

## **RUSTY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE IGBO UNION IN SOUTHERN CAMEROONS AND THE CAMEROONIAN AUTHORITIES, 1946-1970**

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### **Abstract**

*The Igbo of Nigeria migrated to Southern Cameroons in droves following the Richards Constitution of 1946 which made Southern Cameroons part of Eastern Region of Nigeria, and set up town unions cum Igbo Union. The town unions cum Igbo Union had issues with the Cameroonian authorities. This study sets out to expose the reactions of the Cameroonians following the presence of Igbo settlement, with the outcome being the promulgation of anti-Igbo laws and treason act leveled against some Igbo. There is this belief by some scholars that the Igbo were hated in Southern Cameroons because of their unscrupulous nature and their over domineering influence, without giving one the detailed breakdown of the hatred which this study refers to as 'Igbophobia'. Hence, this research looks at an added aspect of 'Igbophobia' in details indicating the rusty relations between the Igbo and the Cameroonian authorities. Archival materials from the National Archives, Buea in Cameroon, oral interview and books provided the data for this study. The Social Identity Theory by Tayfel and Turner is adopted. This research argues that the Igbo in Southern Cameroons were not to be blamed as they*

*contributed financially to the Republic of Biafran government of Ojukwu to prosecute the war of 1967-70. Findings reveal that as a result of the few bad eggs amongst the Igbo population in Southern Cameroons, anti-Igbo laws were introduced. This study recommends that to forestall rusty relations between the hosts and settlers, there should be collaboration between Cameroonian security agencies and the various town unions cum Igbo union, in order to fish out criminally minded individuals of Igbo extraction.*

**Key words:** Biafra, Rusty Relations, Southern Cameroons, The Igbo union

## **Introduction**

E.M Anosike defines town union as "voluntary associations, usually formed at all levels of the socio-political structure of the Igbo." He argues that town unions in Igboland had pre-colonial roots springing up between the 1920s and 1930s. They exhibit the tradition of self-help of the people; a tradition which depended on the ordering of communal, social, economic and political affairs in the pre-colonial order, he continues! 'The town unions were theoretically under the umbrella body of the Igbo State Union (I.S.U). The various towns in Igbo speaking areas had associations/town unions in Southern Cameroons. Prominent town unions were those of Orlu, Owerri, Mbaise, Enugu, Okigwe, Onitsha and Nsukka. These town unions had different names. The names of these town unions are misleading as one will think that members of an association like Orlu Town Union were only

indigenes of Orlu Town. Members of this union were not only from Orlu Town but from the Old Orlu Division.

The formation of ethnic unions is probably linked to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Then the people were speaking one language and were erecting a tower to take them to heaven. They were united and might have formed an association to take care of their welfare. Since the Lord was opposed to the building of the tower, he caused them to be speaking different languages. They could not continue in the erection of the tower. Those speaking the same language must have formed an association to take care of the needs of their people.

The Igbo State Union began as the Igbo Federal Union, Lagos in 1934 and was inaugurated in 1936 following the hosting of Dr S.E Onwu, Dr Akanu Ibiam and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe as the first Igbo university graduates in a reception.<sup>2</sup> By 1948 the Igbo Federal Union was changed to Igbo State Union (I.S.U). In the early 1940s, Mr Mark Ahuzi formed the Igbo Union in Tiko and other branches took off in Buea, Victoria, Mamfe, Bamenda and Kumba in Southern Cameroons<sup>3</sup>. The Igbo State Union in Victoria was invited to the Eastern Region Festival of Arts that was held in Enugu from 2nd to 6th March, 1953<sup>4</sup>. The aims of the Igbo Union read thus

- To cater for the common interest and welfare of all Igbo people
- To provide a forum where all Igbo would get to know one another

- To cooperate for the upliftment and improvement of members
- To aid, coordinate and participate in community development programmes in the Cameroons

The Richards Constitution of 1946 made Southern Cameroons an administrative part of Eastern Region of Nigeria. This arrangement made a lot of Igbo to move into Southern Cameroons. According to the 1953 census, there were about 258,000 Igbo out of the over 838,000 Nigerians in Southern Cameroons.<sup>5</sup> They provided migrant labour in plantations owned by Cameroons Development Corporation, Pamol Limited and Elders and Fyffes Limited. They were also in the British colonial public service where they occupied the clerical class and a lot where found in the Public Works Department. A good number were into commercial activities. The presence of Igbo settlement resulted in the formation of Igbo town unions cum Igbo union. There were reactions from Southern Cameroonians following the presence of Igbo settlement. It is against this backdrop that this paper looks at the anti-Igbo laws of 1948 and accusation levelled on the various Igbo town unions cum Igbo Union for supporting the government of Biafra during the Nigeria- Biafra war of 1967- 1970.

The central hypothesis of Social Identity Theory as propounded by Tayfel is that members of an in-group look for negative aspects of an out-group, thus boosting self-image.<sup>6</sup> Tayfel and Turner propose three mental processes involved in the theory viz categorisation, social identification and social comparison. In juxtaposing this theory with our study, one could say that under categorization, the Cameroonians differentiated the Igbo from

other ethnic groups through the Igbo language and the names they bore. The society is divided into 'us' and 'them'. The 'us' which is the in-group refers to the Cameroonians while the 'them', the out group refers to the Igbo. Under the second stage, an Igbo person had to identify with other Igbo. In the last stage, there was comparison between the Igbo and the Cameroonians by Cameroonians. This resulted in the promulgation of anti-Igbo laws by the Victoria Division and accusation of treason levelled on the Igbo town unions cum Igbo Union in Southern Cameroons

G.T Basden writes about the Igbo thus

*Abroad they maintained close contact, cemented and sustained by a strong tribal bond of union whatever the conditions, the Ibo migrants adapt themselves to meet them, and it is not long when before they make their presence felt in the localities where they settled. Through the formation of town unions, the Igbo maintained close contact with brothers, sisters and kinsmen*<sup>7</sup>

According to Chima Korieh, the emergence of ethnic unions became a bridge between their new location and original homes. Town unions were very effective in relation to development programmes while ethnic union was more effective in protecting the interest of the Igbo. He goes further to define 'home' to an Igbo man as "not just a geographical expression, but a sense of where one is born, where the ancestors are buried or where one can connect with the past."<sup>8</sup>

Blaise-Jaques Nkene affirms that the Nigerian immigrants living in Douala were a *sine qua non* for the cohesion of the social and

economic life despite not being trusted<sup>9</sup>. According to A.B Atabong, Nigerian immigrants have traditionally operated key markets in towns in Southern Cameroons.<sup>10</sup> Piet Konnings posits that Nigerian immigrants in English speaking Cameroon have benefitted from formal and informal cross border trade for a lengthy period.<sup>11</sup> The Nigerian immigrants these writers refer to are the Igbo. Eyongetah and Brain observe that the Igbo owned market stalls and took their wares into remote areas of Cameroon during the colonial era.<sup>12</sup> Some of these scholars mentioned the hatred (xenophobia also to be known here as *Igbophobia*) the Igbo went through. Consequent upon this Victor Bong Amazee wrote a piece titled the 'Igbo Scare'<sup>13</sup> All these scholars did not fully give us a background to the anti-Igbo laws of 1948 and did not discuss the treason act levelled against the Igbo Union in Southern Cameroons with the upshot being *Igbophobia*. This is the gap this study seeks to fill. Hence, this paper is split into conceptual clarification, Igbo migrants in Southern Cameroons before 1946, anti-Igbo laws, accusation levelled on the Igbo Union of supporting Biafra and conclusion

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The concept to be analysed here is 'relation'. Relation is the way in which two people, groups or countries interact with each other or deal with each other.<sup>14</sup> No country, human, organisation or group is an island and consequently will want to interact with one another because no one has all the things he needs. P. Chandra stresses that every state has one kind of interaction with another. No nation in the modern era will want to be an island to itself, and so must partake in international affairs centred on certain

principles.<sup>15</sup> He goes further to posit that countries must interact with one another in a certain manner. He sees drafting of a foreign policy as an important role of a modern state because a state with no foreign policy is compared to a ship with no radar. The ship is bound to be involved in a mishap. The migration of the Igbo into Cameroon shows that no nation is an Island. Nigeria cannot stay on her own without relating with other countries like Cameroon and vice versa. J. Akonye, Udeh and Christopher tow the same line with P. Chandra. To them international relations is relevant if a state's objectives are to be achieved. For this reason, the state interacts with other governments outside its shores. Moreover, on the belief that no country is an "immune Island" hence the essence for the state to relate with one another in the international system.<sup>16</sup>

Relations can be international, political, economic and social. International relations refers to the study of foreign affairs and world issues among states in the international system, including the duties of states, inter-governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations.<sup>17</sup> International relations is the interaction between two independent states. Political relation refers to the social relation that has to do with the intrigue in gaining authority.<sup>18</sup> Economic relation has to do with external and internal interactions that affect economic stability and growth.<sup>19</sup> Social relation refers to the interactions between two or more people, groups or organisations.<sup>20</sup> It is the designed human interaction that includes relationships among individuals, unofficially and officially organised groups. Individualist theories explain social relations as an outcome of

rational individual to the external environment. Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) played major role in systematically arranging individualist thought. Social relations are made up of both positive and negative interactions.<sup>21</sup> The anti-Igbo laws and accusation levelled on the Igbo Union can be regarded as negative interactions of the social relations between the Igbo union and the Cameroonian authorities. The commercial activities of the Igbo in Cameroon and patronizing of their goods and services by Cameroonians fall under the economic relationship while the political relations could be seen in the light of the Igbo in Cameroon campaigning for an integration of Southern Cameroons with Nigeria which ended in a fiasco. International relations could be seen in the interaction of the government of Nigeria with Cameroon during the Nigeria-Biafra war. The relation this study is focusing on is the socio-political and economic relations between the Igbo migrant settlers and the Cameroonian authorities which was in a deteriorating state. Socio-political and economic relations are also component of international relations.

### **The Igbo in Southern Cameroons before 1946**

Ekejuba, an Aro scholar claims that the Aro were involved in the trans - Atlantic slave trade in Southern Cameroons thus

*The Aro confederacy (1690-1902) was a slave trading political union orchestrated by the Igbo sub-group, the Aro people, centered in Arochukwu in present day southeastern Nigeria. Their influence and presence was (sic) distributed across Eastern Nigerian into parts of present day Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.*



*The Arochukwu kingdom was an economical, political and a (sic) oracular center as it was home of the powerful long juju oracle, the Aro king Eze Aro, and highest priest*<sup>22</sup>

Nwaezeigwe is totally opposed to the view of Ekejuba that Aro's influence extended to Cameroon, regarding such stance as vainglorious fabrication.<sup>23</sup> The earliest set of Igbo that moved to Southern Cameroons might have been the Aro based on the fact that they established colonies in Calabar and Calabar is close to Cameroon. Eyongetah and Brain write that "Bamileke markets supplied Calabar, the slaves passing through upper Cross River area"<sup>24</sup> From the Bamileke markets to Calabar, one had to pass through Southern Cameroons making it possible for the Aro to participate in the trade and established settlements. The fact remains that there is today no Aro Cameroon as we have Arondizogu, Aro Okporoenyi, Ndikelionwu, Ajalli etc which are all Aro territories in Nigeria. During the trans-Atlantic slave trade there might have been Aro settlements in Southern Cameroons. These settlements might have disappeared because they were not regarded as true Cameroonians following the independence of Cameroon. This must have been the reason an informant said the Aro Confederacy did not extend to Cameroon as the Aro did not participate in trans-Atlantic slave trade in Southern Cameroons,<sup>25</sup> which looks unlikely. In future, a thorough research will be carried out on this issue. In Tiko, it is believed that the Igbo from Amucha in the present day Imo State were found in large numbers in the early 20th century and might have been among the earliest set of Igbo to settle in Tiko.<sup>26</sup>

The Igbo were found in Southern Cameroons in the 1920s as recorded by Talbot.<sup>27</sup> Back in 1923, Mr Sylvester Osuji was a second class clerk<sup>28</sup> and Mr C.A Okeke, a first class clerk with Cameroon Province.<sup>29</sup> The Igbo worked on the plantations. The Igbo had started to impact on British Cameroonian markets from 1930 as result of their commercial prowess and they easily cemented contacts with major trade centres in Nigeria.<sup>30</sup>

### **The 1948 Anti-Igbo Laws**

The I.S.U (Igbo State Union) sent delegates to Southern Cameroons following discriminatory laws that were passed against the Igbo in 1948.<sup>31</sup> The Igbo in Southern Cameroons went spiritual in order to douse the tension. It was rumoured that the driving force behind these laws was to chase the Igbo from Southern Cameroons and this was secretly sanctioned by a British administrator. A British Resident administrative officer in Southern Cameroons had blamed the Igbo of injustice and carried themselves as “if they were a law unto themselves and not want to recognize ‘local authority’”<sup>32</sup> The planned expulsion was as a result of the following charges levelled against the Igbo of Victoria Division accompanied with anti-Igbo laws. It is the view of this study that these laws were imposed as a result of some bad eggs amongst the Igbo who dented the image of the Igbo ethnic group, by involving themselves in some unwholesome activities. The Igbo Union equally responded to the charges made by the Cameroonians.

### **The charges against the Igbo were as follows:**

- That the Igbo stole their church bell to print fake currency. Response of Igbo Union: Unfounded, investigations should be carried out.
- That they (the Igbo) sold starch and chalk to Cameroonians for M and B (May and Baker) drugs, hot tea for sloan ointment and one yard of fabric for two yards. Response of Igbo Union: Untrue, police officers should arrest offenders.
- That in the Public Works Department (PWD) where the Igbo were overseers they charged five pounds as bribe before a Cameroonian was employed and would be later relieved of the position. Response of Igbo Union: Unfounded.
- That they (the Igbo) sold their goods at exorbitant prices. Response of Igbo Union: Profiteers should be prosecuted.
- That they (the Igbo) were violent and terrifying in their method of dealings with them (the Cameroonians). Response of Igbo Union: Frivolous.
- That in the olden days they (the Cameroonians) used to send their children to Victoria without guides but this was not the case nowadays on account of the Igbo. Response of Igbo Union: Unclear, we did not waylay their children.
- That the trouble we (the Igbo) were giving to their women was too much. Response of Igbo Union: We didn't know the trouble we were given to their women.

### **The laws against the Igbo were as follows:**

- That no landlord should let out his house to any Igbo man and that those who were already tenants should all be

ejected on or before the 10th of March, 1948 while another report says on or before the 15th of March, 1948.

- That those with landed property or farmlands should be asked to quit and the costs should be refunded by the Native Authority.
- That no Igbo man or woman should buy or sell to any Cameroonian and vice versa.
- That no Igbo man or woman should be allowed to fetch firewood from the bush.
- That no Cameroonian lady should have any dealings with any Igbo man.
- That any Cameroonian who violated the above rules would be liable to a fine of 5 pounds.<sup>33</sup>

The laws came into force on 25th February, 1948. Another report modified No 4 under the anti-Igbo laws by stating that it was not only to obtain firewood but could be for any other purpose and included the violation of No 4 under the same law as prosecution in the Native Court. All Igbo government officials were exempted from No 3.

Chief Manga Williams, one of the two representatives of Cameroons Province in the Eastern House of Assembly before the introduction of Macpherson Constitution had expressed anti- Igbo feelings in his farewell address.

*I am only sorry that I shall not go with a very good memory of the treatment I have received from the African brotherhood of this institution. In my own country we have native etiquettes and customs and I am obliged to say, as a result of the contemptuous*

*treatment I had received from my African colleagues and friends, I have been very much disappointed that our coming together, instead of promoting mutual love and unity has exposed some of us to revengeful experiences. However, being born of a free spirit, I decided not to leave this House without voicing my feelings.<sup>34</sup>*

It is believed that Chief Manga Williams including Dr Endeley was the architect of the anti-Igbo laws. In 1954, Endeley supported the move for Southern Cameroons to cease from being part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. As a result of *Igbophobia* in Southern Cameroons, the Igbo appealed to the government for land where they would build shops and another plot where they would erect temporary living quarters. These appeals were turned down.<sup>35</sup> Also, the Igbo Union in Bamenda Province in a petition had complaint that an Igbo trader overheard the Fon of Bafut hatch a plot on expelling the Igbo from his domain because they introduced harlotry and crime.<sup>36</sup>

### **Accusation Levelled on the Igbo for Supporting Biafra**

Under the government of Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon, the Igbo Union in Cameroon was banned and Igbo cultural celebration was abolished likewise the Igbo Day. The Union Hall in Kumba was brought down by the Kumba Council in about 1961/1962.<sup>37</sup> It is believed in some quarters that this was carried out to curb Igbo domination. The Igbo in Cameroon were closely monitored during the Nigeria-Biafra war, so as not to sow the seed of secession into Southern Cameroonians. On 16th July 1967, the Biafrans in

Kumba who were mainly Igbo complained to the District Officer (D.O) that the Nigerian Consul secretly met non-Igbo Nigerians and discussed to attack the Igbo in Kumba with machetes. From investigations carried out by the D.O, it was discovered that the Consul had a secret meeting. The D.O frowned at this because he was supposed to be informed whenever the Consul was to visit the Division. This allegation of attack was presented by the Igbo because they were not invited for the meeting.<sup>38</sup> The Cameroonian authorities allegedly came across a document containing donations to the Biafran Government made by Igbo in West Cameroon formerly called Southern Cameroons before 1961. See table below:

### **Summary of Donation by the Igbo to the Biafran Government during the War**

S/No	Name and Address	Amount in CFA Francs
1	Mr/Mrs Michael Uba and 43 others resident in Mankon, Bamenda	302,815
2	Okwudor Family Abroad in Kumba Town (Mr Eleazer E Wurus and 77 others)	143,100
3	Nkume Family Meeting Kumba (Christopher Orisakwe and 67 others-men) (Benedeth Simeon and 12 others-women)	154,250 23,500
4	Ihechiowa-Ututu and Isu People, Kumba (Mr Ofo Ejeh and 139 others – men) (Mrs Torti Kalu and 7 others- women)	140,000 7000
5	Awka Women and Men in Kumba (Mr Lyizoba, Mr Jowel Okika and 42 others)	93,000
6	Ezeagu Divisional Union Udi Kumba Branch (Peter Onyekwalu and 37 others)	32,600
7	Onitsha Community in Bamenda (Mr Raphael Ajide, David Amusi and 39 others)	220,000
8	Amodu Awkunanaw Oji-River Province - men	

	resident in Kumba (James Agu and 48 others)	44,700
9	Akeze Welfare Union in Ekondo Titi, Ndian Division (Joseph Choke Nwanpo and 7 others)	6000
10	Mr Emmanuel Ihekweaba, Mr/Mrs Ugwu Idam and 16 others of Awomama from Bai Kuke Mbonge- Kumba	20,550
11	Arochukwu Welfare Association Ndogore Council-men resident in Ekondo Titi (Oji Eze and 28 others)	21,400
12	Owerri Residents in Lobe (Michael Madu, Philip Nnoworu, Evaristus S Odoh and 106 others)	98,109
13	Edda Community in Mbonge (Smart Chukwu and 25 others)	9,900
14	Umuahia Men in Bai Rubber Estate (Ndubuze and 12 others)	6,100
15	Okigwi Family Meeting Mbonge-Marumba (James Ike Uhuda and 64 others)	75,600
16	Biafrans in Ngusi Bakossi (Moses Okpokoro and 1 other)	4000
17	Uboma Family Okigwi in Kumba	19,200
18	Nempi in Orlu Division living in Kumba (Joseph Ojini and 25 others)	24,450
19	Mbemo Okigwe Men and Women resident in Mankon, Bamenda (Francis Obiagwa and 24 others)	39,500
20	Ogwa worri's residents in Bai Estate (Mr G.N Abraham Ogujiaku and 21 others)	14,500
21	Umuahia Community Residents in Mbonge (F.E Odikamere and 43 others)	31,050
22	Arochukwu Committee in Mbonge (Francis Ukpabia and 36 others)	37,500
23	Enugu Branch Mbonge (Okafor Ogbodo and 23 others)	15,800
24	Amasiri Afikpo Elements at Bekura Lobe (Ikpe Uro and 32 others)	17,500



25	Onitsha Southern District Union Kumba (Mr /Mrs Daniel Okike and 51 others)	106,000
26	Amasiri Family Afikpo living in Kumba (Robert and 84 others)	69,100
27	Nnewi, Onitsha People living in Bamenda (Peter Igbokwe and 3 others)	47,000
28	Afikpo Division Apkoha in Mbonge Marumba (Oko Azu and 45 others)	24,000
29	Umunam Atta Orlu Residents in Bekure-Barombi, Lobe Estate (Cletus Nwagboh and 7 others)	3,500
30	Owerri Branch, Mbonge (James Akazo and 30 others)	19,250
31	Ibo Community in Boa-Bakundu (Hilary Oguinye and 7 others)	10,000
32	Aro Ibi People in Kumba (Okonkwo Okeke and 23 others)	30,200
33	Urualla, Orlu Province in Kumba (Mr Ignatius Izuogu and 19 others)	34,450
34	Ekwereazu Mbaise, Owerri Residents in Kumba (Mr/Mrs Simeon Ocko and 16 others)	32,800
35	The Uli Family- Orlu in Kumba (Moses Obiamankwa and 49 others)	43,000
36	From Mr Samuel Izuegbu of the Family of Matthew Izuegbu of Alot Onitsha and University Student in transit donated c/o S.N Ozim, Box 13, Kumba Note:The word Alot may be Alor	10 dollars
37	Mr/Mrs Ayaekwezu Okafor in Awka Etit	4,500
38	Igbo of Ngugo Ikeduru, Owerri Residents in Bamusso Bakolle (Anthony Osuji and 6 others)	14,500
39	Item Community, Mbonge (Esonu Onuegbu and 2 others)	2000
40	Awomama Kumba Branch (Mr/Mrs Ignatius Nzediegwu and 215 others)	238,000
41	Miscellaneous, Umuaka Orlu No A and B, West Cameroon (Demian Akojuru, Festus Uchendu and 100 others)	89,500



	Total	2,369,934
	Untyped written document with 1830 names (Dominic Nzerue and 1829 others)	2,437,125
	Grand Total	4,807,059

Source: NAB, TC/1966/14, Nigeria-Biafra Conflict Suspected Activities of the Ibos in Cameroon

**Remark:** All the names in the table are written just as they appeared in the file in the National Archives, Buea.

This table just shows part of the general donation. The Surete Service, Buea stated that the Biafran Sun on 3rd August, 1967 carried a report of how the Ifite Ukpo Community in Kumba donated 4,400 CFA francs (55 Nigerian Pounds) to the Civil Defence Fund in Enugu through a three-man delegation led by P.F Nwankwo. The Tiko Biafran Community also made their own donation according to the paper.<sup>39</sup> On 17th August 1967, the Surete Service, Buea claimed to have uncovered a secret meeting held in Mountain Hotel, Buea involving three British and five Biafrans. Amongst the five Biafrans were three Igbo namely Dennis Curtis Ejemba, a Biafran Navy pilot; Emmanuel Chukwunanu Nnoyelu, likely a Navy pilot and Pius Ndukwa Madu, a photographer resident in Buea. The purported motive of this meeting was to purchase V.H.F radio equipment through the assistance of Mr Donald George Harrison and Mr James Harry Perkins, who were consultant engineers with the Federal Ministry P.T (Post and Telecommunication) based in Buea. Another report has it that they discussed on how to buy navy ships and war artilleries from abroad through Cameroon. The four Biafrans based in Nigeria and one of



the British were repatriated as they were escorted by the Gendarmes to the Ekok border with Nigeria. Mr. Pius Ndukwu Madu of Mbaise in Owerri Province was accused of aiding and abetting Biafran rebellion from Cameroon as he collected money for the Biafran Civil Defence Fund. Also, it was alleged that one Barrister Benard Sunday Chigbu Nzenwa arrived Buea with John Ukechem Uguru to seek for moral and financial support to execute the war. Mr Madu was said to have used his Volkswagen car with Plate Number CM 2981 to move them from place to place and even reached Victoria.<sup>40</sup>

On 20th July 1968, the Consular General of Nigerian Consulate, Mr H.J.N Okpokam paid a visit to Nigerian residents in Muyuka and blamed Lt Col Ojukwu solely for the cause of the Nigeria – Biafra war,<sup>41</sup> which is debatable. On 22nd October 1968, two International Red Cross members, Mr Vlf Per Erik Gastrin and Mrs Helena Magdalan serving in Biafra arrived Buea as tourists as monitored by the Surete Service, Buea. The Surete Service later found that they ascertained the Biafran population in Cameroon and the reactions of Biafrans in Cameroon on the Republic of Biafra as well as the reactions of Cameroonians on the war.<sup>42</sup> The Igbo also inquired from Cameroonians their view of the war and why President Ahidjo refused to support Biafra.

In a letter dated 13th October, 1968 emanating from the Consulate-General of Buea from the Nigerian Ambassador, H.E Alhaji Bello Malabu allegedly revealed that prominent Biafran personalities were aiding rebellion in Nigeria through their activities. From Kumba, the following names were penciled down:

Lawrence O Ekwunor, Biafran alleged Consul in Cameroon; Mr Innocent Dike; Charles O Nwachukwu, proprietor of City Hotel and Mr Walter Wilson, proprietor of National School. Others were Mr Ozim, arms agent; Nwafor alias Mayor; Mr T.A Okubor; Mr Godwin Anyaogu, lived in Igbo Quarters, Kumba and was accused of recruiting Biafran soldiers in his house; and Mr Pius Fusi, a Cameroonian and suspended Police Superintendent who was believed to be the adviser on security. From Mamfe, Mr Davidson Onuora, manager and proprietor of Confidence Trading Company; Mr Nwosu alias Watch and Pray; Mr Bernard Anatagu; Mr Nkama Ode and Mr Ikem or Ben Nkwezu were equally accused. From Victoria, Mr Alphonsus Ekuchi, a lawyer and also of Utility Trading Company, Mamfe and Mr N. Nnoke (name not legible from the source), a law student at University of Yaounde, formerly a law student of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The recruitment as stated earlier was done in Kumba where each recruit was said to pay 1000 CFA francs as registration fee and after which would be sent to Gabon through Mbonge for training, Messrs Alphonsus Ekwuchi and Davidson Onuorah were accused of using the Red Cross to maintain thirteen runner way policemen from Biafran enclave. They included Police Corporal Alphonsus Obiora, Thaddeus Odiofor, Sebastian Ibe etc.<sup>43</sup>

In a letter dated 8th November, 1968 by the Federal Inspector of Administration, Buea he noted that the Nigerian Consulate-General alleged that Biafra guerilla training centres were established in Bomeh and Oshie in Gwofon Sub-division. The Consul based his allegation on the incident of 21st October 1968, where over twenty Igbo young men returning from Mbengwi to

Bamenda evaded arrest. Mr Donatus Ibe, said to be one of the ring leaders of the incident was later arrested near Oshie. One Brother Richard, an Igbo in the the Bomeh Catholic Monastery was believed to be in the know of the training centre. The Directors and Managers of Confidence Trading Company and Union Trading Company were blamed of spearheading rebel activities in Southern Cameroons.<sup>44</sup> In 1969, one Mr Emetu Awa of Elu Ohafia, residing in Kumba was labelled a Biafran agent because one thousand copies of Republic of Biafra 1969 Calendar were sent to his Post Office Box and intercepted at the Tiko Airport. He refuted the allegation of being an agent saying he was a cocoa seller and over 30 subscribers were using the box. The calendars were sent by Mr S.I.E Nwegbene from Paris and each was to be sold for 50 CFA francs.<sup>45</sup> Mr Emetu, the former General Secretary of the Igbo Union, was deported via Douala to Gabon in June 1969 because of pro-Biafran activities in Kumba. Why Gabon? May be because Gabon was an ally of Biafra since Cameroon - Nigeria border was closed. The Igbo asked for protection from the authorities after the war for the fear of being attacked by non-Igbo Nigerians.<sup>46</sup>

Some of these accusations levelled on the Igbo of supporting Biafra, though were initiated by the Nigerian Consul in West Cameroon had the backing of the government of Cameroon. Hence, this work is of the view that the Cameroonian government accused the Igbo in West Cameroon of supporting Biafra.

## **Conclusion**

This research has been able to take a look at the rusty relations between the Igbo of Nigeria resident in Southern Cameroons and the Cameroonian authorities. As the Igbo left their homeland and



settled in Southern Cameroons they had to devise a means of maintaining their oneness, hence the formation of town unions cum Igbo union. The activities of the Igbo Union waned in the 1970s following the defeat of the Republic of Biafra in 1970. It was observed that the anti-Igbo laws came up as a result of the few bad eggs among the Igbo that were involved in unacceptable practices. Also, some of the heads of the town unions were repatriated from Cameroon as they were accused of treason. The close monitoring of the Igbo in Cameroon by the government of Amadou Ahidjo was to ensure that they didn't sow a seed of secession in Southern Cameroons. That notwithstanding, Southern Cameroons fifty years later in 2017 announced its secession from Cameroon leading to conflict between the government and the Ambazonian separatists of Southern Cameroons which is still on. To forestall rusty relations between the hosts and settlers, there should be collaboration between Cameroonian security agencies and the various town unions *cum* Igbo union, in order to fish out criminally minded individuals of Igbo extraction.

## End Notes

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