

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE 26TH MAY 2010 In AFC at 4pm

African unity

The conference began at 4.15 pm because of my lateness, but most attendants were already there and also the experts (the person holding the conference). The room was full, about 200 people or more. We couldn't count but I took photos as you can see. Then it was impossible to make a circle as usually in the project and the experts were in front of the attendants.

The moderator Mister Tchouankap was the first at the microphone. He introduces the experts : Doctor Fouelifack Celestine and Doctor Norodome. He also said how they will make their presentations and on what.

The plan was Doctor Fouelifack expert in African Civilisation and Egyptology will make her presentation on the cultural aspect of integration as basis for a regional integration in Central Africa.

Doctor Norodome expert on political integration in Africa will make his presentation on the evolution from AEF (Afrique Equatoriale française : equatorial french Africa) to the CEMAC (Communauté économique et monétaire d'Afrique Centrale) studying the structure of integration and their failure and giving perspective.

The organisation was 15 to 30 minutes of exposé for each presentation and 30 minutes for Doctor Tchouankap to resume and present the parliament of CEMAC and then 1H.30 for questions-answer and discussion.

1- Doctor Fouelifack : cultural heritage as base for a good integration in Central Africa

Africa was once upon the time united or not so much divided. And the actual problem of Integration colonialism on Africa, the division of people and tribes. In Central Africa the Sara people were divided between Tchad, Cameroon and Central Africa (the country), the Fon people were divided between Nigeria came because of Balkanisation of Africa. Africa was balkanised (divided) after the Berlin Conference in (1884). That was the first consequence of and Cameroon.

The independances have divided Central Africa so the need of integration is really urgent. For a good integration said Doctor Fouelifack there are three majors factors which can be used by the countries. The first one is the ecological similitude.

The climate of countries of Central Africa is the same : Hot climate (climat chaud) with many varieties depending on the countries. Even if the divided people have adapted themselves culturally on the climate, the cultural food habits are nearly the same. Eg : maize couscous is prepared in the same way in Cameroon and Tchad, Nkwem (manioc leaves with palm oil) is also found in Gabon, Congo Brazzaville. The wild animals buffalos, lions, rodents gorillas are in the savannah and the equatorial forest divided in Cameroun, Congo Brazza and Gabon, for the savannah between Tchad and Cameroon. So even if the climate is the same and the habits didn't change a lot.

The second factor is the human one : the bantou group is the most widespread group in Central Africa. Even the languages didn't change a lot. Eg : God : Zamba in Cameroon, Zambeu in Zaire, Nyambeu in Gabon. The internal organisation between those peoples is also common. The bantous civilisations had a central administration and hierachical and they were settled or sedentary. The pygmies who are found in Cameroun, Gabon, Congo have naturally also the same way of living.

The third factor is the historical one. The countries of Central Africa shared the same past. They all come from ancient Egypt (this these is contradictory because

historians doesn't agree on it). And also most of those countries were all colonised by France except of Nigeria colonised by England with that CEMAC should begin a real integration coming from the basis. She a part of Cameroon.

In conclusion, she explains that we should not be afraid of differences and that besides all this similitudes the first thing we have in common is that we are all human. That we should be curious and accept others as they are as in a complementary distribution and that there are always similitudes. She added: "we don't integrate structures or politics but we integrate people if the people are not interested on the question of integration, then it has failed"

The moderator added some few words to explain the last words of doctor Fouelifack and gave the microphone to Doctor Norodome.

2- Doctor Norodome : From AEF (Afrique Equatoriale française : equatorial french Africa) to the CEMAC (Communauté économique et monétaire d'Afrique Centrale)

AEF was the french part during the colonisation, Cameroon was not really counted inside because it was not accepted by Germans that Cameroon is french Colony. The colonial power limited the movements of people within their colonies while integrating communities and not people. Their aim was "to divide for a better control" (diviser pour mieux régner). So they were against unification and even during independances, Charles de Gaulle the french president, said in the clauses for independancy to have the freedom individually and that he should be the one choosing the presidents of each country. He naturally choose those who were against integration and unification of Africa and who were totally devoted to him. But african even though created UDEAC a structure of integration which didn't reach his objectives and failed as CEMAC because the people didn't feel concerned and were not really put into it. The only step which has been made was the totally free circulation between countries of the Central Africa of people and goods.

Most of the actual Central African presidents are not really engaged in the integration process, since in 5 years they didn't started the integration politic of CEMAC and are just electing the parliament. Elections are made without real advertisement or encouragement of the populations to take part. Eg: there was a football play between Union of Douala and Gabon FC in Gabon because of an error of the referee the cameroonian players were beated there and sent back to Cameroon. The export of food to Gabon, this was a real punishment since Cameroon is the only exporter of food in Gabon. The next problem is the leadership problems because of the fact that all nearby Cameroon countries depends on Cameroon food exportations and Cameroon wants to control them or some immigrants are treated inferiors in Cameroon since Cameroon see themselves superior to them. He ended his speech with "we need a human integration in Central Africa", "no culture is more important than another" with leadership it will never work !"

The moderator made a small presentation of the CEMAC parliament and a conclusion.

Then the microphone was given to the public. There were many questions so i just choose some interesting one because i couldn't write everything :

- Don't you think that colonisation has brought some positive aspects ?
- Does a culture has more importance than an other ?
- Don't you think the integration will `cause some problems ?

- What was the relation between Cameroon and France the european integration ?
- Don't you think we can take something out of the model of european integration system a french man.

Some answers were given :

- Of course colonisation has brought some positive aspects like the treatment of some illnesses, clothes and life easiness but the consequences were more than the advantages. and the question is not about it, because we cannot change the past. The question is : how can we unite now ?
- The only problem that the integration could cause is the break up of cultural barriers and power discussion and i don't personally see it as a problem(doctor Norodome)
- No culture is more important than another
- France came unfortunately for Cameroon too late in Cameroon in 1919 and they didn't creat structures they because were not sure of staying there, they just exploited Cameroon ressources. The same thing happened in 1945, because the french knew they will soon have to leave because of independancy.

Afterwards, we made a small presentation of the project and separated at 6.45pm with the attendants. Some few stayed because they needed answers to their questions.

Many people were really interested about the project and we had to explain more, take their adresses and to held a meeting and then we went back home.

Reported and sent by participants of the project YOW/ TDS