France’s involvement and engagement in suppressing independence and opposition movements in Cameroon between 1945 and 1971

Report of the “Research” section of the Franco-Cameroonian Commission

Press Pack

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Key points to remember

A few figures about the written and oral archives used in our report

1,100 archival boxes analysed by our team of **14** historians

2,300 declassified documents from the French archives, thus fulfilling the promise made by the President of the French Republic. The documents are now freely accessible to every reader.

A dozen donations of private **archives** in France and Cameroon.

Around 100 interviews were carried out. Most of them were undertaken to cross-check points covered in the archives. Some interviews were also carried out by the "heritage and arts" section of the Commission. All the interviews used in our report follow the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Our report will be freely available at https://www.vie-publique.fr/ and on a Cameroonian website to be determined shortly.

Available free of charge at Éditions Hermann (digital version), printed version at cost price of 15,000 CFA francs (distributor Kala éditions) - 35 euros elsewhere.
All authors have waived their rights to this publication.

As expected, our research report provides a historical and historiographical analysis of France's role in Cameroon over the period in question, in a comparative perspective with other wars of decolonisation.

Main findings of our research:

France waged a decolonisation war in Cameroon. Our report highlights the multiple acts of repressive violence perpetrated by the colonial authorities and the French army, both before and after independence in 1960.

- The violent events in **Douala in September 1945 were part of a series of repressive measures taken by the French authorities in their colonial empire after the Second World War** (Senegal, Algeria, Madagascar).

- We highlighted the extent of the **political, diplomatic, police and judicial repression** employed by the French authorities against the independence movement **of the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC), the Union Démocratique des Femmes Camerounaises (Udefec) and the Jeunesse Démocratique du Cameroun (JDC), which intensified after they were banned in July 1955.**

- The report acknowledges the acts of violence perpetrated by the French army and the soldiers under its command against combatants and civilians as part of a "total" war: We particularly focus on the:

    - Recourse to the **"revolutionary war doctrine",** practised in Indochina, continued in Algeria and adapted by the French army in Cameroon in the form of special military zones.
    - **"Counter-revolutionary"** organisation **of civilian populations and use of "psychological action" and violence** (including attacks on women, civilians and bodies, the use of torture, executions and disappearances)
    - **Collective violence (bombings and use of incendiary cartridges**; destruction of villages, sometimes widespread in certain regions; massacres of civilians, including those documented by the Commission **at Ékité on 30-31 December 1956 and Balessing on 28 May 1960**; execution of civilians identified as combatants).
    - Forced displacement of civilian populations to "regroupment" camps, causing major long-term damage.

- Our report **documents the establishment of a racialized and inegalitarian justice system in Cameroon**, as well as a **political system marked by censorship, inequity and the establishment of false political parties co-opted by the French authorities**, despite the mandate given by the UN to allow the emancipation and progress of the territory towards autonomy and independence: a real **misuse of the mandate.**

- We also highlight the responsibility of the French army and the French state in the **deaths and assassinations of** certain UPC leaders: **Isaac Nyobè Pandjock (17 June 1958); Ruben Um Nyobè (13 September 1958); Félix-Roland Moumié (3 November 1960); Paul Momo (17 November 1960); Jérémie Ndéléné (24 November 1960).**

- **We assess the political, military and financial support** provided by the French Republic to the Cameroonian state in its fight against opposition movements after 1960, in a context where the state was moving towards an authoritarian regime.

For more details, the summary of the report and more ... the report itself.

Epilogue/summary

The "Research" component of the Franco-Cameroonian Commission, tasked with investigating France's involvement and engagement in suppressing independence and opposition movements in Cameroon between 1945 and 1971, offers a detailed account of this largely overlooked decolonization war. Divided into four chronological sections, this report retraces the genesis of the confrontation between the French colonial authorities and the independentist opposition through the prism of the long colonial period (1945-1955), and then the shift from political, diplomatic, police and judicial repression to the war waged by the rebels (1955-1960), which continued despite Cameroon's political transition and independence (1960-1965) - and even beyond, as French aid was maintained within the framework of cooperation between the two countries (1965-1971).

Section 1

The first strategies for combating emancipatory forces in Cameroon (1916-1955): defence of French interests, control of political life, and violence

This section looks at the early strategies deployed by the French authorities against emancipatory forces in Cameroon from 1916 to 1955, particularly from the Second World War onwards, when the independence movement took hold.

As a prologue, the report begins with a study, already well documented by historians, of the European colonial occupation at the end of the 19th century and the partition of German *Kamerun* into two League of Nations mandates after the First World War. It seeks to link these two episodes to the question of the decolonisation war in Cameroon. From the end of the 19th century, France and the United Kingdom coveted this territory for its economic and strategic potential, which explains France's determination to preserve its domination there until the end of the colonial period - and then its influence well beyond. During and after the First World War, the French government exerted diplomatic pressure on the Allies to obtain the creation of League of Nations mandates that would satisfy its territorial and political ambitions. **From the very beginning of the mandate, France sought to exploit Cameroon as one of its colonies, thereby breaching the fragile international law that the League of Nations sought to enforce, which was seen as a brake on its political and economic ambitions in Central Africa**.

The Second World War confirmed the importance of this territory to French power. Along with the Congo, Ubangi-Chari and Chad, Cameroon joined Free French Africa at the end of August 1940, giving de Gaulle a territorial base and political legitimacy to continue the war, albeit at the cost of a brutal war effort demanded of the Cameroonian people. More than 4,000 Cameroonian riflemen enlisted and fought alongside the Free French Forces against Axis troops. Cameroon thus acquired a symbolic dimension in the story of the liberation of France for all the Resistance fighters who passed through there. This fact explains the way in which the French authorities once again sought to integrate Cameroon into the French colonial empire at the end of the conflict, during the diplomatic negotiation process concerning the future of the mandated territories. Despite heavy lobbying within the new United Nations Organisation

(UNO), in order to maintain its domination without international control, agreements were finally signed in 1946: the former Cameroon under French mandate became a territory under its trusteeship which should, in theory, rapidly evolve towards autonomy and independence. **However, the French desire to continue to rule Cameroon as an "integral part" of its empire persisted** and shaped the way in which the various governments and colonial authorities, often made up of former resistance fighters, acted during the Cameroon war.

This section also places particular emphasis on the **political dynamism of Cameroonians after 1944**, whether through the creation of trade unions, associations or movements now calling for independence and reunification with the part of the country under British trusteeship. **Our study focuses on the men and women who helped to bring about this political emancipation: the trade unionists working in Cameroon, who were close to the future members of the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC) created in 1948, the *Union démocratique des femmes camerounaises* (UDEFEC) created in 1952 and the *Jeunesse démocratique du Cameroun* (JDC) created in 1954**. This report provides a new insight into the way in which Cameroonians embraced nationalist ideas, guided by key UPC leaders such as Ruben Um Nyobè, Félix-Roland Moumié, Abel Kingué and Ernest Ouandié, both in the South and West of the country, already studied by many historians, and in the lesser-known regions of the Mbam, the North and Kribi. The granularity of our analyses makes it possible to identify why the French authorities, despite their constant efforts, were unable to halt the growing success of the UPC among the Cameroonian population, prompting them to resort to a range of legal, illegal and violent methods to thwart this influence. Police and judicial repression of nationalist activists went hand in hand with an attempt to control political life. The colonial authorities created parties specifically to counter the UPC: by renaming these parties, then known as "administrative" parties, as "collaboration parties", we wanted to emphasise that the French colonial authorities corrupted and manipulated Cameroonian politics to maintain their positions in the midst of decolonisation and the Cold War.

Thanks to the cross-referencing of archives from overseas France and those of the military justice system, which were revealed on this occasion, we have been able to study in detail the violent events of Douala in September 1945, which the Commission re-characterised as such in order to free itself from the pejorative term "riots", which had long been used to describe them, and to place them in the context of the wave of French repression that took place in Algeria, Senegal and Madagascar after the Second World War. **The report highlights the role played by a handful of French settlers in the escalation of violence and the inability of the political authorities to control it**. These settlers rejected any reform that challenged their political and economic domination and their social privileges and organised themselves into "Estates-General" to denounce the reforms that emerged from the Brazzaville conference in 1944, which were still very timid with regard to the Cameroonians. We discover the weakness of Governor Henri Nicolas in the face of these clearly identified, aggressive and vindictive colonists, who opposed the demonstrations by the poorest people in Douala, affected by the difficult post-war economic situation. **Overwhelmed, the governor agreed to supply them with weapons, as attested by a small notebook found by the Commission in the military archives**. These settlers and some French airmen from the Béthune squadron, who exceeded their mission, were the repressive actors in this first violent sequence, whose official human toll (nine killed) is largely underestimated. The punishments meted out at the end of the events are a perfect illustration of a racialised colonial justice system: thousands of demonstrators were arrested and hundreds were sentenced to prison or forced labour.

Conversely, only a handful of colonists were charged with "rebellion against authority". The airmen were tried by a military court set up for the occasion: they were all arrested for a few weeks and their captain was stripped of his command. The guilt of some administrators was recognised, but most of them remained in post. **The violent events in Douala in September 1945 became a symbolic moment for Cameroonian nationalists**, who saw them as proof that post-war colonial reformism was incapable of satisfying their expectations, while the supervisory authorities could only provide an authoritarian and repressive response to their aspirations.

Finally, with a view to connecting the analyses of Cameroon under French trusteeship and Cameroon under British trusteeship, particularly in the South with the Southern Cameroons, this section shows how the repression of the Cameroonian independence movement transcended the borders of the two Camerouns through a system of surveillance of the UPC from the early 1950s. It details the first exchanges between the main nationalist movements in the two territories, whose protagonists are already talking about a potential reunification feared by the French colonial authorities. The French authorities asked their British counterparts to monitor contacts between these Cameroonian nationalists and to provide them with information on their activities. The report also emphasises, from the perspective of a global and connected history, that **the UN rapidly became a forum for oratory and ideological confrontations between members of the UPC and the colonial authorities**. The French government, *via* its diplomats, aided by the American government, notably its consulate in Paris, thus engaged in a tactic of systematic obstruction of the nationalist players, aimed at preventing the dissemination and circulation of their ideas. They all regularly and deliberately undermine the authority of the UN by preventing them from travelling to New York to plead their case at hearings before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. Rarely effective, this policy is accompanied by a mobilisation of its permanent delegation and Cameroonian actors sympathetic to its cause, to discredit the UPC members' statements and defend the political *status quo*, aided by the allied imperial powers. Similarly, their petitions sent to the Trusteeship Council were methodically contradicted by others written by the leaders of collaborationist parties. In the same vein, the first UN missions to Cameroon in 1949 and 1952, which were supposed to assess progress towards political autonomy, were closely supervised by the colonial authorities. **As a result, the UN, faced with various forms of diplomatic repression by the French authorities, was incapable of defending the fundamental rights of Cameroonians**.

Section 2

The polymorphous repressions, from the 1955 moment to the war in Sanaga-Maritime

The second section of this report looks at **the turning point represented by the "1955 moment" in the fight against the independence movement, which led to its disappearance from the legal political scene**. This vast repressive sequence, from January to July, is explained here in detail, as close as possible to the players involved.

One civilian official plays a crucial role: the new High Commissioner, Roland Pré. A notorious anti-communist, renowned for his authoritarian methods in West Africa, **he proposed**

structural reforms, while at the same time adopting a repressive policy against the nationalist movement. **He was helped in this by certain civil servants, the Catholic Church and the collaborationist parties, and supported by a judiciary and security forces dedicated to repression**. In a socio-economic and political context that had been tense since his arrival in January 1955, **new violent events took place from 15 to 29 May in the Mungo, Sanaga-Maritime and Bamiléké regions - as well as in Douala and Yaoundé - while Ruben Um Nyobè, secretary general of the UPC who had returned to the UN, was being prosecuted and had already gone into hiding in his home village near Boumnyebel**. **Women's political involvement, which had been structured and developed in the first half of the 1950s, continued with their active participation in the actions of May 1955 - they were present at all the demonstrations and protests in towns and villages**. UPC rallies, which were well attended by the local population, were disrupted by the intervention of opponents or "forces of order", leading to street clashes, the arrest of activists, dozens of injuries and, officially, 26 deaths. While this type of anti-nationalist measure was a *modus operandi* in the French colonial empire in Africa after 1944, the report shows how the authorities, foremost among them Roland Pré, campaigned *via* various political networks within the French government of Edgar Faure, and in particular the Minister for Overseas France, Pierre-Henri Teitgen, to obtain the dissolution of the UPC, the JDC and the UDEFEC, on the basis of a 1936 French law on combat groups and armed militias. Although the wave of repression had already begun in May 1955, the decree of 13 July 1955 made the ban official, opening up a new phase and forcing activists to go underground, either to take refuge in the first maquis or to opt for exile to the Southern Cameroons.

This new sequence was marked by an intensification of repression **via multiple mechanisms for controlling civil, political and media life. The report begins by emphasising the containment of nationalist ideas *by* mobilising the bureaucracy and various pro-French (or pro-France) players within colonial society (chiefs, members of collaboration parties, Christian missions and associations)**. The appointment of Pierre Messmer as High Commissioner in April 1956 intensified this policy, which aimed to strictly supervise the process of Cameroon's accession to autonomy following the passing of the framework law by the new Minister for Overseas France, Gaston Defferre. **The new "trusteeship" state, established in May 1957, still gave a major role to the colonial authorities, despite the appointment of a government led by Cameroon's "first" Prime Minister, André-Marie Mbida, chosen for his pro-French and anti-UPC leanings**. In order to put an end to the political confrontation that had begun in May 1955, negotiations with the UPC were envisaged for a time, but quickly put on hold, in particular because of the refusal, shared by several Cameroonian politicians, to pass an amnesty law that would allow the return of UPC leaders to the legal scene. The vote on this law was therefore delayed until February 1958. Although there was a simultaneous military crackdown in southern Cameroon, the authorities gradually came round to more political solutions, which led to a major crisis between André-Marie Mbida, who was intransigent with the UPC, and the new High Commissioner, Jean Ramadier, who had been appointed in February 1958 and was in favour of negotiation. Ramadier's archives, which were entrusted to the Commission, shed light on the course of this "tug of war", which led to Mbida's dismissal and Ramadier's return to Paris, where he was disowned and dismissed by Gérard Jaquet, the Minister for Overseas France in Félix Gaillard's government.

This section also highlights the fact that this episode marked a turning point in the history of Cameroon: from then on, plans for independence and reunification, which had been

put forward for almost a decade by the UPC, were supported and exploited by the new Prime Minister, Ahmadou Ahidjo, and by Xavier Torré, the new High Commissioner, as they stepped up the military crackdown on UPC fighters in the south and west of Cameroon. At the same time as this political control, administrative repression was unleashed on all those who supported UPC ideas in civil society or expressed sympathy for them: certain civil servants were transferred or dismissed; trade unionists were progressively muzzled; protest leaders were dismissed and exiled; and activists, particularly students, mobilised in mainland France were carefully monitored and censored: repression was thus exported beyond the borders of the authorities. Judicial repression, already massive in 1955, continued, intensified and hardened.

In 1956, in the face of attempts by the UPC and other Cameroonian politicians to unite, the first universal suffrage elections in December were tightly controlled by the colonial authorities, especially as the Comité National d'Organisation (CNO), the UPC's paramilitary organisation, called for them to be boycotted or obstructed by armed action.

Among the methods of political and civil repression, our study takes a fresh look at the role of the colonial authorities in the 'battle of opinions' launched after May 1955. With the help of a collaborationist press and a French society that tended to be indifferent, if not anti-UPC, official propaganda, which was particularly active in Cameroon and abroad, painted a distorted picture of the UPC, which was seen solely through the prism of its armed actions, described as 'terrorist', the better to delegitimise its political project. This repression is coupled with various forms of media control, *via* radio, cinema, literature and postal censorship, as the clandestine UPC struggles to disseminate its own story. **Repression also affected the independent press, which fell victim to censorship** and targeted arrests of its most outspoken journalists, several of whom, such as Marcel Bebey Eyidi, were sentenced to prison terms.

Finally, the Commission, always keen to see the **independence movement in its global context, insists on the intensification of repression outside the borders of the trusteeship territory**. Firstly in the Southern Cameroons, where French lobbying, timidly welcomed by the British authorities, resulted in joint police action and the expulsion of UPC leaders, who were forced into exile in Sudan in July 1957. At the United Nations, French repressive diplomacy intensified against those who tried to bring the voice of independence to New York: once again, the same strategies of administrative blocking of hearings before the Fourth Committee, a policy of inter-imperial alliances in the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly, and anti-UPC propaganda through the intervention of its permanent delegation and the head of the External Relations Service, Xavier Deniau, were used. The geopolitical and organisational impasses at the UN, skilfully exploited by the French authorities, perpetuated the strategy of muzzling the members of UPC. The huge number of protest petitions sent to New York could not really be dealt with by the UN bodies, while the visiting mission sent there in October-November 1955, chaired by the Haitian diplomat Max Dorsinville and supposed to investigate compliance with the trusteeship agreements, but without any power of constraint, was bound hand and foot to the will of the colonial authorities.

Using French intelligence service archives and declassified documents, this section also focuses on 'policing' practices in the war against the UPC members. Before May 1955, the authorities stepped up security initiatives, often in an *ad hoc* and uncoordinated manner, to

contain the UPC members, *by* strengthening the Sûreté, the police, the gendarmerie, the auxiliary guard and the judiciary, while at the same time conducting surveillance operations abroad.

The banning of the UPC in July led to the increased mobilisation of French administrators, magistrates, military and police officers: in a quasi-experimental manner, actions were carried out by the administrator Maurice Delauney, assisted by a team of loyal collaborators, who, from 1956, deployed extensive security and repressive measures in the Bamiléké region in order to prevent the war from spreading to the West. Although the intelligence networks remained scattered and sometimes competitive, they shaped a "culture of surveillance" that permeated colonial society, grew denser in Cameroon and was even exported to metropolitan France. Police repression was widespread throughout colonial society, alternating between identity checks, the targeting of gathering places such as markets or private homes, and the surveillance of border crossings. The report highlights the practice of preventive arrests and "raids", which, as well as bearing witness to colonial arbitrariness and the use of extra-legal measures, revealed the use of torture and the disappearance of people - all forms of violence observed in particular in the large towns, in the west and in the south of Cameroon.

Finally, to compensate for a blind spot in research on this war of decolonisation, the section offers new analyses of the judicial repression of UPC militants. Instrumentalised by the authorities, who initially hesitated between leniency and intransigence, this biased justice system became increasingly repressive until 1958, in the hope of silencing nationalist voices and pushing them to surrender, while the defence of the UPC members, represented by French lawyers, was regularly obstructed or even refused. A specific study established that around fifty women were tried and sentenced between 1956 and 1958 for their political activities after the dissolution of political organisations linked with UPC. While their fate was similar to that of male activists, they were also exposed to specific forms of repression within police structures or in prison, with distinctive forms of torture directed against them. This systematic violence spans the period studied by the Commission and is also addressed in section 3.

In addition, magistrates who asserted their independence from the political authorities and maintained a measured approach to the administration of justice were disowned and recalled to mainland France. Prisons, whose conditions of detention were denounced at the time, also proved to be repressive environments where ill-treatment and torture took place, concealed from public opinion which, moreover, was not very sensitive to them, as the public debate was so polarised by "the question" in Algeria. House arrest and the creation of a number of internment camps, including Bangou and Mbanga, were gradually envisaged as extra-judicial solutions to the anti-UPC struggle. **Ultimately, the section highlights the intensity of the police and judicial practices employed against the UPC during the decolonisation war in Cameroon.**

Alongside this political, police and judicial repression, there was also a more specifically military repression. The report provides a detailed overview of the history of the UPC fighters, distinguishing between their two main paramilitary organisations: the CNO in the south of the country and the Sinistre de Défense Nationale du Cameroun (SDNK) in the West. Initially,

these groups had no experience of warfare and were poorly equipped. The CNO and SDNK were structured behind leaders, Gorgon Foe and Pierre Simo respectively, who succeeded in carrying out guerrilla actions. They gradually became more effective, better trained and better armed, thanks to the movement of supplies and people between the maquis in different regions.

Our work proposes a detailed analysis of the military mechanisms deployed to combat the development of the maquis in Sanaga-Maritime. It begins with an overview of the 'forces of order' in 1956, highlighting the fact that these were being renewed with the arrival of new military actors, who shared the experience of the Indochinese War of Independence. In addition to the civilians and administrators, the section focuses on the military cadres, whether they were in charge of the AEF-Cameroon Defence Zone (Generals Dio and Le Puloch) or Cameroon (Colonels Whitehouse and Crest de Villeneuve), or whether they were operating within local units: The career paths of Lieutenant-Colonel Lamberton, as well as those of his main subordinates (Paul Gambini, Gabriel Haulin and Georges Conan) and African Affairs officers employed specifically for intelligence purposes in strategic territories, are retraced here thanks to the unprecedented use of their career files. **This approach makes it possible to reconstruct the state of mind of these actors who, traumatised by their defeat at the hands of the Viêt-Minh, and believing themselves to be exposed to the same type of 'subversive' threat, advocated the adoption of new repressive techniques, adapted to the 'irregular' strategy of their adversary: inspired by Charles Lacheroy's thoughts on 'revolutionary warfare', their strategic thinking enshrined the civilian population as the stake and object of armed confrontation.**

The report shows that the December 1956 elections were a tipping point towards armed confrontation in Cameroon, following the actions of the CNO. It gives a precise historical account of the events that led to the detachment of reinforcements to an initial emergency zone: the Éséka operational zone, the scene of a particularly brutal crackdown involving numerous arrests and military operations, with a death toll of almost 300. On this subject, the Commission is documenting the Ékité massacre of 31 December 1956 in an unprecedented way, by cross-referencing military archives and the testimonies of relatives of the victims in order to deconstruct the official account, which presents this collective violence as a legitimate counter-attack, whereas in fact it was an assault on unarmed civilians. This first phase of extreme violence resulted in the war taking root: While the colonial authorities maintained a high level of judicial and political repression, the maquis were reconstituted and the CNO resumed its struggle, prompting the High Commissioner to create a new emergency zone - the Sanaga-Maritime "pacification zone" (Zopac), which came into force in November 1957 and led to an intensification of the war, under the aegis of the High Commissioner's delegate in Douala, Daniel Doustin, and his military chief, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Lamberton.

The report details the organisational and social control procedures to which the people of Sanaga-Maritime fell victim, even before the actual military operations. It shows that, by applying the "revolutionary war doctrine" (RWD), the command aimed to control them in order to better facilitate the war against the maquis. He begins by reviewing the policy of forcibly moving civilians to so-called "regroupment" camps, inspired by the methods used by the French army in Cambodia. Using Zopac's military archives, the report provides a detailed account of the practice, which was fully endorsed by the military as a 'counter-revolutionary' instrument designed to sever family and social ties between civilians and combatants. The populations were the subject of intense propaganda on the part of the colonial administration

and the French army, who nevertheless preferred to talk about “psychological action”: the specific characteristics of its application in Cameroon are examined here, in particular through the prism of the archives kept by its main architect, the journalist André Boyer, which are partly preserved in the diplomatic archives in Nantes. Above all, this propaganda shows, for the first time, that this “psychological action” was progressively concentrated in the “regroupment” camps, where it was intended to help persuade the displaced populations of the "merits" of maintaining their new “villages” beyond the repression of the maquis, and also highlights the widespread economic insecurity resulting from their uprooting.

Our study details the issues, procedures and consequences of the military operations carried out in the Zopac. It highlights **the crucial role played by intelligence gathering, the focus of the military’s attention**. While describing its research processes, the report deconstructs Lieutenant-Colonel Lamberton’s argument that he favoured the psychological manipulation of prisoners in order to absolve himself of the violence committed under his orders: although rare, written and oral sources provide an account of torture practices. They were at the heart of the chain of actions that made possible the specific operations carried out as part of the “counter-revolutionary” war: “surveillance” operations and field operations carried out by small units, sometimes involving massive “sweeps”. The archives of the diaries of marches and unit operations, which have been subjected to a critical examination of their semantics, provide a glimpse of the violence used arbitrarily against combatants, but also against civilians, such as the murder of “fugitives who have been shot”, a term that echoes the violence of the Algerian War of Independence. The military’s aim was to destroy the maquis by targeting their leaders more specifically, such as the CNO’s chief of staff, Isaac Nyobè Pandjock, who was killed by a French patrol on 17 June 1958, and above all the UPC's main leader, Ruben Um Nyobè.

The report takes a comprehensive approach to the hunt that led to his assassination on 13 September 1958, cross-referencing available archives and oral testimonies, highlighting the differences between them and their impact on the memory of the conflict. His death provided an opportunity to seize his documents, including his famous personal notebooks, which include dreamlike descriptions. The Commission’s research has shown that they are not currently held in French archives, and that the only transcription published by the journalist Georges Chaffard, whose archives were entrusted to the Commission by his family, is in fact merely the transposition of a notebook written and supplied by Lieutenant-Colonel Lamberton himself, inviting the historian to be cautious about its origin.

Finally, the section attempts to draw up an assessment of this repression after the dissolution of Zopac, two months after the death of *Mpodol.* Deconstructing the discourse on the ‘rallies’ of the UPC members, which were so many surrenders disguised as pseudo-acts of allegiance, it also highlights the high death toll (between 355 and 400) of these ‘operations to maintain order’, far below the reality that its protagonists assumed to be a war.

Section 3

The French authorities at the heart of the Cameroonian transition process 1958-1964: a turning point?

The discussion in this section of the '1960 moment', during **which the official end of trusteeship over Cameroon was debated, shows that formal independence did not in any way constitute a clean break with the colonial period**. On the contrary, it marked the beginning of a process of political transition that lasted from February 1958 to April 1965, a period that was far from putting an end to the involvement of the French authorities in the repression of opposition movements - something that Cameroon's new institutional situation should have put an end to in the name of independence and the principle of sovereignty.

This section examines the ins and outs of an important debate aimed **at defining the new relations resulting from this transition, which, although asymmetrical, are based on a form of collaboration that certain players in the country are seizing upon**. First and foremost, was Ahmadou Ahidjo, an *outsider* in Cameroonian politics? Originally from the North, he played a central role in this period of transition, which was largely controlled by the tutelary power: he became "the man of the French". His appointment as Prime Minister in February 1958 came just before the crisis of May 1958, which, by favouring General de Gaulle's return to power, consecrated a new president favourable to preserving France's influence in sub-Saharan Africa, and *a fortiori* in Cameroon. While a transitional statute was adopted to accompany the process of independence, the report highlights the role played by the visiting mission of the UN Trusteeship Council which, in October 1958, visited a Cameroon that resembled a "Potemkin village", so limited and controlled was its investigation once again in a context of high tension. **The conclusions of the mission, which was committed to anti-UPC rhetoric, ultimately led it to give uncompromising support to the Cameroonian government, which obtained an end to UN supervision in March 1959, while at the same time confiscating its citizens' say on the shape of the future regime. The report focuses on the way in which Ahidjo, president of the new state in April 1960, his government and a number of Cameroonian political leaders built an autocratic and authoritarian regime with the support of the French authorities, represented by advisers and administrators who gave their green light to the repressive measures adopted at the time. The Commission's work shows that a number of French players were also involved in drafting the Constitution of Cameroon, including Michel Debré**, then Minister of Justice, which was promulgated in March 1960 and amended in 1961 with the creation of a Federal Republic. This established a strong presidential regime which, despite the lifting of the ban on the UPC in February 1960, continued to repress its activists and leaders - who, unlike most of the political players in Cameroon, refused to "join" the "unified" and then "single" party imposed on them by Ahidjo.

With a view to characterising the political transition in Cameroon, which was controlled by the French authorities, this section also offers a detailed study of all the **so-called 'cooperation' agreements, which were marked by an unbalanced negotiation process between Cameroonian and French players**. This process took place between 1958 and 1961 and resulted in the adoption of provisional texts, which were then formalised in the form of bilateral treaties, some of which remained secret to the benefit of French interests. In addition to the

economic, cultural and judicial sectors, the military aspect of these texts, the defence agreements, envisaged the continued participation of the French army in the "maintenance of law and order". **The report shows the extent to which the agreement reached between the two governments is the result of a combination of interests, underlining their emerging interdependence**: For the Cameroon government, it was a question of ensuring stability and substantial military resources at a time when armed action by the Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun (ALNK), the UPC's new military organisation, was tending to intensify; for the French government, it was a question of working to maintain a head of state on whom it had placed its bets in order to guarantee the continuity of its influence in Africa, in addition to ensuring that the decolonisation process under international scrutiny went smoothly. By legitimising the maintenance and even reinforcement of French troops in Cameroon, these texts created the conditions for a post-colonial continuity of France's involvement in the repression of opposition movements - in a country that was, in theory, now "independent".

Our study also highlights how the French government, *via* its embassy, its consular network and its development workers, adapted to the move towards an authoritarian regime in order to preserve their influence in a game of *realpolitik* that has been little studied until now, but which was a determining factor in the development of repressive logics. This French position was embodied in the installation of the first ambassador, Jean-Pierre Bénard, whose career is traced in great detail. The role of this ambassador was to relay to Paris the "temperature" of relations with the regime. The report shows that, for a long time presented as an *eminence grise*, his role as adviser to President Ahidjo was more complex: the use of the embassy's archival holdings highlights the changing relationship between these two actors, who were soon united in a community of interest that led them to support each other, but which revealed that Jean-Pierre Bénard had to deal more and more with a President and a number of Cameroonian officials who wanted to act independently. French cooperation is also particularly marked within the justice system. The introduction of a "state of emergency" in Cameroon was inspired by measures that existed in France at the beginning of the Fifth Republic, probably because of the presence of legal specialists in the cooperation. For their part, the magistrates are becoming involved in the workings of the Cameroonian judicial system, which is geared towards the repression of political opposition, and this is creating tensions with their supervisory ministry. **The report shows that the position of the French authorities at the time was to support Ahidjo's regime by avoiding the involvement of French aid workers in political trials**, such as that of André Mbida, Charles Okala, Marcel Bebey-Eyidi and Théodore Mayi Matip in 1962. **This did not prevent magistrates from playing a major role in authoritarian developments, but the section shows that their influence diminished as the state became more Cameroonian**, as highlighted by the example of magistrate Francis Clair, legal adviser to the Minister of the Armed Forces, Sadou Daoudou. Although he had a decisive influence on the reshaping of criminal legislation, during the reform of military justice in October 1963 he came up against the determination of Cameroon's decision-makers, to whom he nevertheless remained an advisor.

This section also shows the active role played by French development workers in the transmission of a security apparatus to independent Cameroon, in particular in the creation of a Federal Security Service and a political police force, the *Service des études et de la documentation* (Sedoc), to repress opponents. Maurice Odent was its main architect, before giving way to the Cameroonian police officer Jean Fochivé. The 'networks' of Jacques Foccart,

the Secretary General for African and Malagasy Affairs and adviser to President Charles de Gaulle, were also at the heart of French contributions to the 'maintenance of order' in independent Cameroon: firstly through surveillance activities organised by the French intelligence services, in particular the *Service de la documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage* (Sdece), but also with the help of aid workers who helped train police officers in Cameroon and France. With the help of declassified French archives, the report also highlights the role of French development workers in intelligence research units, the Brigades Mixtes Mobiles, which deployed a great deal of violence in the name of the fight against UPC. The careers of key players such as Georges Conan, André Gerolami, Ernest Charoy and Henri Grattarola are retraced in order to identify their exact role up until 1962. With the help of oral testimonies, and in contrast to what is left unsaid in the written archives, the report sheds particular light on the use of torture during interrogations carried out by these units under the command of French police officers. These intelligence and 'policing' practices, which were reappropriated by the Cameroonian authorities after the departure of the aid workers, demonstrate the colonial legacy of the routinisation of political violence.

To fully grasp the global and interconnected dimension of the repression, this section also reconstructs the French influence in the process of reunification with the areas previously administered by the United Kingdom. **This involved, first of all, working closely with the British authorities to wipe out the UPC in the Southern Cameroons through targeted arrests and expulsions to the French-administered zone**. This led the British to wage war with their own troops from October 1960 to September 1961, a period during which Southern Cameroons was no longer administered by Nigeria but directly by London. From 1958 onwards, this collaboration was also characterised by active support for reunification, one of the UPC's demands, which was now being exploited by the French authorities: after Cameroon gained independence under French trusteeship, they continued their lobbying of the various Cameroonian players, during the favourable referendum in February 1961 and at the Foumban conference in July 1961. While Northern Cameroons gained its independence by joining Nigeria, Southern Cameroons became independent by joining the Republic of Cameroon in October, thanks to French interventionism designed to ensure the stability of Ahidjo's regime. This action outside the borders of the former trusteeship territory was coupled with interventions, sometimes violent, against UPC members living abroad. While the French authorities agreed to ban the French section of the UPC in 1963, the report also notes their gradual reluctance to take such repressive measures in metropolitan France, for legal reasons and because they were gradually losing interest in this type of action. They were, however, aware of the need to keep a close watch on the UPC leaders in exile, firstly in Cairo where they had taken refuge in September 1957, and then in other states allied to their cause, in Ghana, Guinea and certain Eastern European countries. However, the effectiveness of this surveillance became increasingly limited. **The failure of the UPC actions at the UN, their internal divisions and Cameroon's foreign policy weakened the movement's diplomatic strategy on the international stage, which at the time was led by its main leader, Félix-Roland Moumié**.

His death brought this strategy to an almost complete halt. His death by poisoning on 3 November 1960 reveals the French strategies deployed to bury, in particular, the plan for a provisional revolutionary government in Cameroon conceived by the president of the UPC in Guinea. Drawing on declassified Swiss and French archives, the report offers important

insights into the career of Moumié's assassin, William Bechtel, an experienced sleeper agent who had already been asked to carry out covert actions for the SDECE, the French foreign intelligence service. Our story reconstructs, hour by hour, the scenario of this poisoning carried out in a Geneva restaurant, when Bechtel managed to approach the UPC leader by posing as a journalist. Under arrest warrant, Bechtel, protected by various military and political supporters, was not arrested until fifteen years later: he was tried in Switzerland in 1980, but his case was dismissed. The report characterises the chain of decisions behind this assassination, which was essentially secret but discussed by several players, notably French authorities wishing to protect the long-term viability of Ahidjo's regime. The report shows without concession that this was a political assassination involving the responsibility of the French government.

Set in the political and diplomatic context, the years 1958-1964 were also a turning point in military terms**. The report relies heavily on military archives, in particular the career files of the men at the heart of the system**, on the private archives of General Max Briand made available to the Commission, and on numerous eyewitness accounts, to provide a precise analysis of the massive reinvestment of French troops in the repression of opposition movements and in particular the UPC "armed wing", the ALNK, after January 1960.

The violence reached a climax in the first half of 1960, as the French army had to reduce the ALNK's capacity for action on the ground as much as possible before the legislative elections in April 1960. Military archives have made it possible to draw up a detailed history of the maquis, highlighting the movements of groups of fighters in the field and the growing rivalry between their leaders. The strategies and tactics of the leaders at the top of the ALNK structure were clarified, in particular the roles of Martin Singap from 1959 and Ernest Ouandié, who succeeded him in 1961. The originality of the report lies in showing that these maquis were not confined to Western Cameroon, but persisted in the Sanaga-Maritime and Nkam regions. The groups of fighters were generally led by different leaders between whom rivalries were exacerbated: Martin Singap and Paul Momo in the West, Étienne Bapia and Makanda Pouth in Sanaga-Maritime. These armed actions extended as far as Cameroon's cities, particularly Douala, where urban guerrilla strategies were developed - strategies that had hitherto been less well studied. The Commission was able to shed light on several attacks on places where Europeans lived, on the night of 27 June 1959, on 30 December 1959 and in April 1960 - strategies that continued until 1961.

The section also highlights **the reaction of the French authorities to this reorganisation of the armed struggle, by analysing the new arrangements devised as independence approached and which formed the military framework within which repression was carried out on the ground. One of the Commission's main contributions here is to offer an institutional chronology of the measures, but also a non-linear account of French military involvement, marked by hesitations between 1958 and 1961, the most emblematic manifestation of which remains the succession of exceptional measures that are often difficult to understand. The report shows that the period from November 1958 to April 1959 saw the French army's first ebb in the West of the country: the new challenges of "maintaining order" in the run-up to autonomy put a damper on the Cameroonian administration and government, which refused to authorise the reproduction of the military resources used in Sanaga-Maritime** for fear that they would alienate the local elites and populations in the run-up to independence and the legislative elections that were to follow. The situation displeased the French military, who accelerated

their withdrawal to garrisons, but the increase in armed actions by the ALNK fuelled fears that the transition process would be disrupted. The two governments therefore agreed to reinvest the French army in Western Cameroon, where new military leaders were deployed from January 1960 - the main ones being General Briand and Lieutenant-Colonels Gribelin and Laurière between February 1960 and January 1961. Their careers are the subject of an original presentation, which highlights their shared experience of Indochina, but also and above all of the Algerian War of Independence. Under French command, but under the authority of the Cameroonian government, military operations were stepped up, at the cost of thousands of lives and the overall upheaval of local rural society. They were all the more massive and brutal because they had to allow the rapid disengagement of the many troops invested in a country that was now independent.

Our work also offers an original approach to the role of the French Military Mission (MMF), which was responsible for organising the creation, training and supervision of the Cameroonian army. It provides a detailed history of this process, highlighting the tensions that arose between Paris and Yaoundé, and especially between General Briand and General Sizaire, commander of the Zone d'Outre-Mer n°2, whose archives, hitherto little studied, are extensively exploited here. Working directly with Prime Minister Debré, General Sizaire did his utmost to slow down the withdrawal of troops from Overseas Zone 2, and then to **keep units in Western Cameroon, where they continued to take part in military operations until January 1962. The August 1961 Tombel massacre, the importance of which is highlighted in the report, marked the end of this last French military investment: all that remained were the WMW aid workers, whose predominant role in the continuation of the war is highlighted in this third section, from Colonel Blanc, head of the Cameroon army until 1966, to Commanders Le Gales and Dumas, responsible for supervising the Cameroon battalions. The report shows that their influence was gradually undermined by the Cameroonisation of the military apparatus**, highlighting the growing ability of Cameroonian cadres to act in their own interests, far from the image of actors dominated unilaterally by French aid workers.

After 1960, there was an intensification of operations carried out in the field, but also in the forced displacement of civilians: the analysis of their history, and therefore that of the "regroupment" camps in West Cameroon, is one of the Commission's major contributions. The third section begins by deconstructing the military rhetoric that presents them as a "return to legality": far from being "voluntary", the populations are forced to "regroup" in camps monitored by the army, supported by the local administration. **This section provides a detailed history of the practice, highlighting its main dynamics, naming the social groups concerned, and providing an overview of the upheaval in the spatial distribution of the population - while emphasising that the Cameroonian army is gradually appropriating the practice, carrying out "regroupings" in Sanaga-Maritime and Nkam**. The report also looks in detail at strategies for dealing with the civilian population, in particular the implementation of a policy of "self-defence": here again, the section proposes to examine in greater depth a hitherto tenuous chronological account, from the first experiments carried out in the Mbouda district to their widespread use in the "regroupment" camps in the Bamiléké region. Self-defence groups played a crucial role in the structuring and surveillance of these camps, and this is the subject of a new sub-section in the Commission's report, which highlights the role of the French military thanks to new accounts gathered by the Institut national des études démographiques (INED) from displaced populations. This text also points

out that the elite of the "self-defence" forces were enrolled in auxiliary units - the "civic guard" commandos, who were involved in military operations. The history of these units is highlighted to emphasise the crucial role played by French officers, from Captain Plissonneau in charge of their instruction to the administrator Maurice Quezel-Colomb who oversaw their "civic" training, not forgetting the many gendarmerie officers who led them in the field even after 1961. Ultimately, the report shows that the "guards" were major players in the war: they developed practices that were often arbitrary towards civilians, particularly in the "regroupment" camps, where their violence left an indelible mark on collective memories.

Lastly, the Commission details the violence committed during or on the fringes of the military operations against combatants and civilians, highlighting in particular the strafing and aerial bombardment of homes, which was particularly extensive in the West of the country. A study of Air Force reports confirms that napalm was not used in Cameroon, but that particularly devastating incendiary cartridges were ordered by General Briand and used, particularly in April-May 1960. They caused the destruction and burning of huts, without it being possible to establish an exact death toll. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the extent of the violence, although the Commission would like to point out that **the death toll from these operations remains high: while official military estimates put the number of "combatants" killed between 1956 and 1962, the period when French troops were most heavily involved, at around 7,500, if the total number of victims is taken into account, it is more likely to be several tens of thousands of Cameroonians.**

During this violence, the report focused on the active search for the most important leaders of the ALNK, such as Paul Momo and Jérémie Ndéléné, who were both killed in November 1960. A study of the French military archives and those of the Mbouda sub-prefecture revealed that the former was killed during an operation carried out in Bahouan by French chief warrant officer Raymond Bechet. The second, Jérémie Ndéléné, was killed at Bamendjo in an operation led by Captain Plissonneau, two operations carried out in the field by French officers and Cameroonian auxiliaries. Despite our active research, it has been difficult to investigate certain events on which the Commission was keen to make progress, such as the **fire of the Congo district in Douala on 24 April 1960: no new sources have confirmed the presence of French soldiers, nor any actions carried out at their request**. French repression is also associated with **traumatic sites such as the Metche Falls** in the West, near Bafoussam. A study of the career file of the gendarme André Houtarde, found by the Commission, the testimonies of the family of the writer Jacob Fossi, those of Chief Soukoudjou (king of the Bamendjou) and Michel Clerget (son of the gendarme Jean Clerget commanding the Bafoussam brigade) **nevertheless confirm the fact that prisoners, whose identity is not specified, were thrown there by units under French command and that an operation of this nature took place in September 1959**.

In view of the intense repression that took place on the ground between 1958 and 1965, and the traumas that are still present in local memories, the Commission considered the use of the word "genocide" by comparing its definition and case law with the arguments developed by those involved at the time and in contemporary works to describe this period of military repression. **While the Commission has no legal authority to describe these practices as "genocidal", it is undeniable that the violence was extreme, as it violated human rights and the laws of war**.

Section 4

Between interdependence and emancipation: to what extent did the French authorities influence the repression of opposition movements in Cameroon between 1965 and 1971?

The fourth section focuses on the reconfiguration, between 1965 and 1971, of the relations of interdependence between France and Cameroon, seen here through the **prism of the political, diplomatic and military stakes involved in the continued repression of so-called opposition movements to President Ahidjo's regime**. **Although it has been impossible to access most of the Cameroonian archives dating from after 1964**, the research carried out by the Commission has made it possible to bring together, in sufficient quantity and value, other alternative sources, including the writings of military aid workers and the private archives of Ambassador Francis Huré, in order to address empirically this vast and still largely unknown issue and to restore the complexity of this interdependence, to highlight both France's capacity for influence in Cameroon and its growing limitations.

This section focuses firstly on the **development of military cooperation, which led to the creation of Military Technical Assistance (AMT) in 1965**. It examines the careers of the main players involved in order to establish their real influence within the Cameroonian army, from that of Colonel Blanc, whom President Ahidjo sought to retain as an adviser when he was recalled to France at a time of rupture, to those of lesser-known aid workers, but whose essential role is highlighted in the report - **such as Colonel Desgratoulet, who worked for the Minister of the Armed Forces, or Colonels Renan and Varney, advisers to the French Ambassador**, whose actions helped to ensure that Cameroonian units were properly equipped. The report quantifies this aid and the ways in which it fed into the Cameroonian war effort. It shows that **the supply of military equipment depended both on a "normal" procedure laid down in the 1960 agreements, and on more exceptional transfers through the networks of players linking Ahidjo to Jacques Foccart *via* the embassy - to the detriment of Pierre Messmer's position at the Ministry of National Defence**. The installation of the ALNK's "second front" on the Congolese border, a little-known episode that this section will shed light on, highlights all the issues at stake: UPC fighters settled behind the southern border, at the instigation of Castor Osendé Afana and with the potential support of Alphonse Massamba-Débat's regime in Brazzaville, from 1965 onwards.

If, for Ahidjo, this French support was necessary for the repression of the opposition, the French government in return intended to maintain this African partner in order to ensure its commercial and industrial outlets or to impose a certain diplomatic conformism with regard to its own positions at the UN. While the French constraint weighed on the Cameroonian president's freedom of action, this section also highlights Ahidjo's ability to exploit interdependence to obtain the equipment his army needed. Taking advantage of a post-colonial context that has placed him at the top of the State, he readily threatened French influence by overstating the harmful effects that could arise from the weakening of his personal power. Although he often obtained satisfaction, our account shows the fluctuating outcome of his attempts with regard to a partner that was not always in a position to provide him with the desired military aid, nor indeed inclined to do so, which encouraged the search for other suppliers. This strategic

dimension of Cameroonian actors, which the section highlights as being accentuated at all levels with the Cameroonisation of the military apparatus, ultimately reduced French influence - without ever making it disappear.

Nevertheless, **the French role and responsibility in the repression of opposition movements continued after 1965**. **In addition to the fact that, at Ahidjo's request, military aid workers were retained in command positions in the navy and air force, AMT personnel played a crucial role in directly training junior and senior officers in Cameroon's military academies, then organising their further training through courses in France**. The report underlines the role of these teaching networks on the perceptions of Cameroonian officers and senior civil servants, for whom the DGR is an undeniable colonial legacy: rooted in the strategic thinking of the national army as it was being built up, it came to constitute one of the doctrinal foundations of the Ahidjo regime. With figures to back it up, he demonstrates the routinisation of a repressive approach to society: the supervision of civilians was a constant challenge for the Cameroonian government, which resorted to forced displacements and "psychological action" campaigns aimed at populations that had already been "regrouped**". This section shows that this legacy was also reappropriated and adapted by the Ahidjo regime, which conducted "anti-terrorist campaigns" which, while inspired by French precedents, were also original in character and unprecedented in scale**. The testimonies gathered by the Commission also highlighted the violence of this repression, which the French embassy noted when it supported the strengthening of Ahidjo's authoritarian regime. The French embassy was well aware that the war against the UPC was now a security pretext used by an allied regime to maintain itself: the main thing was to maintain the conditions of interdependence which guaranteed French influence. By approving, supporting and advising an authoritarian state, the French government has placed itself in contradiction with its republican and democratic values and its respect for humanitarian law.

Military operations had a profound effect on the rural population of Cameroon. The places to which the French army forcibly relocated hundreds of thousands of Cameroonians between 1958 and 1961, in the Sanaga-Maritime and Bamiléké regions, did not disappear with the departure of the military troops. Maintaining them was an economic and social problem for the Cameroonian government, which in practice gave priority to the "fight against terrorism" over economic and social development. Above all, our research provides an insight into the day-to-day life of the "regroupment" camps, most of which continued until the end of the repression of the maquis in the early 1970s. They imposed particularly precarious living conditions on civilians: 'uprooting', loss of means of production, insufficient food resources, misery and insecurity, promiscuity and insalubrity - excess mortality and also introduced a more lasting transformation of the rural population.

Finally, this fourth section deals with **the final episode of the war against the UPC, through the prism of an innovative approach to the Yaoundé trials, particularly those of Ernest Ouandié and Albert Ndongmo in January 1971**. It is based on the in-depth use of original sources, notably from the "Foccart fonds" and the archives of the International Committee for the Defence of Ernest Ouandié (Cideo), as well as the testimonies of key players - notably Mathieu Njassep - highlighting the intertwining of legal proceedings, diplomatic negotiations and international mobilisation. **Contrary to the accusations of "the hand of France" behind the affair, the precise account of events highlights the absence of French responsibility in the arrest, trial and execution of the last great leader of the ALNK**. The Commission even

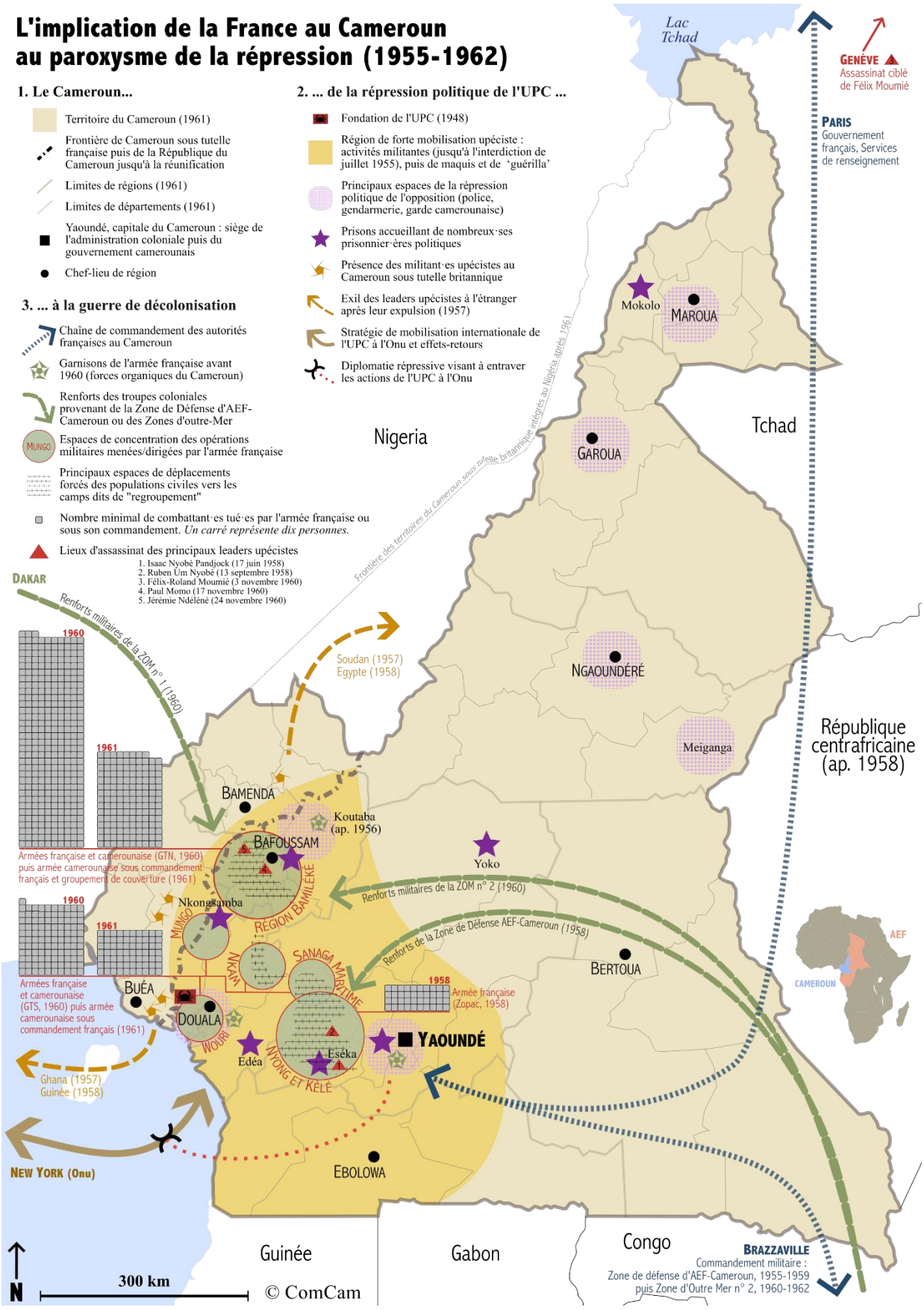
provides a detailed analysis of the struggles for influence waged by the various French services, which were divided into two blocs at the time. On the one hand, the Ministry of Justice, René Pleven, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maurice Schumann, and the Presidency of the French Republic were in favour of organising a fair trial that would respect the rights of the defence and of abandoning capital punishment. On the other hand, the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs and the French embassy in Yaoundé defended respect for Cameroon's sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention. An analysis of the negotiations and dealings seems to underline the predominant influence of this second bloc around President Ahidjo, with whom ambassador Philippe Rebeyrol acted as spokesman, particularly on the issue of defence lawyers, who were subject to pressure from the Cameroonian regime: all were appointed *ex officio* for fear of being associated with the case they were pleading for. This fourth section also highlights the international resonance of the case, both in terms of the mobilisation for a fair and equitable trial, and in terms of Ahidjo's use of the case to further underline his independence from France, in particular by threatening to revise the judicial convention and, more broadly, the 1960 cooperation agreements. This happened in 1972, underlining a decline in French influence in Cameroon.

Finally, this last section reflects on the echoes of this case, beyond the chronological limits set by the Commission, to emphasise that these trials did not put an end to Franco-Cameroonian interdependence in terms of repression. **This had repercussions on French territory, as a result of the Ahidjo regime's desire to control Cameroonians in France**, whom it considered potentially inclined to join the opposition. The fact remains that its diplomatic pressure does not work in its favour in this matter, and the report aims to highlight the nuanced position of the French authorities: the hesitation with regard to the expulsion of Abel Eyinga, a potential presidential candidate, underlines both the French desire not to threaten the preservation of independent relations, and the desire to give precedence to the rule of law. The censorship of writer and teacher Mongo Beti's book *Main basse sur le Cameroun*, published in 1972, illustrates the same logic, which the report traces. Requested by the Cameroon government, it analyses the concessions made by the French authorities. The French authorities, divided over the methods of censorship, agreed to ban the publication, which was considered "foreign", after contesting the author's French nationality. Thrown into a legal battle that lasted nearly four years, Mongo Beti faced a variety of political, media and administrative pressures that, paradoxically, made his pamphlet a success: his French nationality was finally recognised by a court in 1976, and *Main basse sur le Cameroun* was once again authorised, a sign that French repression was less marked than the Cameroonian authorities would have liked.

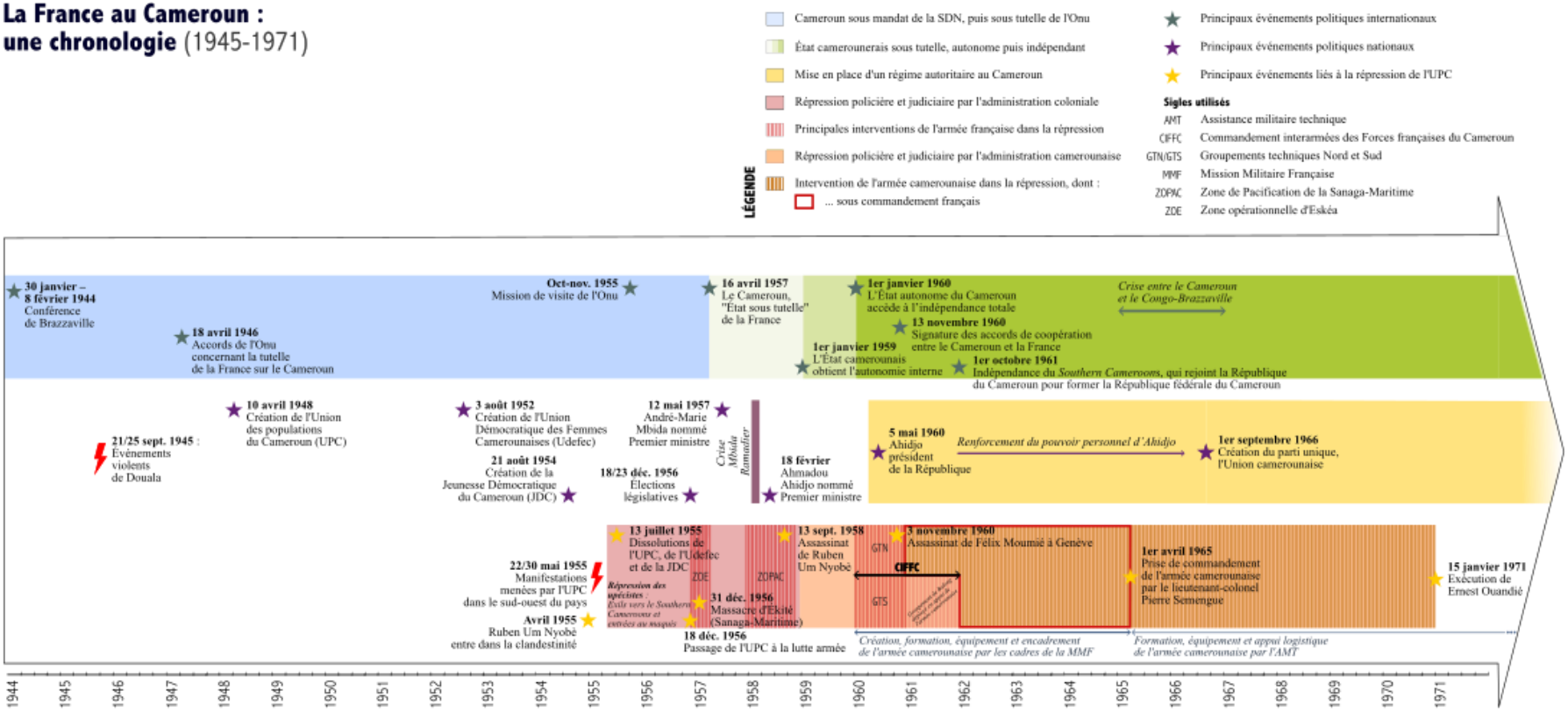
We hope that this report, for which we have worked on the basis of an already rich historiography, put forward new analyses and explored new archives, public and private, Cameroonian and French, will be useful to all those - and there are many of them, particularly in France - who are unaware of this sad colonial past shared with Cameroon. But we also hope that it will provide a solid foundation for those who wish to pursue studies on relations between France and Cameroon or on the history of Cameroon and, more generally, on the colonial history of France.

We are also delighted that it has been produced, regardless of the violence of the past, by a Franco-Cameroonian team in a spirit of understanding and friendship.

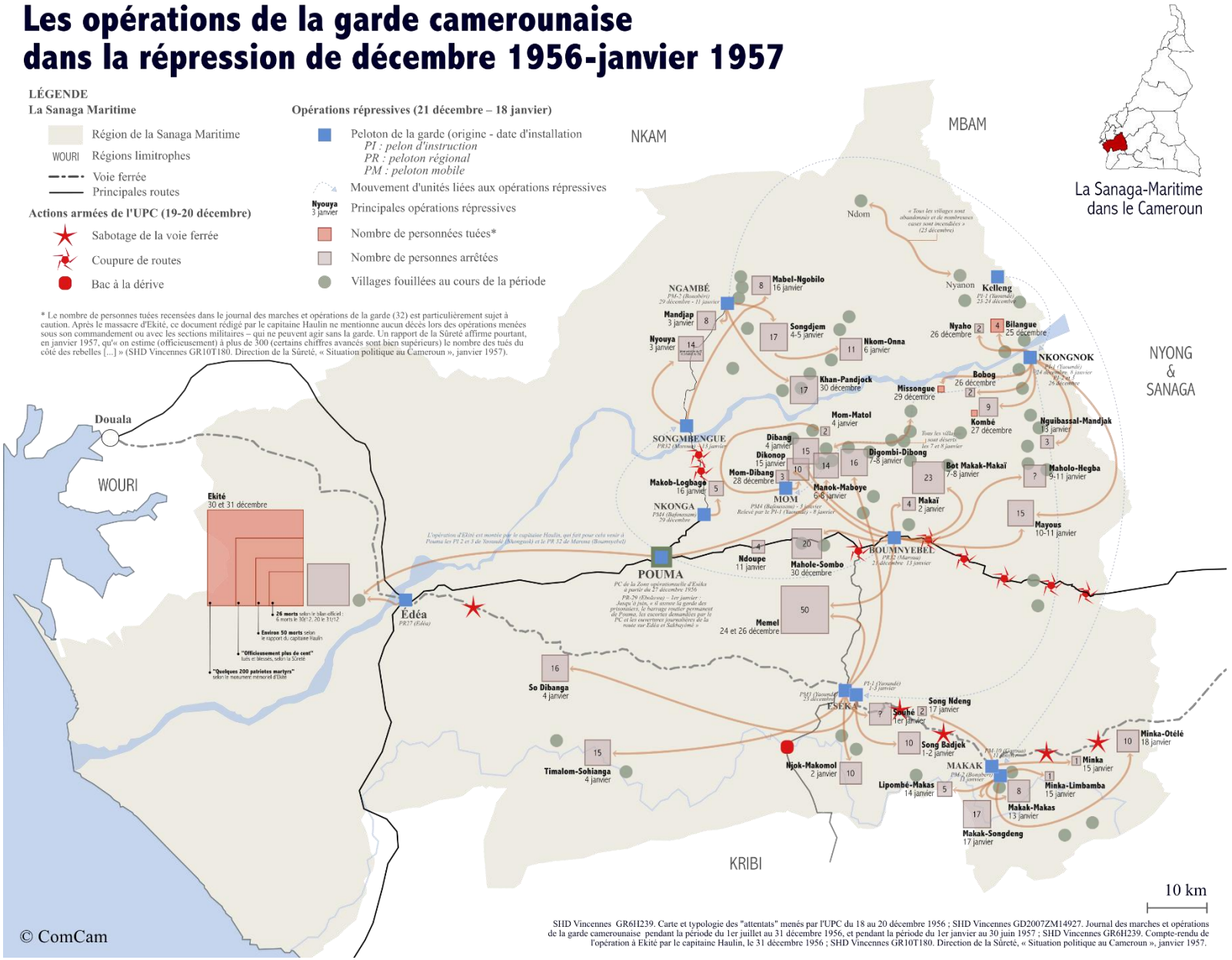
L'implication de la France au Cameroun au paroxysme de la répression (1955-1962)



La France au Cameroun : une chronologie (1945-1971)



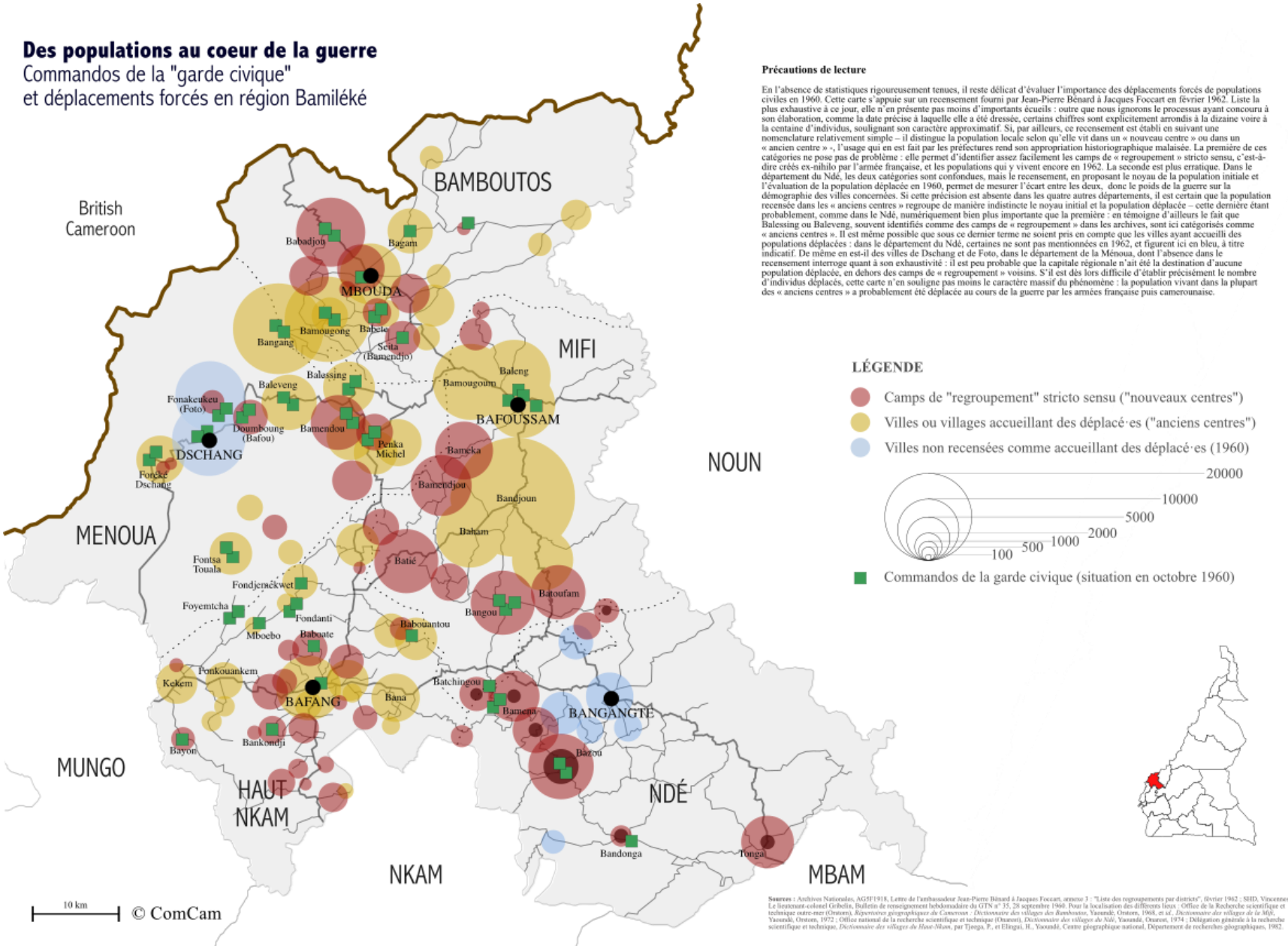
Les opérations de la garde camerounaise dans la répression de décembre 1956-janvier 1957



SHD Vincennes GR6H239. Carte et typologie des "attentats" menés par l'UPC du 18 au 20 décembre 1956 ; SHD Vincennes GD2007ZM14927. Journal des marches et opérations de la garde camerounaise pendant la période du 1er juillet au 31 décembre 1956, et pendant la période du 1er janvier au 30 juin 1957 ; SHD Vincennes GR6H239. Compte-rendu de l'opération à Ekité par le capitaine Haulin, le 31 décembre 1956 ; SHD Vincennes GR10T180. Direction de la Sûreté, « Situation politique au Cameroun », janvier 1957.

Des populations au coeur de la guerre

Commandos de la "garde civique"
et déplacements forcés en région Bamiléké



Précautions de lecture

En l'absence de statistiques rigoureusement tenues, il reste délicat d'évaluer l'importance des déplacements forcés de populations civiles en 1960. Cette carte s'appuie sur un recensement fourni par Jean-Pierre Bénard à Jacques Foccart en février 1962. Liste la plus exhaustive à ce jour, elle n'en présente pas moins d'importants écueils : outre que nous ignorons le processus ayant concouru à son élaboration, comme la date précise à laquelle elle a été dressée, certains chiffres sont explicitement arrondis à la dizaine voire à la centaine d'individus, soulignant son caractère approximatif. Si, par ailleurs, ce recensement est établi en suivant une nomenclature relativement simple – il distingue la population locale selon qu'elle vit dans un « nouveau centre » ou dans un « ancien centre » -, l'usage qui en est fait par les préfectures rend son appropriation historiographique malaisée. La première de ces catégories ne pose pas de problème : elle permet d'identifier assez facilement les camps de « regroupement » stricto sensu, c'est-à-dire créés ex-nihilo par l'armée française, et les populations qui y vivent encore en 1962. La seconde est plus erratique. Dans le département du Ndé, les deux catégories sont confondues, mais le recensement, en proposant le noyau de la population initiale et l'évaluation de la population déplacée en 1960, permet de mesurer l'écart entre les deux, donc le poids de la guerre sur la démographie des villes concernées. Si cette précision est absente dans les quatre autres départements, il est certain que la population recensée dans les « anciens centres » regroupe de manière indistincte le noyau initial et la population déplacée – cette dernière étant probablement, comme dans le Ndé, numériquement bien plus importante que la première : en témoigne d'ailleurs le fait que Balessing ou Baleveng, souvent identifiés comme des camps de « regroupement » dans les archives, sont ici catégorisés comme « anciens centres ». Il est même possible que sous ce dernier terme ne soient pris en compte que les villes ayant accueilli des populations déplacées : dans le département du Ndé, certaines ne sont pas mentionnées en 1962, et figurent ici en bleu, à titre indicatif. De même en est-il des villes de Dschang et de Foto, dans le département de la Ménoua, dont l'absence dans le recensement interroge quant à son exhaustivité : il est peu probable que la capitale régionale n'ait été la destination d'aucune population déplacée, en dehors des camps de « regroupement » voisins. S'il est dès lors difficile d'établir précisément le nombre d'individus déplacés, cette carte n'en souligne pas moins le caractère massif du phénomène : la population vivant dans la plupart des « anciens centres » a probablement été déplacée au cours de la guerre par les armées française puis camerounaise.

LÉGENDE

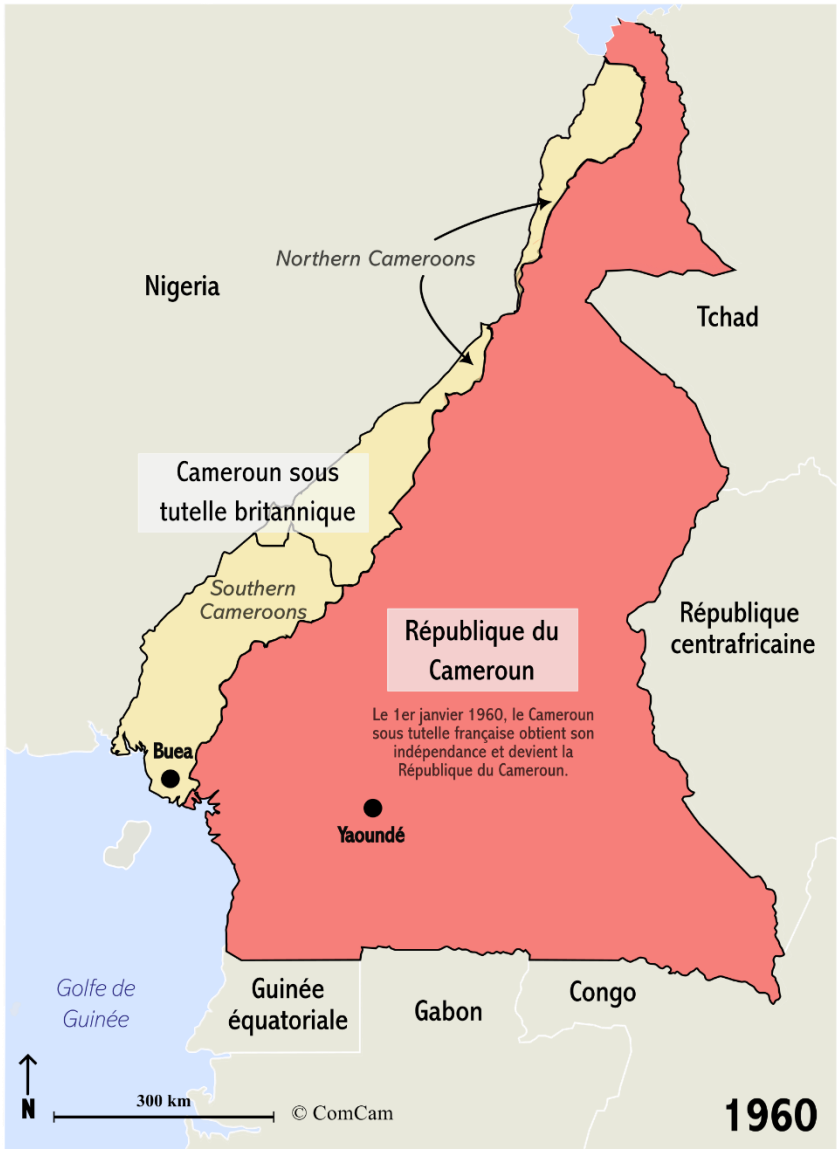
- Camps de "regroupement" stricto sensu ("nouveaux centres")
- Villes ou villages accueillant des déplacé·es ("anciens centres")
- Villes non recensées comme accueillant des déplacé·es (1960)

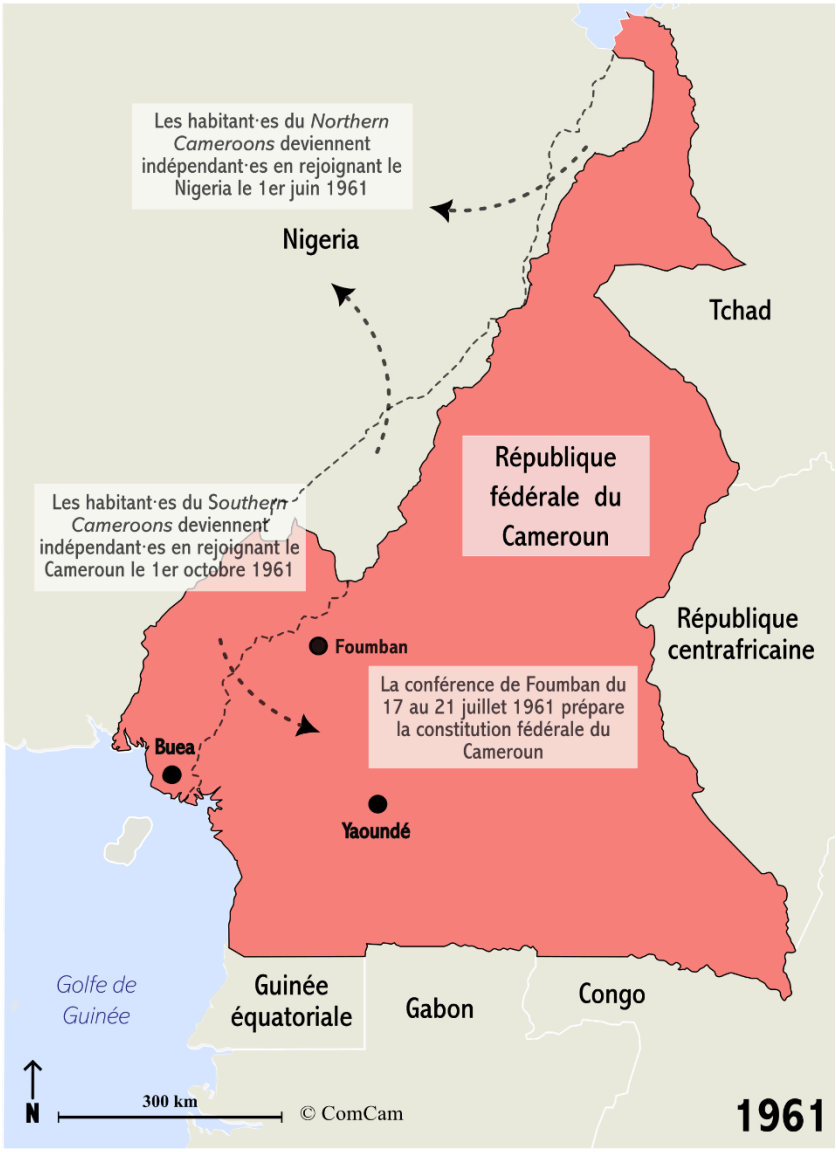
20000
10000
5000
2000
1000
500
100

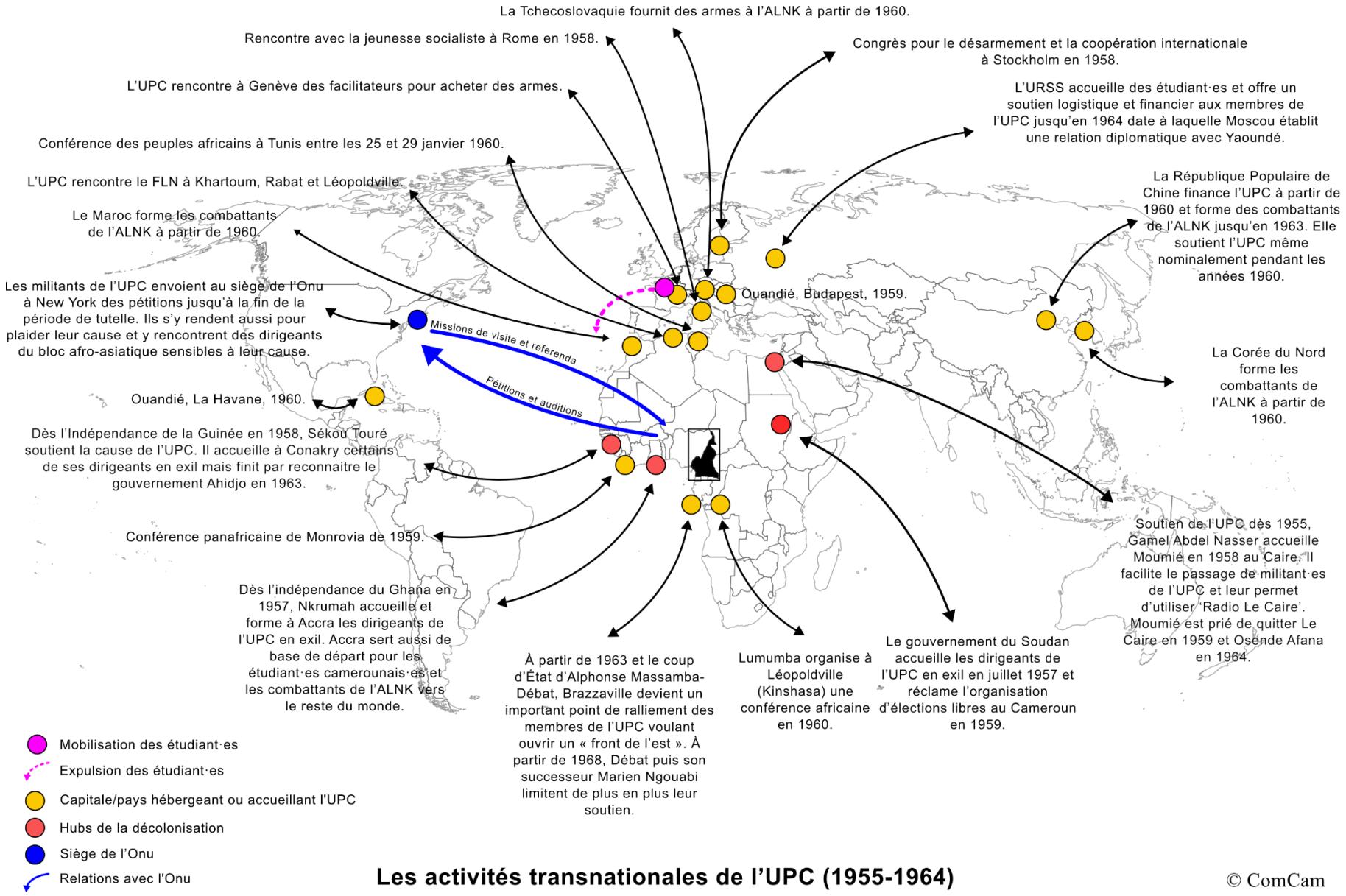
- Commandos de la garde civique (situation en octobre 1960)

Sources : Archives Nationales, AG5F1918, Lettre de l'ambassadeur Jean-Pierre Bénard à Jacques Foccart, annexe 3 : "Liste des regroupements par districts", février 1962 ; SHD, Vincennes, Le lieutenant-colonel Gribelin, Bulletin de renseignement hebdomadaire du GTN n° 35, 28 septembre 1960. Pour la localisation des différents lieux : Office de la Recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer (Orstom), *Répertoires géographiques du Cameroun : Dictionnaire des villages des Bamboutos*, Yaoundé, Orstom, 1968, et s.d., *Dictionnaire des villages de la Mifi*, Yaoundé, Orstom, 1972 ; Office national de la recherche scientifique et technique (Onarest), *Dictionnaire des villages du Ndé*, Yaoundé, Onarest, 1974 ; Délégation générale à la recherche scientifique et technique, *Dictionnaire des villages du Haut-Nkam*, par Tjeega, P., et Elingui, H., Yaoundé, Centre géographique national, Département de recherches géographiques, 1982.

Étapes de la réunification du Cameroun (1960-1961)







Les activités transnationales de l'UPC (1955-1964)