from Cameroon. Its only competition came from Omer Decugis which handled many of the African planters but very little of the total volume of fruit and never came close to being a serious threat to la Compagnie des Bananes' commercial dominance of the trade. A more insidious challenge was growing in the ever-expanding definition of the professional responsibilities of the Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane. By the early 1970s, the OCB was given statutory authority to take over many of the tasks of arranging the evacuation of fruit from Cameroon that had previously been handled by the company. Even this, however, could be conveniently ignored during the tenure of the previous director of the OCB, M. Bitjong. By all accounts, he understood the trade, but was

content to leave the routine management of it in the hands of the company and other Europeans who, therefore, continued to control informally the aerial treatment, shipping and sales of Cameroon bananas. More importantly, any attempt by the company to criticize the growth of the OCB as the professional manager of the banana trade would have put the company in the position of opposing the wishes of a central government not known for its tolerance of opposition. Rather than risk expulsion from the country, it was certainly more convenient to try to work with the OCB than to object to it, even when the OCB has not been capable of meeting the responsibilities it had taken on.

A more aggressive policy on the part of the company might have prevented the commercial competition which developed when la Compagnie Fruitière entered Cameroon in 1975. In many ways, it was the increasingly passive attitude of la Compagnie des Bananes after independence that meant the planters welcomed the arrival of Fruitière as a form of pressure for improving the services provided by la Compagnie des Bananes. John Ngu, at present the general manager of the Cameroons Development Corporation, and a member of the board of OCB, was one of those who supported the attribution of a fixed quota of Cameroon banana sales to la Compagnie Fruitière, on just these grounds.¹² Arguably, therefore, a more dynamic leadership from la Compagnie des Bananes might have helped the company maintain its near monopoly of Cameroon banana sales. But it is also undoubtedly true that after forty years of dominance by one company, the idea of change was not unwelcome. There are, in addition, widespread rumours that Fruitière was allowed to "buy" its quota of the market, which, if true, would tend to blunt the effect of any defence put up by la Compagnie des Bananes.

Taken together, this progression of events since independence has resulted in a steady erosion of the company's responsibilities in Cameroon. Given that this loss of the company's authority has coincided with a general weakening of the trade and with it the company's overall profits, it is reasonable to ask why the company bothers to stay in Cameroon. It is increasingly powerless to improve the situation and the routine costs of staying where no profit is being made must be an expense which the company can less and less afford. Surely there will come a point when it is wiser to pull out

of the trade than to continue to invest in an industry which is slowly rotting away.

In considering whether the company would be advised to pull out of Cameroon, one is forced to consider again the peculiar structure of the entire French banana trade. Here the single most important question is whether the French banana market can or will continue to operate as a protected market for franc-zone fruit. This question is of particular interest to la Compagnie des Bananes because of its access to dollar-zone fruit through its parent company, United Brands of New York. In recent years, the company's most profitable periods in France resulted from the shortfall of franc-zone bananas due to the hurricanes in the Antilles in 1978-79.¹³ At this time, the company was able to bring in the cheaper dollar-zone fruit, sell it at the high French prices set by the Comité Interprofessionel Bananière and show higher than average profits. Paradoxically, therefore, the complete collapse of Cameroon production and the compensating entry of dollar-zone bananas could have the effect of raising company earnings.

It would be a misinterpretation of affairs, however, to judge the company's choices according to such a simple scenario. Among other factors, it is important to remember that within the structure of the French banana market, the company is not really able to act alone. Like the other participants in the French banana market, the company is subject to the decisions of the Comité Interprofessionel Bananière (CIB) which attempts to regulate and arbitrate the competing interests of the business. In that process, one of the principal assumptions of the CIB is the necessity of protecting the French market from any non-franc-zone produce. This policy has been in effect since the 1930s, was reinforced by the quota system established in the early 1960s, and further strengthened by the Lomé Conventions of the EEC. Despite increasing pressure within the European Community to revise the Common Agricultural Policy and with it the Lomé accords there is still considerable doubt whether such pressure will open the French banana market to foreign fruit. Even with the threatened collapse of the Cameroon trade, it is not at all clear that the CIB will reformulate this key, protective policy. What is, more likely is that the Comité will devise new protective mechanisms, or allow the short-term

admission of foreign fruit, on the assumption that after a short transition the franc zone can again fulfil the requirements of the entire French market in bananas.

That being the case, the position of la Compagnie des Bananes is considerably more difficult. The company first went to Cameroon when, in the 1930s, the United Fruit Company's produce from Latin America was excluded from France along with all other non-franc bananas. Since then, la Compagnie des Bananes has always been dependent on Cameroon, and even today much of its business is with Cameroonian bananas. In the early 1970s, some diversification of the company's earnings took place. That effort, however, has not been sustained - in part, according to René Gacon, president of la Compagnie des Bananes from 1969 to 1975, due to a lack of investment available from the New York office.¹⁴ With only limited diversification in the 1970s, the French company in 1982 still depends on bananas for much of its earnings, and of those bananas a high percentage come from Cameroon. Thus, unless the company is allowed to import fruit from the dollar zone, which the CIB will probably be unwilling to permit in any great quantity or for any long period of time, la Compagnie des Bananes must keep open the possibility of developing competitive fruit from Cameroon. As long, therefore, as the need for that option exists, the company is ill-advised to withdraw.

What is less certain is whether the United Brands Company through la Compagnie des Bananes or even Fyffes Group in London would be willing take on the managerial task of rebuilding the banana industry of Cameroon. It is the only large multinational in the banana trade with experience in Cameroon. If the government of Cameroon decided to keep the banana export crop and decided it would be best served by the management skills of an agricultural multinational, neither of which is certain, United Brands would be a logical company to approach for discussion. What is less clear, is whether the company would decide to accept the assignment and work out the terms of an agreement.

There are, as has already been discussed, the uncertainties about whether France will or will not remain a protected market and will or will not begin admitting dollar-zone bananas on a regular basis. More than that, however, there exists a strong prejudice within the New York office against involvement in Africa, a prejudice which,

unfortunately, the company's experience in Cameroon has done little to dispel. In part, this is only the reaction of a company whose experience has been either in the Americas or in the Spanish-speaking Philippines. Africa, and the African style of business, is something alien to the company's experience and instincts. Partly because of this strangeness, the company carries with it a fear that business in Africa is unpredictable and uncontrollable. In this sense, the fact that Elders and Fyffes was forced to pull out of Anglophone Cameroon after reunification only confirms the worry that doing business in Africa is too unpredictable to be trusted. More recently, the failure of the OCB in particular to make good use of specialised personnel seconded from United Brands and its affiliates to Cameroon, has left a suspicion in company minds that nothing can be done in Cameroon and that the company is only wasting its time and money in trying to assist the trade. Moreover, since these people were not effectively employed, and did not leave Cameroon with any sense of accomplishment or optimism, it is more than likely that the reports they took back to their head offices were such as only to affirm the fear that affairs in Cameroon could not be trusted. With such a history behind them, therefore, on what grounds could a company like United Brands be prepared to invest more heavily in Cameroon when their more modest contributions had already been ignored? Would the company not be wiser to try to expand investments in the Antilles, which are closer to their own interests and culture, than to gamble heavily in Cameroon?

The company cannot make any decision until the Cameroon government has made its own choices. However, the fact of the matter is that after years of assuming that the banana trade was in good health or about to improve, the government did not seem prepared in May 1982 to face the choices that must be made once the industry has collapsed. What they will decide once these issues have been confronted is impossible to say. It is equally difficult to predict how the company will react to the government's position. Neither the company or the government, however, is likely to find any obvious solutions to what has always been a fairly intricate equation.

It is almost impossible to generalise very broadly from a single case study. One needs comparable studies examining similar questions

in considerable detail before any pattern can possibly begin to emerge. A few observations, however, can be made. We began this thesis with an interest in the role of a multinational company in agricultural development and conclude by postulating that that role is defined by two kinds of pressures. On the one hand, the company, as the agent of an international export trade, is forced to respond to all the commercial and competitive pressures of that international business. On the other hand, as a resident and essentially subject corporation working in the Cameroonian context, the company is also forced to operate within the many pressures arising from Cameroon's government, society and environment. In this situation, the multinational company can become the medium for translating and adjusting the conflicts between local and international imperatives. Moreover, it is possible to conclude that to the extent that an agricultural export trade is deemed to be a desirable development activity -- an issue of considerable debate -- the multinational company is in a position to offer a valuable and necessary service. How often that position is well used, either by the company or the host society, is a matter for other case studies. In the instance of the United Brands Company in Cameroon, however, it is a position that has, on the whole and most successfully in the 1950s, been filled with tact and diplomacy and ^{made} a genuine contribution to the development of Cameroon.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1: MARKETS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE 1950s

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8. That the yield per hectare on small holdings was no greater than five tonnes per hectare comes from: Jacques Binet, "Bananes au Cameroun," Encyclopédie mensuelle d'Outre Mer 34, vol. III (June 1953): 179-181.

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CHAPTER 2: MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES OF THE 1950s: THE BRITISH CAMEROONS

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2. Interview with Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, in Buea, Cameroon, April 1982.
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8. Interview with Edwin Ardener, in Oxford, October 1981.
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CHAPTER 3: MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES OF THE 1950s: MUNGO

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CHAPTER 4: THE POLITICS OF REUNIFICATION IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

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4. Ibid., p. 172.
5. Bongfen Chem-Langhee and Martin Z. Njeuma, "The Pan-Kamerun Movement, 1949-1961," in An African Experiment in National Building: The bilingual Cameroon Republic since Reunification, editor, Ndwa Kofele-Kale (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Special Studies on Africa, Westview Press, 1980), p. 52.

There are a number of works which discuss the reunification vote in the British Cameroons. However, this article by Chem-Langhee and Njeuma provides the best discussion of the events that influenced the framing of the question, a matter that is usually overlooked in discussions of the referendum vote. Their interpretation also accords well with what we know about the UPC and with attitudes towards the consequences of reunification which were noted during fieldwork in Anglophone Cameroon.

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7. Ibid., p. 52.
8. Ibid., pp. 52-3.
9. Ibid., p. 53.
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20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 1.
22. Union Général des Coopératives Bananières du Mungo, "Rencontre avec les coopératives du Cameroun occidental du 20 octobre 1964 pour la répartition de wagons," (Penja, Cameroon, FEBACAM/UGECOBAM minutes).

23. Agreement ... 12 November 1957 between the Bakweri Co-operative Union of Farmers Limited of Buea, Southern Cameroons ... and Elders and Fyffes Limited of ... London, Clause 5 (e).
24. Heads of Agreement ... the B.C.U.F. to supply and E. + F. Ltd. to purchase green bananas originating in the West Cameroon ... 2 February 1965, Clause (8).
25. Ibid., Clause (8) sub-heading (2).
26. Letter dated 8 April 1965 from Director of Economic Services, West Cameroon to Général Manager, Elders and Fyffes Ltd., Likomba (Buea, Cameroon, BCUF file).
27. Letter dated 17 August 1965 from Eric Sharples, Général Manager of Elders and Fyffes Limited, Likomba, to Monsieur T. Koulé, la Directeur des Changes, Douala (Buea, Cameroon, BCUF file).
28. Heads of Agreement ... the B.C.U.F. to supply and E. + F. Ltd. to purchase green bananas originating in the West Cameroon ... 2 February 1965, Clauses (3) and (6).
29. Letter dated 3 Septembre 1965 from Th. Koulé, Douala to Monsieur le Directeur de la Elders and Fyffes Limited, Likomba (Buea, Cameroon, BCUF file).
30. Interview with David Philp, in London, July 1982.
31. Interview with S.J. Epale, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, May 1982.
32. Patrick Beaver, Yes! We Have Some: The story of Fyffes (Cutting Hill, Britain: Publications for Companies, 1976), p. 92.
33. "Elders and Fyffes General Correspondance," no. 630, Archive Reference no. Qd/a (1959 and 1966) (Buea, Cameroon, Buea Archives).
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Interview with Simon Shang, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, May 1982.
38. Interview with Victor Mukete, in Buea, Cameroon, April 1982.
39. Interview with Mr. Motuba, in Buea, Cameroon, April 1982.
40. Interview with Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, in Bavenga, Cameroon, April 1982.
41. Interview with Athanacious Eddia, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
42. Ibid. and interview with Simon Shang, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, May 1982.
43. Interview with David Philp, in London, July 1982.

44. Archive no. 630. (Buea, Cameroon, Buea Archives).
45. Ibid.
46. "Scheme for Immediate Use of Land Surrendered at Bafia/Bavenga by the Elders and Fyffes," undated, July? 1966 (Buea, Cameroon, BCUF Bavenga file), p. 1.
47. Interview with Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, in Buea, Cameroon, April 1982.
48. Interview with Athanacious Eddia, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
49. Interview with Simon Shang, in Yaoundé, Cameroon, May 1982.
50. Interview with Athanacious Eddia, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
51. Interview with John Robertson, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
52. Letter dated 27 April 1967 from Athanacious Eddia, Manager, Bavenga Farm to Manager of Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, Molyko; letter dated 8 August 1967 from the Manager of the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, Molyko, to the Registrar of Cooperatives, Bota; letter dated 20 June 1969 from A. Eddia, Manager, Bavenga Farm to President of the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, Molyko, (Buea, Cameroon, BCUF Bavenga file).
53. Interview with Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, in Bavenga, Cameroon, April 1982.

CHAPTER 5: THE POLITICS OF INDEPENDENCE IN MUNGO

1. "Relevé complet des planteurs installés au Territoire," in Domanial 759 (Yaoundé, Cameroon, Archives Nationales du Cameroun).
2. This table, like the others from the same source, is based on a sorting of the Relevé complet by type of name. One name (Adam Arab) was listed as African (109 hectares, 3 concessions), but could have been Middle Eastern. Of the European names, the list included Greek, Lebanese and German names, but the majority were French. One company name, Société Mangou et Bucholz, contains both African name, Mangou, and a European name, Buchloz. The company was classified as African because Mangou's name came first. Buchloz, as a separately named concessionaire, however, has been counted as a European, just as Charles Mangou has been classified as an African planter. In counting the number of planters, a European surname appearing with different Christian

names would be counted as one planter, on the grounds they were part of the same family who had immigrated together and were functioning more or less as a single economic unit. In the case of African names, however, even where the same names appeared several times, it was impossible to tell whether these land holders came from the same family or only the same village or lineage. First, the compiler of the list followed no pattern of listing the family name first or second, but seemingly by hazard put the family name first or second as he chose. Second, an African might use the same name either as a family name or a personal name, and given that family and personal names were not written in a consistent fashion, it was impossible to decide whether those people with the same name (e.g. Ekambe Nkem and Njime Ekambe) were in fact related.

3. Jean-Louis Dongmo, Le Dynamisme bamiléké (Cameroun) volume I: La maîtrise de l'espace agraire (Yaoundé, Cameroon: Université de Yaoundé, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Délégation Générale à la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, 1981), pp. 57-115.
4. Ibid., p. 53.
5. Ibid., p. 223ff.
6. Jonathan Derrick, "The Growth of Douala under the French Mandate, 1916-1936," (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1979), p. 106.
7. Interview with Salomon Mpondo, in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982.
8. Interview with Alistair McLaurin in Staines, England, February 1982.
9. Interview with Salomon Mpondo, in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982. It should be noted that Mpondo's memory of the African quotas is at variance with the quotas reported in Ph. Maslin's article: "Peuplement blanc et mise en valeur de l'ouest Cameroun". For details, see Note 2, Chapter 3.
10. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, "Bilan 31 décembre 1959" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
11. According to Richard Joseph, the rebellion in the Sanaga Maritime lasted until the death of Ruben Um Nyobé, the leader of the UPC in September 1958. "After 1958, it was the Bamileke who launched the more extensive and destructive wave of the U.P.C. rebellion." Richard A. Joseph, Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social origins of the U.P.C. rebellion (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 345 and 348.

12. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de l'Assemblée générale ordinaire du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le jeudi 9 avril 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 8.
13. Ibid. pp. 9-10.
14. "Motion adoptée par les planteurs Africains de bananes à l'exportation dans sa réunion du 10 avril 1959" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
15. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de l'Assemblée générale ordinaire du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le jeudi 9 avril 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 3.
16. Letter dated 16 April 1959 from Planteurs de la Région du Mungo (signed by EPAKA Martin Planteur), Loum-Chantiers to Monsieur le Président de la S.D.I.B.C. Penja. (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
17. As quoted in Dongmo, pp. 188-9.
18. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de la réunion du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le 23 avril 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 6.
19. Ibid., p. 7.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Chambre d'Agriculture de l'Elevage et des Forêts du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de la réunion d'études des problèmes bananiers tenue à Penja le 5 mai 1959" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 13.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
24. Ibid., p. 14.
25. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de la réunion du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le 23 avril 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 8.
26. A quotation from the UPC newspaper, Voix du Cameroun, (no. 17, January 1955) reads:

With regard to the particular case of Cameroun, do not forget

that the colonial question is basically an economic question. The raison d'être of colonialism is the exploitation of wealth. One can thereby understand that our country which have received from nature all the economic and geographical privileges could not avoid exciting considerable greed among the financial powers. Consequently, despite the presence of an administration and its paraphernalia, the veritable rule in the colony belongs to the colon who exploits wealth and men ...

This appears in Joseph, p. 213.

27. "Le Gouvernement prend d'importantes mesures pour assainir le marché bananier: création prochaine d'une caisse de stabilisation des cours, Yaoundé, 25 mai," as reprinted in full in Circulaire no. 10.59 from the S.D.I.B.C., Penja, 29 May 1959, to all planters and cooperatives (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
28. Ibid.
29. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Procès verbal de la réunion du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le Samedi 23 mai 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 2.
30. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu de la réunion qui s'est tenue le lundi 18 mai au S.D.I.B.C. à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
31. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
32. Ibid., p. 3.
33. All Syndicat minutes come from the files of la Compagnie des Bananes in Penja, Cameroon and show signs of being complete.
34. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu de la réunion du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le mardi 10 novembre 1959 au siège du Syndicat à Penja" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
35. Interview with Jean Ratillon in Penja, Cameroon, April 1982.
36. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu du voyage effectué par la délégation du S.D.I.B.C. les 15 et 16 janvier 1960" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), attached letters.
37. Ibid., pp. 1 and 3.
38. "Réunion du 15 avril 1960, GICAM - Douala" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 1.
39. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Note pour

la commission économique envoyée dans la région du Mungo pour étudier la situation bananière, Assemblée de Penja, le 24 février 1961" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 1.

40. Ibid., p. 2.

41. The Syndicat's report did not discuss how many Cameroonian farmers were actually using hired as opposed to family labour. If very few farms were using hired labour, the Cameroonian farmer's position would have been somewhat less economically marginal than the report suggests.

42. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Note pour la commission économique envoyée dans la région du Mungo pour étudier la situation bananière, Assemblée de Penja, le 24 février 1961" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 3.

43. ORSTOM, "Enquête sur la situation du planteur dans les zones de reconversion bananière," in Programme de Reconversion Bananière, Institut Français de Recherches Fruitières Outre-Mer (I.F.A.C.) (Yaoundé, Cameroon: République Fédérale du Cameroun, 1967).

44. Ibid., p. 9.

45. Ibid., p. 2.

The problems caused by conflicts of title, particularly those land titles founded or acquired under customary law, have not been easily specified in this study, but are of considerable importance. It can only be hoped that future research will look into this aspect of the development of Mungo in more detail than was possible here.

46. Institut Français de Recherches Fruitières Outre-Mer, Programme de Reconversion Bananière: Titre III, études financières (Yaoundé, Cameroon, République Fédérale du Cameroun, 1967), pp. 31-2.

47. "Réunion des planteurs de Npaka ... le 17 avril 1967 s'est tenue à Npaka". (A photocopy of these minutes was found with a copy of Programme de Reconversion Bananière held at the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques, Nyombé, Cameroon.)

48. "Proces verbal ... L'an mil neuf cent soixante sept et le 7 mai s'est tenue à l'école Officielle de Mangamba une réunion pour la conversion bananière dans le secteur de Mangamba". (A photocopy of these minutes was found with a copy of the Programme de Reconversion Bananière held at the Institut de Recherches Agronomiques, Nyombé, Cameroon.) It is difficult to judge whether similar documents were drawn up to serve as the legal base for the acquisition by the OCB of the right to use the smallholders' land, or whether this was an approach that was later abandoned.

49. Ibid.

50. Interview with Michel Foyet in Nyombé, Cameroon, April 1982.

51. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu de l'assemblée générale du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le 28 mai 1960 au siège social" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
52. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu de la réunion de la commission des finances qui s'est tenue le 28 mars 1962" (Penja, Cameroon, syndicat minutes), p. 2.
53. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu de l'assemblée générale du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le 16 juillet 1962 au siège social" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
54. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de l'assemblée générale extraordinaire du S.D.I.B.C. qui s'est tenue le 18 août 1962" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p.2.
55. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de l'assemblée générale du S.D.I.B.C. du 23 décembre 1963" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 1.
56. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de l'assemblée générale ordinaire du S.D.I.B.C. du 28 août 1962" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
57. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de la réunion du 1er conseil d'administration du S.D.I.B.C. tenue à Penja le 21 octobre 1971" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 2.
58. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Proces verbal de la réunion du conseil d'administration du S.D.I.B.C. tenue à Penja le 18 novembre 1971" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes), p. 2.
59. Ibid., p. 3.

CHAPTER 6: THE CAMEROON BANANA TRADE OF 1982

1. Gravellini, editor, Contribution à l'étude de la production et de la commercialisation des bananes antillaises, camerounaises et ivoiriennes (Paris: Caisse Centrale de Coopération Economique et Institut de Recherches sur les Fruits et Agrumes, 1980), p. 45.
2. Ibid.
3. Interview with Raymond Waroquier in Rungis, France, September 1981.
4. Ibid.

5. Gravelini, p. 46.
6. Ibid., p. 45.
7. Ibid., p. 63.
8. Ibid., p. 66-67.
9. Ibid.
10. John Ardagh, The New France: A society in transition 1945-1973 (London: Penguin Books, second edition 1973), p. 163.
11. Interview with Raymond Waroquier in Rungis, France, September 1981.
12. Ardagh, p. 171.
13. Interview with Raymond Waroquier and Paul Bardou in Rungis, France, September 1981.
14. Interview with A. Lassoudière in Nyombé, Cameroon, April 1982.
15. Interview with M. Gaudin in Penja, Cameroon, April 1982.
16. Interview with John Robertson, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
17. Interview with A. Lassoudière in Nyombé, Cameroon, April 1982.
18. Interview with Ronald Senfftlenben in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982.
19. Interview with John Robertson, in Ekona, Cameroon, April 1982.
20. Interview with Ronald Senfftlenben in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982.
21. Interview with A. Lassoudière in Nyombé, Cameroon, April 1982.
22. Gravelini, pp. 71-74.
23. Ibid., p. 69.
24. Interview with John Ngu in Bota, Cameroon, April 1982.
25. Interview with Ronald Senfftlenben in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982.
26. Interview with Charles Penny in Rungis, France, September 1982.
27. Décret no. 64/DF/478 du 12 décembre 1964 modifiant le Décret no. 64/DF/180 du 1er juin 1964 portant création de l'Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane (République Fédérale du Cameroun).
28. Ibid., Articles 5-8.
29. Ibid., Article 9.
30. Ibid., Article 11.
31. Ibid., Article 15.
32. Interview with John Ngu in Bota, Cameroon, April 1982.
33. Loi no. 68/LF/6 du 11 juin 1968; Portant création d'une Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane (République Fédérale du Cameroun), Article 2.

34. Arrêté no. 28/MINDIC/PB du 13 mai 1975 portant création d'une commission d'homologation et de repartition du contingent bananier et fixant les conditions d'exportation et de commercialisation de la banane. (République Unie du Cameroun).

CHAPTER 7: CHOICES, 1982

1. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers, "Rapport général sur la banane du Cameroun" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
2. Interview with Reverend Father Guth, Nyombé, Cameroon, March 1982.
3. Ministère de l'Agriculture, Ve Plan Quinquennal Secteur Agricole (Yaoundé, Cameroon: République Unie de Cameroun, 1981).
4. Ibid., p. 1.
5. Interview with John Ngu in Bota, Cameroon, April 1982.
6. Interview with Alain Moreau in Douala, Cameroon, April 1982.
7. Interview with Thomas Ekane in Yaoundé, Cameroon, May 1982.
8. Interview with Jean-Paul Michel in Douala, Cameroon, March 1982.
9. Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun, "Compte rendu du voyage effectué par la délégation du S.D.I.B.C. les 15 et 16 janvier 1960" (Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).
10. See: José Aybar de Sota, Dependency and Intervention: the case of Guatemala in 1954 (Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1978); and Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit: The untold story of the American coup in Guatemala (New York: Doubleday, 1982).
11. Interview with Michel Essom Njaleu in Penja, Cameroon, April 1982.
12. Interview with John Ngu in Bota, Cameroon, April 1982.
13. Interview with Raymond Waroquier in Rungis, France, September 1981.
14. Interview with René Gacon in Paris, September 1982.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Archives

Government Archives

Archives Nationales (Section d'Outre-Mer)
Paris, France

Carton 29, Dossier (formerly Cameroun AP11/27, Dossier 8) - for material relating to the governorship of Pierre Boisson during the 1930s.

There is also a good collection of periodicals concerned with overseas affairs and the Journal Officiel du Cameroun, which published laws and arrêtés of the Mandate period on the French Cameroons. Periodical articles are listed in a subject card catalogue.

Archives Nationales du Cameroun
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Domaniale 759 - for land tenure information and land concession information about the French Cameroons during the 1930s.

National Archives of Cameroon
Buea, Cameroon

Archive Reference no. Qd/a (1959 and 1966), no. 630: "Elders and Fyffes General Correspondance".

It should be noted that the Buea Archives preferred that permission be obtained from the Yaoundé Archives before access was granted.

Company Files

Fyffes Group
London, United Kingdom

New Trading Agreement ... 14 October 1958 between The Cameroons Development Corporation of Nigeria ... and Elders and Fyffes, Limited of ... London.

New Service Agreement ... 14 October 1958 between the Cameroons Development Corporation of Nigeria ... and Elders and Fyffes Limited of ... London.

La Compagnie des Bananes
Penja, Cameroon

Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers - a chronological file of meeting minutes, reports, memorandums or circulars distributed by the Syndicat. The file contained material from mid-1959 to the early 1970s.

FEBACAM/UGECOBAM: Fédération Bananière du Cameroun, later named Union Générale des Coopératives Bananières du Mungo - a chronological file of meeting minutes of FEBACAM/UGECOBAM from 1960 to the mid-1970s.

Personal Files

Alistair McLaurin
Staines, England

1937 map of Mungo concessions and of the land either planted in bananas or to be planted in bananas, as well as indications of banana crops contracted to la Compagnie des Bananes.

Dr. Emmanuel Endeley
Buea, Cameroon

BCUF file - contracts and correspondance pertaining to the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s.

BCUF/Bavenga file - correspondance pertaining to the takeover of Elders and Fyffes Bavenga Plantations by the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers, 1960s to the present.

Endeley, E.M.L.; Burnley, G.E.; and Mukete, D.M. "Memorandum on Land Tenure and Problems Resulting from Ruthless Alientation of Land in the Fako Division." Buea, Cameroon: mimeographed communication to His Excellency the President of the United Republic of Cameroon, 17 September 1973.

Co-operative Department of the Southern Cameroons. Annual Reports' of the Co-operative Department 1954-56 and 1956-58.
Buea, Southern Cameroons: Government Press, 1957 and 1959.

Much of the material from the personal and company files has been placed in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

Interviews

Christian d'Ambrière: Manager, Nassif Planatation, Loum-Chantiers, Cameroon.

Aloyios Ajab Amin: Department of Economics, University of Yaoundé, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Fon Adii Lucas Anyangwe: Chartered Surveyor and Photogrammetrist, Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Edwin Ardener: Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford, England.

Paul Bardou: Manager, Procurement of Green Bananas, la Compagnie des Bananes, Rungis, France.

Samuel Bateki: Directeur du Commerce, Ministère de l'Economie et du Plan, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Benedicta Biaka: formerly of Service de Statistiques, Yaoundé, Cameroon, Buea, Cameroon.

Warren G. Breck: Executive Vice President, United Brands Company, New York, USA.

Monsieur J. Brun: Institut de Recherches sur les Fruits et Agrumes, Paris, France.

Jean Champion: Institut de Recherches sur les Fruits et Agrumes, Paris, France.

Max Clément: Directeur-adjoint, la Compagnie des Bananes, Penja, Cameroon.

Jean-Louis Dongmo: Head, Department of Geography, University of Yaoundé, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Jacques Eckebil: Director, Institut de Recherche Agronomique, Nkolbisson, Cameroon.

Athanacious Eddia: Plantation Manager, Ekona Banana Estate, Cameroons Development Corporation, Ekona, Cameroon; formerly Elders and Fyffes employee and manager of Bavenga Plantation.

Thomas Kolle Ekaney: Director of Lands, Ministère de l'Urbanisme et Cadastre, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

George Eldridge: Vice President, United Brands Company, New York, USA.

Salomon Elogo: Directeur Général de l'Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane, Douala, Cameroon.

Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Endeley: Buea, Cameroon; former Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons under British Mandate and President of the Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers.

Chief Justice Endeley: Chairman, Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon.

Dr. S.J. Epale: Secretary-General, Economic Council, General Assembly, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Peter Fonkem: Businessman, Kumba, Cameroon.

Michel Foyet: Chef de Centre de Nyombé, Institut de Recherche Agronomique, Nyombé, Cameroon.

René Gacon: President, Agrisol, S.A., Paris, France; former president of la Compagnie des Bananes, Paris, France.

Monsieur Gaudin: Manager, CAM and Boubou Plantations, Penja, Cameroon.

Reverend Father Guth: Catholic Mission, Nyombé, Cameroon.

Albert Ikoni: BIAO, Douala, Cameroon; son of West Cameroon banana farmer.

Didier Jean: CAMATRANS, (forwarding agents for the banana trade), Douala, Cameroon.

T.S. Jones: Natural Resources Advisor, Commonwealth Development Corporation, London, England; formerly General Manager of the Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon.

Happy Louis Kemayou: Mungo banana farmer and former president of the East Cameroon Legislative Assembly.

David Fonky Kukah: Surveyor, Service de l'Urbanisme and Cadastre, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Kongnso Lafon: Management Assistant, Head Office, Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon.

A. Lassoudière: Technical Advisor, Institut de Recherche Agronomique, Nyombé, Cameroon.

Pierre Léobon: Director, Fruitière Camerounaise, Douala and Penja, Cameroon.

Alistair McLaurin: retired, Staines, England; former manager of la Compagnie des Bananes, Penja, Cameroon.

Monsieur Mallisard: Manager, OCB plantations, Cameroon, seconded from Institut de Recherches sur les Fruit et Agrumes, Paris, France.

John Mallet: Technical Advisor, National Produce Marketing Board, Victoria, Cameroon; former Assistant Registrar of Co-operatives.

Jean-Paul Michel: Agrichim, Douala, Cameroon.

Jean Monnet: Technical Advisor, Institut de Recherche Agronomique, Nyombé, Cameroon.

Alain Moreau: Manager, SPNP Plantation, Nyombé, Cameroon.

Mr. Motuba: Assistant director, Office of Lands, Buea, Cameroon.

Philippe Moumié: Directeur-adjoint, Organisation Camerounaise de la Banane, Douala, Cameroon.

Salomon Mpondo: Douala, Cameroon, former president of the Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers and president of a banana cooperative.

Victor Mukete: Kumba, Cameroon; former Chairman of the Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon, Vice President of the Cameroon Chamber of Commerce.

Simon Ledoux Ngamondi: Mungo banana farmer; Secrétaire départemental de l'Union National du Cameroun du Mungo 2ème.

Monsieur Ngooso: Mungo banana farmer; former secretary of the Union Bananière, smallholders' cooperative.

John Ngu: Général Manager, Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon.

Peter M. Ngu: Administrative and Financial Director, Conseil National des Chargeurs du Cameroun, Douala, Cameroon.

Michel Essom Njaleu: Mungo banana farmer; President of Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers.

Rose Njeck: Service de Statistique, Section Cartographique, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Martin Oyebog: Chief Production Manager, Cameroons Development Corporation, Bota, Cameroon.

Charles Penny: President, la Compagnie des Bananes, Rungis, France; Director, Fyffes Group, London, England.

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Marius Talla: Mungo banana farmer.

Cyrille Tchoumo: Mungo banana farmer.

Monsieur Tsalefac: Centre Géographique Nationale, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Raymond Waroquier: Sales Manager, la Compagnie des Bananes, Rungis, France.

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NOTE: All titles and occupations are those held as of May 1982.

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* Works cited in the text.

APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATIVE TIMELINES

<u>United Republic of Cameroon</u>	<u>United Brands Company of New York</u>
1884	Germany annexes Kamerun.
1899	United Fruit Co. formed in Boston.
1901	Elders and Fyffes Co. set up in London.
1914	Kamerun taken by British and French allied forces.
1915	United Fruit Co. buys Elders and Fyffes.
1916	Occupied territory divided between Britain and France.
1921	La Compagnie des Bananes set up by Elders and Fyffes to sell bananas in France.
1922	Start of administration under British and French mandates from League of Nations; later Trusteeships of United Nations.
1936	La Compagnie des Bananes begins business in the French Cameroons.
1948	Elders and Fyffes starts work in the British Cameroons' Southern Province.
1960	French Cameroons becomes independant Republic of Cameroon.
1962	Southern Province of British Cameroons votes to join Cameroon Republic; creation of Federal Republic of Cameroon.
1966	Elders and Fyffes leaves Cameroon; la Compagnie des Bananes remains,

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF THE BANANA TRADE OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

- 1922 British Mandate officially begins.
- 1924 Mount Cameroon plantations bought back by former German owners.
- 1928-32 Banana exports to Germany rise from 281 tonnes per year to 17,404 tonnes.
- 1940 Banana exports halted by war for lack of shipping.
- 1946 Cameroons Development Corporation (CDC) created from former German plantations.
- 1948 Elders and Fyffes acquires 18-year lease on Likomba plantation and sign shipping agreement with the CDC.
- 1952 Bakweri Cooperative Union of Farmers (BCUF) formed to negotiate smallholder banana sales with the CDC.
- 1956 CDC begins reducing banana acreage.
- 1957 Elders and Fyffes start negotiation for 10,000 acres at Bavenga for development as banana plantations.
- 1958 Elders and Fyffes sign agreement with the BCUF to second managerial staff to the cooperative.
- 1960 Peak production; exports approximately 76,000 tonnes.
- 1961 Southern Province votes to federate with the Republic of Cameroon.
- 1963 Commonwealth preference for Cameroon fruit expires; new tariff imposed.
- 1966 Bavenga plantations turned over to the BCUF.
Likomba Estate returned to the CDC.
Elders and Fyffes withdraws.
CDC agrees to sell fruit to France through la Compagnie des Bananas.
- 1970 Banana exports from the BCUF virtually nil.

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF THE BANANA TRADE OF FRANCOPHONE CAMEROON

- 1922 French Mandate officially begins.
- 1928 Douala/Nkongsamba railroad completed.
- 1931 Europeans introduce export banana cultivation to Mungo.
- 1932 France closes market to non-franc zone bananas.
- 1936 La Compagnie des Bananes obtains one-hundred-hectare concession at Penja and begins managing Nassif plantation in bananas.
- mid-1930s Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers formed.
- 1941 Banana exports halted by war; British subsidy of Mungo banana planters begins.
- 1948-9 Quota agreement between European and Cameroonian planters of Mungo; Cameroonian producers allowed sixty percent of all banana exports.
- 1958 Peak banana production in Mungo; exports approximately 85,000 tonnes.
- 1959 9 April - first Cameroonian president of the Syndicat is elected.
10 April - African Planters' Motion protesting the high cost of the trade.
3 May - smallholders' strike begins.
- 1959-60 State of civil war in Mungo; government military reprisal; decline of Syndicat begins.
- 1961 Conversion to Poyo/Cavendish varieties begins.
- 1964 Organisation Camerounaise de la Banana (OCB) formed to work on conversion programme.
- 1967 OCB plantations created on smallholders' land.
- 1975 Entrance of la Compagnie Fruitière; declining importance of la Compagnie des Bananes.
- 1980 Syndicat memorandum to President of Cameroon Republic signalling weakness of the trade.
- 1982 Fall in banana production disrupts regular shipping; government issues subsidy to banana trade.

APPENDIX B

KEY TO MAP 15, "MUNGO BANANA PLANTATIONS OF THE 1950S"

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
1.	Jeremy	no data
2.	Dikoumé Oho	13
3.	Mich. Meimaris Kirakos	128
4.	Alexander Sarandis	115
5.	Louis Rouger	55
6.	la Compagnie des Bananes	124
7.	Société Charles Homerides et Compagnie	223
8.	la Compagnie des Bananes	141
9.	la Compagnie des Bananes	101
10.	Chtos. M. Rossides	106
11.	Gerasimos Mavromatis	327
12.	Lucien Pierre and Lucienne Alice Ferrand	178
13.	Priso-Belle	no data
14.	Cotsiomitis	96
15.	Ewane Mouanjo	no data
16.	Cotsiomitis	no data
17.	SARL Carron at R. Vallée	187
18.	George Oger	94
19.	Mub.	no data
20.	Germaine R Robert Oger Madame Aux Jaqueline André	122
21.	Louis Rouger	37
22.	Mavromatis	
23.	Société Plantations Djoungo-Penja	114

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
24.	Edouard Misse	10
25.	Les Tabacs du Cameroun (now known as SPNP: Société des Plantations de Nyombé et Penja)	no data
26.	Société des Produits Exotiques	no data
27.	Raymond Peroneille	21
28.	Société Charles Homerides et Compagnie	223
29.	PRATS Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers	55
30.	la Compagnie des Bananes	100
31.	Jean Léon Thesters	110
32.	Caplain	50
33.	Société des Plantations Djoungo-Penja	365
34.	Marie Charles Agnes	100
35.	Georges Oger	40
36.	Compagnie Agricole du Mungo	108
37.	Jean Pallier	124
38.	Compagnie Agricole du Mungo	100
39.	Société Plantations du Haut-Penja	227
40.	Paul Sholler	121
41.	Société Plantations du Haut-Penja	no data
42.	Beynis	75
43.	Louis Léon Bondan	110
44.	Nassif Plantation (upper) (lower)	388 421
45.	Charles Mangou	92
46.	Geneviève Marie Renard Jose Jean Martirene Françoise Jeanne Martirene	35
47.	Laborie (SPROA)	435
48.	CFSO (south) (north)	139 317
49.	René Jolly	440

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Hectares</u>
50.	Louis Jean Bondan	77
51.	Bouvier	no data
52.	Vauve Papageorgiades	78
53.	Alkminu Homerides	81
54.	Laborie	no data
55.	Maurice Njoke	79
56.	Myron Coulaxides	45
57.	les Cafés du Cameroun (en cours d'immatriculation: sections a-h)	no data
58.	Ngassa and J. René	no data

Source: SATET, Douala, Cameroon. "La Bananière du Mungo" 1955-1958

APPENDIX C: SELECTED DOCUMENTS FROM THE 1959 SMALLHOLDERS' STRIKE,
MUNGO

MOTION ADOPTÉE PAR LES PLANTEURS AFRICAINS DE BANANES
A L'EXPORTATION DANS SA REUNION DU 10 AVRIL 1959

Attendu que la baisse constatée à l'exportation de bananes est due aux frais multiples et que de ce fait les planteurs depuis plus de six mois travaillent à pert et n'arrive plus à couvrir des frais énormes de main-d'oeuvre.

Les planteurs réunis à LOUM le 10 Avril 1959 à 8 heures sous le hangar de la gare bananière de LOUM, ont adopté la motion suivante:

- 1° - La suppression Immédiate de la C.A.T.A.
- 2° - La suppression de l'emballage,
- 3° - La suppression du marché à terme, en remplacement du paiement comptant de la banane rendue à Bonabéri avec conditions,
- 4° - Une grève indéterminée à partir du 3 mai 1959 au cas ou satisfaction ne nous sera donnée.

Les Planteurs Africains du Mungo

- | | |
|--------------|----------|
| 1° - EPAKA | Martin |
| 2° - JOHNE | Jean |
| 3° - NGANGUE | Doolo |
| 4° - LOBE | Richard |
| 5° - NSEKEAM | Arman |
| 6° - KEUGOU | Marcel |
| 7° - NTOYO | Maurice |
| 8° - TCHANE | Géorges |
| 9° - NGANKAM | Zacharie |
| 10° - NJOUME | Gustave |
| 11° - SOP | Tohoula |
| 13° - YOYEME | Elie |

SOURCE: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun
(Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).

APPENDIX C: SELECTED DOCUMENTS FROM THE 1959 SMALLHOLDERS' STRIKE,
MUNGO

MOTION PRESENTEE PAR LES PRESIDENTS DE COOPERATIVES

attirent instamment l'attention du Gouvernement sur le grave mécontentement des planteurs africains, du fait que pendant six mois non seulement les planteurs n'ont rien perçu pour les bananes chargées, mais encore leurs coopératives se sont endettées.

Constatant que les planteurs et leurs organismes sont au bout de leurs forces :

D E M A N D E N T

- 1° - la suspension immédiate de la taxe de 3 francs qui finance la C.A.T.A. en attendant sa suppression par l'Assemblée.
- 2° - Demandent que de même qu'il y a deux ans un arrêté a réalisé un abattement de 10% sur la taxe de sortie pour alléger les charges de plantations tornadées,
Ce dégrèvement de 10% soit appliqué à la période allant du PREMIER SEPTEMBRE 1958 au 28 FEVRIER 1959;
- 3° - Demandent la remboursement de la taxe prélevée sur la banane non emballée puisque les conditions qui ont justifié la création de cette taxe n'existent plus;
- 4° - Demandent au Gouvernement d'ouvrir une enquête rapide et de prendre les mesures pour l'allègement des charges qui pèsent sur la banane:
TARIF DE FRET, TARIF FERROVIAIRE, etc, etc.
- 5° - Demandent l'application immédiate du conditionnement en gare en attendant la création le plus vite possible de l'Office des Produits;
- 6° - Les Coopératives demandent à être consultées sur l'emploi des crédits et moyens du fonds Routier car il ne sert à rien de faire une propagande en faveur de la qualité, si les pistes d'évacuation sont en mauvais état.

WAMBO Louis	COPLABAM
SIDI Gabriel	SCOARM
WAGNA Sachée	SCAPBB
MPONDO Salomon	COFOUR
KINGUE Pierre	UNION BANANIERE
NJITCHANG Pierre	C.P.M.
KWOPNANG Moise	COFOUBAM
PENDA Paul	C.A.M.

.../

SOURCE: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun
(Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).

APPENDIX C: SELECTED DOCUMENTS FROM THE 1959 SMALLHOLDERS' STRIKE,
MUNGO

COMMUNIQUE DU MINISTERE DES AFFAIRES ECONOMIQUES

LE GOUVERNEMENT PREND D'IMPORTANTES MESURES
POUR ASSAINIR LE MARCHÉ BANANIER
CREATION PROCHAINE D'UNE CAISSE DE STABILISATION DES COURS

YAOUNDE, 25 MAI - Le Ministère des Affaires Economiques communique :

"La chute des cours de la banane sur le Marché français ayant mis les planteurs dans une position difficile, les prix de réalisation dépassant le montant des frais d'évacuation, le Gouvernement camerounais s'est immédiatement consacré à la recherche des mesures propres à remédier à une telle situation. Il convient de souligner tout d'abord que l'élément essentiel de cette conjoncture à savoir les prix de vente à l'extérieur lui échappaient totalement. La seule possibilité qui lui restait était d'étudier avec les producteurs et les divers intermédiaires les mesures propres à alléger les frais inclus entre le stade plantation et le stade vente en France -

Après une réunion préliminaire tenue à Yaoundé au Ministère des Affaires Economiques et groupant les ministres et techniciens intéressés à la question, M. Fouda, ministre des Affaires Economiques, recevait du premier ministre mission de se rendre en zone bananière afin de prendre un contact direct avec les planteurs. Trois réunions furent tenues le 2 Mai à Mbanga, Loum et Nlohé auxquelles les planteurs assistèrent en foule -

Le ministre recueillit les desiderata des planteurs et leur donna l'assurance que le Gouvernement s'emploierait dans le plus bref délai à trouver des solutions aux problèmes posés -

Les 8, 12 et 14 mai étaient convoqués successivement à Yaoundé les représentants des transitaires, les Compagnies de Navigation, le Conseil d'Administration de la Régie des Chemins de Fer, et le Conseil d'Administration de la CATA -

A la suite de ces réunions et entrevues, le Gouvernement a décidé de prendre et de faire appliquer immédiatement les mesures suivantes :

- 1/- suspension immédiate de la taxe de 3 frs perçue au profit de la CATA en attendant sa suppression définitive -
- 2/- tarif des Chemins de Fer ramené de 14, 50 à 14 frs la tonne kilométrique et minimum de perception ramené de 12 à 10 tonnes du 15 septembre au 14 mars et de 10 à 8 tonnes du 15 mars au 14 septembre -

- 3/- commission des exportateurs ramenée de 5 à 4% -
- 4/- assurance ramenée au taux le plus bas actuellement appliqué par la Compagnie des Bananes -
- 5/- suppression de l'assurance sur les risques de guerre, de la cotisation propagande, de la cotisation importateurs -
- 6/- réduction des honoraires d'agréés en douane de 156,25 la tonne à 125 frs -
- 7/- commission sur débours ramenée de 1,50 à 0,50% -
- 8/- suppression de la cotisation de 180 frs la tonne perçue au profit de la Caisse de compensation privée.

L'ensemble de ces mesures aura pour effet d'augmenter la rémunération du planteur de 280 à 300 millions par an sur la base d'un tonnage normal d'exportation.

En outre, les Compagnies de Navigation ont accepté d'étudier un système de tarif de fret avec ristournes applicables dans le cas où la situation des chargements redeviendrait normale.

Par ailleurs, le Gouvernement a décidé de mettre en place aussi rapidement que possible le conditionnement dans les gares bananières. Cette mesure doit réduire très substantiellement les frais d'évacuation du produit. En effet, les planteurs ne supporteront plus les frais de transport fer pour des régimes ultérieurement refusés à Bonabéri.

Enfin, il sera procédé dans le plus bref délai possible au renouvellement des Conseils d'Administration des Coopératives.

Il convient de noter que nombre des dispositions prises vont au-delà des désirs exprimés par les planteurs.

Le Gouvernement a fait le maximum dans le minimum de temps pour assainir une situation dont, nous le répétons, la cause essentielle réside dans la chute des prix sur le Marché extérieur. A cet égard, le Gouvernement a mis à l'étude la création d'une Caisse de Stabilisation des cours de la Banane. Cette Caisse permettra d'absorber les fluctuations des prix et d'assurer une rémunération normale du planteur en toute conjoncture.

Il appartient maintenant aux planteurs de reprendre et même de développer leurs activités afin de profiter des gains que leur vaudront les mesures évoquées ci-dessus. Leur attention a été par ailleurs attirée sur la nécessité qui s'impose à eux d'effectuer les traitements phytosanitaires par leurs propres moyens, ces traitements

seront d'ailleurs rendus obligatoires. Ils devront également améliorer la qualité de leur produit afin d'en assurer le placement sur les marchés extérieurs même en période de surproduction mondiale".

PENJA, le 27 Mai 1959.
Pour copie certifiée conforme,
Le Directeur du S.D.I.B.C.

P. LEOBON

SOURCE: Syndicat de Défense des Intérêts Bananiers du Cameroun
(Penja, Cameroon, Syndicat minutes).

APPENDIX D

LABOUR RECRUITMENT IN THE FRENCH CAMEROONS AS DESCRIBED
BY IRENE DUGAST, 1942

Ayons donc le courage de notre honte et transportons-nous dans les villages pour prendre part au recrutement. L'Office du Travail a dit au chef supérieur: "Tu dois me donner 40 hommes". Les yeux brillants, il appelle ses chefs de village et leur transmet la consigne: "On me demande 60 hommes, donnez-les moi vite". Les chefs de village décident entre eux du nombre que chacun donnera pour fournir les 60 hommes. "Mois, je peux en donner dix". Il appelle ses messagers et leur dit en secret: "Donnez-moi quinze hommes". Les messagers, munis de leur redoutable chicote s'abattent alors sur les villages et se saisissent de qui ils rencontrent, de jour ou de nuit. Certes, le chef du village leur a indiqué ses ennemis, eux-mêmes ont les leurs, et ils savent les trouver. Dans les cases, dans les champs, ils font la chasse à l'homme. Sans pitié ils frappent et blessent, mais tant mieux. "Tu veux être libéré? donne-moi une poule, donne-moi 5 F. Tu n'en as pas? tant pis pour toi". Ils en prennent le plus grand nombre possible pour pouvoir en libérer le plus possible contre des cadeaux rémunérateurs. Quelle joie pour eux que les périodes de recrutement! Vite on ramène chez le chef de village ceux qui n'ont pas pu se racheter, et souvent sans leur avoir d'abord permis de retourner jusqu'à leur case ou de prendre congé de leurs femmes. Ils sont enfermés à clé pour être livrés à l'échelon supérieur le lendemain. Le chef a reçu les 20 hommes demandés. Mais alors il intervient à son tour: "Que ceux qui veulent être libérés me fasse un cadeau; qui veut se racheter?" L'un promet 2 poulets, deux autres se cotisent pour donner une chèvre, un 4e apportera 10 mesures de maïs, le 5e une grosse calebasse d'huile. Comme il est facile de s'entendre! Cinq seront libérés. Les 15 demandés seront envoyés au chef supérieur. Mais ces 5 libérés peuvent-ils rentrer chez eux? Ce serait trop simple. "Si vraiment tu veux être libéré, que ta femme m'apporte le cadeau promis mais tu travailleras d'abord pour moi pendant une semaine". Il n'y a qu'à accepter sans discuter, et nourris à peine, ces 5 hommes serviront à tous les travaux avant de regagner leurs foyers.

Pendant ce temps, leurs 15 camarades sont amenés chez le chef supérieur. Dans l'espace de quelques jours les 60 hommes sont trouvés et réunis devant lui. Maintenant commence la même comédie de rachat: "Qui veut me faire un cadeau? Celui qui me donnera une chèvre sera libre de rentrer chez lui". Que le sacrifice soit énorme, on l'accepte plutôt que d'aller se ruiner plus encore dans une plantation. "Moi, je donne la chèvre", dit l'un. "Je ne veux pas de ta chèvre", répond le chef qui depuis longtemps désire prendre la femme du malheureux. Il sait d'avance lesquels partiront coûte que coûte, et il faut bien qu'ils partent, ils n'ont de recours auprès de personne si le chef supérieur le veut ainsi. L'un ou l'autre voudrait

même, lors de son passage à la subdivision, plaider sa cause pour être libéré, il ne le peut pas car à quelles persécutions ultérieures ne s'expose-t-il pas de la part du chef supérieur, de son chef de village, de tous les messagers?

Pendant que les recrutés passent par tous les services administratifs, les 20 libérés du chef supérieur partent pour le travail du potentat. Ils passent 15 jours à un mois dans ses propres plantations de café, travaillant en recevant la ration de 0,30 F. par jour, seront sous les verroux la nuit et affamés, ne seront libérés qu'après le versement de leur prix de rachat.

Voilà donc nos recrutés amenés à la subdivision. Ils passent la visite médicale. Le médecin, s'il n'est pas consciencieux, voit arriver avec terreur tous ces hommes et se dit: "Les infirmiers peuvent bien faire ce travail". Quelle chance pour les infirmiers! Car eux aussi peuvent dire: "Tu es inapte si je reçois un poulet". Un autre recevra la visite de sa concubine: "Celui-ci mon frère, laisse-le, tu le remplaceras par un malade que tu avais renvoyé.

Dans tous les contingents qui passent la visite médicale il y a des inaptes. L'un est rachitique, l'autre a une hernie: un troisième est trop vieux. Plus il y aura d'inaptes, plus le chef supérieur s'en réjouira car ils seront "cueillis" après la visite, et au lieu de rentrer chez eux, le vieux, le rachitique, le hernissieux vont rejoindre au travail les rachetés. Le chef supérieur a donc su recruter comme la plantation européenne.

Enfin le contingent étant au complet, ils peuvent partir dans les plantations, sous l'oeil vigilant des policiers. Et nous, serions nous assez sots pour ne pas avoir notre petit profit? Si tu me donnes 2 F je te remplacerai ce soir par un autre".

SOURCE: Jean-Louis Dongmo, Le Dynamisme bamiléké (Cameroun) Volume I: La maîtrise de l'espace agraire (Yaoundé, Cameroon: University de Yaoundé, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Délégation générale à la Recherche Scientifique et Technique, 1981), pp. 122-30.