Fear of a black planet:

Paternalism, private industry and profit motives in French development aid to Cameroon, 1946-1974

by Andrew Larkin

The city of Douala marks the river Wouri's entrance into the Atlantic ocean and was Germany's entry point into a territory that it named Kamerun. When the city fell into French hands following World War I, it served the function the Germans had conceived for it, a uniquely well-suited outlet for the wealth of a vast Mittelafrika territory- except that this territory was now French. Following the 4th Republic's law of April 30th, 1946, instituting a massive investment project in the African colonies, Douala was a major site both for direct investments in projects expanding the port and initiating bridge construction, and indirect benefits, as a transport hub for an export-oriented empire and consequently Cameroon's economic capital. Between 1945 and 1951 150,000 square meters of the city saw the construction of 490 new buildings and the expansion of the ranks of an urban poor. As construction companies popped up and expanded across the city, its eponymous inhabitants became minorities following a vast influx of Africans suffering from a decline in the rural economy and searching for jobs sure to result from the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Social des Territoires d'Outre-Mer (FIDES). Yet the first FIDES program, operating essentially from 1949-1953, invested almost entirely in Cameroon's infrastructure without taking meaningful steps to foster changes in the agricultural structure of its economy or improve this structure's efficiency, creating, in effect, little more than a construction bubble and significant inflation.

Nonetheless the FIDES constituted France's first sustained, large-scale investment program in its African colonies, and as an institution coterminous with the Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (FAC), was...

2 ANOM BIB12128.
3 Richard Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 54: “The problems that emerged in Douala were therefore, in part, rural unrest that had been shifted over to the towns.”
4 *Marches Coloniaux du Monde*, March 20th, 1948, suggests that the cost of living in Douala went up 50% between 1947 and 194.
also France's first serious participation in a prototype of contemporary development aid from industrialized to non-industrialized countries. FIDES provided funds to improve physical and social infrastructure, 'modernize' rural production, and study development possibilities, the latter programs growing in importance to combat political agitation after 1953. It became the FAC in 1960, following the accession of most of France's African territories to independence.  

FAC and FIDES are not unique in having undergone administrative continuity and a name change following the wave of French African independence. The other major institutions of post-colonial French aid, the Fonds Européen de Développement (FED), administered by the Communauté Économique Européenne (CEE), and the Caisse Centrale de la Coopération Économique (CCCE), also have direct links to French colonialism. The FED was prominently involved in francophone sub-Saharan Africa largely because when France signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957, it insisted that its colonies be associated with the European Common Market, and that the EEC become associated in development aid. As with the FAC, the CCCE was merely a new moniker for the Caisse Centrale de la France d'Outre Mer (CCFOM), the central bank of the French aid programs.

These glaring continuities have been remarked on by almost every scholar who has investigated Franco-African cooperation, and yet remarkably, to my knowledge, a study of these institutions as institutions, addressing their pre- and post-colonial programs in continuity, has yet to be undertaken. By

\[5\] CADN SCAC 2.  
\[6\] Note that serious problems have been observed in the French government's method for calculating official aid volumes. In a letter on 24 June 1970, concerning aid figures, one functionary noted that “Ces chiffres concernant les 'prêts et investissements du secteur privé sont contestables a d'autres égards. Les remboursements perçus sont bien soustraits des prêts versés, mais on néglige de déduire les intérêts et les profits rapatriées dans les pays riches, alors qu'on inclut, dans l'aide, les bénéfices réinvestis dans les pays pauvres.” Ibid. Official statistics providing the total volume of French overseas aid also included aid money spent in the Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, DOM-TOM, though these were legally part of the French republic.  
shifting the chronology of my analysis to treat the history of French development aid as an institution, rather than within the confines of a political narrative of history, I hope to more clearly elucidate how France's post-colonial economic relationships with Cameroon were neo-colonial, and what public investments from the colonial era have in common with later public investments, to better understand the colonial origins as well as the post-colonial novelties of development aid. In particular, as a method of dealing with the question of neo-colonialism, I have attempted to analyze whether implementations of programs under FIDES and FAC, the CCFOM and CCCE, have been in French rather than African interests. The wide variety of programs undertaken with French aid money do not fit easily into such a rigid binary of interests and thus a careful analysis of the implementations of this aid money is necessary to understand both what French priorities for its use were, and how African states exerted their own influence on its dispensation.

One influential criticism of development aid addresses the dependence of donor countries on resources available in the recipient countries, seeing aid as a method to safeguard access. Guy Martin's “Uranium: A Case Study in Franco-African Relations” in particular convincingly analyzes French interests and actions in Gabon in terms of France's domestic dependence on nuclear energy and consequent dependence on Africa for uranium provision.9 Beyond this particularly well-suited example, Brigitte Schulz and William Hansen have demonstrated that strategic dependency can extend beyond rare minerals. Examining the German Federal Republic's aid connections with Africa, they quote a governmental report on how Germany's “dependence on a few tropical agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa and tea is total. It is also high for agricultural raw materials for industry (cotton about 60

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percent, rubber about 80 percent, jute about 90 percent).”

While uranium concerns, and resource concerns more generally, have no doubt significantly influenced French policy in sub-Saharan Africa, they alone are not sufficient explanations of French cooperation. On this count, Cameroon is particularly demonstrative. Cameroon's principle export receipts from the '50s, '60s and '70s were from bananas, coffee and cacao, with approximately 45% of the last commodity contracted by Holland.\(^1\) French import policy through the late '60s forced French consumers to pay above world prices for Cameroonian cash crops, and from the '50s French administrators were emphasizing the territory's need to diversify buyers, as much to move Cameroon away from economic dependence as because the French coffee market was already saturated.\(^2\) This information is difficult to reconcile with a theory of French dependence on Cameroonian export crops, even if France was dependent on sub-Saharan Africa more broadly for certain products. Nor do Cameroonian strategic resources account for French aid money to the territory, for though, in 1974, 90% of mining company capital was French, mining activity was consistently negligible.\(^3\) Petrol, which came to constitute a significant part of Cameroonian GDP, was not discovered until around 1971, and even by 1979 Cameroonian oil constituted a negligible portion of French imports, so even if France's Cameroonian interests in the '80s are surely marked by oil, its involvement in the country in the '60s is less easily explained.\(^4\) The Ahidjo government continued to emphasize diversifying Cameroon's customer base, a policy noted and approved of by the French embassy at the time, and ultimately eliciting Mike DeLancey's terse epigram on French neo-colonialism in Cameroon: “In 1961 France accounted for over 59 percent of Cameroon exports and 55 percent of its imports. Over the years Cameroon has developed relations with trading partners other than France, and France's relative

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\(^2\) CADN SCAC 261.

\(^3\) IMF Country Summary, ANOM 1AFFECO/84.

\(^4\) CADN Yaounde Ambassade 199.

\(^4\) CADN Ambassade 92, 184.
significance has declined.”

Studying France's connections with Africa need not be shaped exclusively around available statistics of commodity flows and published treaties. Another hypothesis derives quite simply from the fact that France dominated economic activity in Cameroon. In keeping with the principles of Martin's criticisms of French aid, one can argue that France wanted to protect its companies' control of markets, rather than its access to what was being sold in them, by retaining close links to its former African territories. France held 45-55% of private capital in Cameroon in 1977, and French citizens retained disproportionate roles as cadres in the private sector. This sort of government intervention in the retention of markets abroad would not be surprising. When Volkswagen tried to create a plant in Cameroon in 1972, which would use Cameroonian aluminum and gain a chunk of the Cameroonian car market, the German government offered 70% of the initial investment capital (the installation never came about, in part due to the opposition of the Minister of Economic Planning, who worked closely with French advisers). To link these facts with development aid, numerous observers of Franco-African relations have noted the failure of France's published aid statistics to account for profit made by French industries or individuals repatriated to France, though they include French private reinvestment in the totals. As Philippe Hugon noted in 1968, “Since independence... the flight of private capital has been greater than the influx of public capital.” While this factoid alone isn't proof of a direct association between French aid and repatriated profit, it does invite interrogation. To put the thesis another way, did it matter who bought cocoa from Cameroon, if Cacao Barry would be the company providing it?

To prove this hypothesis one would have to both demonstrate the sustained presence of French

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17 CADN Yaounde SCAC 596.
interests in African economies, that this presence was reinforced by the use of French aid money, and that whether via aid administrators' knowledge of or belief in the importance of these companies to the domestic economy, or the influence of representatives of these companies among aid administrators, this reinforcement was deliberate. In this paper I will demonstrate the first two points. Noting, however, that certain aid programs appear to have extended beyond the possible outer limits of the immediate concerns of the French private sphere, I will also attempt to describe a broader factor in the administration of French aid- the reluctance of the French, who retained positions of great influence in Cameroon, to give up authority to Africans, in the public or private sphere. French aid programs were united in being administered in such a way as to retain French control, a control which in turn facilitated France's economic prominence in Cameroon. John Chipman's explanation of the evolution of French policies from the 1944 Brazzaville conference through independence seems pertinent here: “Brazzaville should be seen not as the place where decolonization began, but rather as the place at which a specific style of managing power was implicitly adopted... the path from essential 'unity' through to loose 'union,' 'community' and finally to 'co-operation' could be followed with only a minimal loss of real power and influence.”¹⁹ This managing style was consistently characteristic of French development aid.

Indeed, one major criticism of the first FIDES program was that its principal direct beneficiaries were European companies. French sympathizer Charles Okala claimed that “in practice, the Credit du Cameroun granted loans only to Europeans and for construction work,” and historian Richard Joseph notes that, for the first FIDES plan, “many of the FIDES funds went directly to European-owned construction enterprises.”²⁰ As we've seen, companies benefiting or originating from FIDES investments were disproportionately based in the country's major port city. According to then-Governor General Hoffher, “everything was concentrated in Douala.”²¹ Of commercial and industrial buildings created in the city between 1947 and 1951, 129 of 138 were European-owned, the vast majority by French

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people. Not a single industrial building was owned by an African. The major grants of the CCFOM through ’51 went to large French-owned construction firms such as Bourdin & Chaussée, Baudon and Monod as well as subsidiaries of metropolitan companies created to profit from tax incentives for new businesses, such as the Compagnie d'Exploitation Automobile au Cameroun (CEAC), a subsidiary of the Compagnie d'Exploitation Automobile. The overview of CEAC’s loan application in the CCFOM’s files stresses that “it (CEAC) ensures.... the commercial representation of Renault in Cameroon.”

A French river navigation company and the Cameroonian vendor of Citroën, Suarez Almeyda, were also given major loans to assure that in one way or another French companies would benefit from infrastructural development and be represented in the transportation industry in Cameroon.

This information on its own is hardly striking, as infrastructural investments in Cameroonian companies would have required that these companies exist. We must also avoid confusing the manner in which FIDES was implemented with its goal; to do otherwise implies that the French government invested billions of francs in Cameroonian infrastructure solely for the purpose of throwing construction companies a bone. Here we arrive at one ambiguity of interests present in the administration of the first FIDES program. As France was ultimately implicated in the success or the failure of a colonial Cameroon's economy, it is difficult to starkly juxtapose their economic incentives. However, it is useful to briefly observe the antagonism between bureaucrats in the Ministry of Overseas France and in Cameroon's executive, and French settlers in Cameroon, who comprised the territory's Assembly, for Franco-Cameroonian administrative conflict was extant. Another division that is useful to observe is that between a positive balance of payments on a territorial scale and economic growth for Africans. That is to say, FIDES did remarkably little to develop economic opportunities for Africans. Most of the FIDES' favors to French industry follow quite logically from the legal obligation of FIDES and CCFOM beneficiaries to make franc zone purchases whenever possible- France was, of course, the only economy

22 ANOM BIB 12128.
23 1FIDES/8. All translations mine.
24 Ibid.
in the zone with an automobile industry. This legal requirement certainly signifies that France had the interests of its metropolitan industries in mind when designing the FIDES, but it does not follow that the Renault vehicles French money brought to Cameroon held back the latter's economic development in a way American cars wouldn't have. The significance is rather in the fact that, in spite of the territorial government's implementation of tax breaks for new companies, and in spite of the attention the French government paid to fostering African savings, FIDES was not engaged in strengthening the role of African business in the Cameroonian economy, an operation that could have increased domestic savings and fostered profit reinvestment.  

CCFOM loans and public works contracts went to companies that could credibly demonstrate their creditworthiness, with established histories and large capital assets, of the sort that nearly no Cameroonians had at this point. The first FIDES plan's investments, 84% of which went to industry, directly benefited French companies more than any others. Though at the time this was certainly natural, this tendency to favor French business would remain in place long after it became apparent that Cameroonian economic development would require a broader African place in the national economy. So strictly speaking, the money largely went to the French, which is not the same as saying that the projects executed were strictly for the French. We need now to assess the conception, goals, and achievements of the first FIDES plan.

Inside Cameroon, the French government's assumption that more efficient exportation would be a sufficient stimulus to the territory's economy to merit the debt it was taking on was not convincing. For though the FIDES plans for Cameroon were financed by both the Cameroonian territory and the French government, the drafting of the plans was done almost exclusively by the latter. An initial analysis of the plan must therefore note its divorce from the perspectives of the French settler community in Cameroon. This resulted in prominent opposition to the first FIDES plan not only from the growing African radical movement in Cameroon, but also from the French colons, independent plantation owners.

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25 See Blin's contribution to the Cavet Report, ANOM 1FIDES/85.
and traders who were both numerous and economically prominent.\textsuperscript{27} In an editorial in \textit{Marchés Coloniaux du Monde}, one \textit{colon} tried to present a front of European and African small business interests uniformly threatened by the administration of FIDES, with its support of large metropolitan industries.\textsuperscript{28} In reality almost no African businesses were created or supported by the first FIDES program whereas French ones sprung up in great quantities, and the \textit{colons} were just emerging from a period of exceptionally severe exploitation of Cameroonians as a result of the administrative disorder of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} World War.\textsuperscript{29} However, their concerns speak to the territory’s growing indebtedness over frivolous projects. The territory paid 45\% of all FIDES projects.\textsuperscript{30} The infamous \textit{route Razel} absorbed some 2,000,000,000 CFA Francs and was constructed parallel to another road which needed repairs. The \textit{route Razel} extended only 10 kilometers further.\textsuperscript{31} Other showcase disasters resulting from metropolitan planning included a bridge built where there were no roads.\textsuperscript{32} Cameroon was in the midst of an economic boom for the initial period of FIDES investments, but most private investment was oriented around gaining contracts for infrastructural work, so with no serious effort to develop demand within Cameroon, capital investment, like the African proletariat now installed in Douala, faced looming obsolescence after the major construction credits ended. Foreign firms, the major beneficiaries of public investments and loans, repatriated the majority of their profits. One internal report noted the impossibility of increasing taxes on repatriated profit due to the influence of colonial companies who had forestalled similar attempts in French Equatorial Africa, suggesting that only incentives could be used to increase private investment.\textsuperscript{33} Tax incentives that were offered were clearly insufficient, as the

\textsuperscript{27} See in particular chapter 2 of Joseph, \textit{Radical Nationalism} for a summary of the \textit{colons’} economic situation during World War II and its implications for reform attempts in the post-war period.  
\textsuperscript{29} Again, see chapter 2 in Joseph, \textit{Radical Nationalism}.  
\textsuperscript{30} Ndongko notes that France increasingly took on expenses in the financing of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} plan, but this was largely through French subventions to the Cameroonian budget which continued through independence.  
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 117.  
\textsuperscript{32} Martin Atangana, \textit{French Investment}.  
\textsuperscript{33} See Blin’s contributions to the Cavet report, ANOM 1AFFECO/85.
end of the first FIDES plan was marked by major private disinvestment.  

Administrative reports from 1951 also suggest that the territory began to go into debt as a result of its FIDES commitments. In other words due to poor implementation the FIDES program initially worked very strongly against territorial interests by requiring a huge financial contribution and insufficient stimulus to production, due as much to poor conception as to conflicts of interest.

To really interrogate the first FIDES program with respect to African interests, we must again stress its conservative character. It attempted to render more efficient an extractive economy and did so by concentrating on a sector in which very few Africans were active. Though it is difficult to determine on a micro-economic level which actors most benefited from improved infrastructure, it seems reasonable to assume that advantages largely accrued to transportation companies whose costs were cut.

The agricultural export structure was no doubt rendered more efficient, offering the potential for greater territorial revenues from exports, but some benefited more than others from these efficiencies. Only the Bamileke of the Mungo region had really developed adequately sophisticated savings and cooperative networks to finance attempts to transport their own merchandise. The failure of their early attempts due to shoddy infrastructure suggests that French efforts were steps in a needed direction, but among Africans, only the Bamileke stood to directly benefit. To quote Joseph, “the greater part of the wholesale and retail trade was in the hands of the large colonial trading firms found in other parts of West Africa, while the Greeks and Lebanese controlled the middle level of both the retail trade and the purchasing of agricultural produce.”

Similarly, significant portions of the cash crop economy were firmly in European hands, a fact to which the first FIDES program was at best indifferent. An export quota system fixed by pre-colonial export market shares and influenced by French plantation owners drastically

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34 Atrangana, *French Investment.*
35 See Truitard's report in ANOM 1FIDES/84
favored European banana and coffee plantations, undercutting Bamileke and broader African entrepreneurship. Only the diminishing size of these plantations forced a reluctant administration to change the quotas gradually in the early '50s.\textsuperscript{38} The inflation, recession, and disinvestment following the end of the construction boom no doubt more than offset the new efficiencies in transport on a macroeconomic scale, and for Africans in particular, produced a pattern of large urban under- and unemployment. As the construction boom slowed in the early '50s, this population swelled to around 40\% of the Douala labor pool.\textsuperscript{39}

In sum, it is difficult to say positively that the first FIDES program was oriented \textit{exclusively} around French commercial interests other than insofar as they were the dominant actors in the Cameroonian economy. However, in leaving unchanged an economy based on agricultural exports while facilitating transportation, in assuring French companies' involvement in transportation, and in largely contracting French construction companies, the FIDES program is certainly consistent with such a theory. It did nothing to meaningfully develop interior markets or integrate African businesses into the territorial economic landscape. The benefits of improved infrastructure presumably facilitated the large growth in export tonnage over the concerned period, but any improved productivity was the accomplishment of African farmers, working against colonial policies. The construction boom precipitated a major economic debacle.

The realization among colonial administrators that FIDES had to engage more directly with African cash crop producers, rather than fostering cash crops infrastructural outlets, appears to have begun in earnest around 1952.\textsuperscript{40} There were numerous reasons for this. For one, increasing expenditure on agricultural production was a good way to address complaints that FIDES only interacted with French construction companies and paid essentially no attention to 'the bush' (a complaint articulated in

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{39} Joseph, \textit{Radical Nationalism}, 163.
\textsuperscript{40} This was the year the radically different 2\textsuperscript{nd} FIDES plan was initially drafted, and territorial commentators make this point as well. ANOM 1AFFPOL/2099. It is also referred to in Truitard's contributions to the '51 Cavet report, ANOM 1FIDES/84.
the colon-dominated *Cameroun Libre*). It was also a natural next step in attempting to provide a more solid foundation for Cameroon's cash crop economy, and for these two reasons, historian Martin Atangana has interpreted the second FIDES plan's increased emphasis on rural production as a service to European commercial interests. However, he does not explain how dealing directly with African cocoa farmers, and increasingly African coffee and banana farmers, helped European farmers any more than developing the roads on which these products were exported. Certain projects of the second FIDES plan, as we will see below, are notorious for their transparent relation to exclusively metropolitan interests, but expenditures on rural production, which constituted 4% of the first plan and 36% of the second, are more comprehensible in terms of a broader political strategy of the colonial, and ultimately post-colonial Cameroonian administrations.

Beginning most notably under the administration of Roland Pré, the Cameroonian government from the mid '50s was preoccupied with undercutting African radicalism by co-opting its programs. To understand this development, we have to first understand the emergence of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun*.

Cameroon is unique in francophone sub-Saharan Africa for having experienced something that could meaningfully be called a war of independence. Growing out of the discontent of impoverished Bassa farmers in the capital-intensive, labor-light industrialized region of Edea and the upwardly mobile Bamileke plantation owners undercut by European farmers and antagonistic laws, intellectual Africans in the territorial administration blocked out of managerial posts and the semi-literate jobless of Douala, the UPC provided a radical call for independence and economic empowerment in Cameroon. Founded in 1948 following the failure of previous reformist political parties such as *Jeucafra* and the first post-war nationalist organization, *Racam*, the UPC demanded reunification of French and British Cameroon, independence and dissociation with the French Union in line with the requirements of the

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41 *Le Cameroun Libre*, April 15, 1953, quoted in Atangana, *French Investment*.
42 Atangana, *French Investment*, 56.
43 Ibid., 131.
44 This issue hit close to home for many Bamileke and Douala as parts of communities split by the Anglo-French partition of 'Kamerun.'
United Nations tutelage program, and an increased role for Cameroonians at every level of the economy. It maintained close relations with French Marxists after Felix Houphoeùt-Boigny's Rassemblement Democratique Africain pursued a rapprochement with the French administration in 1950. Checked by the territorial government from its inception, it nonetheless drastically expanded its profile until 1955. According to Joseph, “the UPC was at the centre of Cameroun politics during the years 1952-4.” Its close ties to trade unions and articulation of a sense of national, 'Kamerunian' identity made it one of very few parties with a legitimate claim to a political platform rather than an ethnic support base. As Joseph notes with respect to one of the prominent parties of opposition to the UPC, the Bloc Democratique Camerounais, “the BDC was an important barometer of the growing influence and appeal of the UPC's programme, for although it strongly denigrated the UPC's goals of independence and unification in the early '50s, by 1955 it had come to adopt these very two themes, if not the nationalist fervour, of the UPC.”

Cameroon's broader trajectory, starting from the governorship of Roland Pré in late 1954 was analogous to that of the BDC. Under Pré the territorial government adopted a “policy of reforms...meant to win the Cameroun people away from the UPC.” These policies were ultimately inherited by the country's post-independence leader, Ahmadu Ahidjo, a continuous administrative process of co-opting radical talking points without ever threatening a firmly francophile administrative structure. Nor did these programs meaningfully bridge the gap between interacting with Africans and facilitating their rise to significant roles in the national economy, in spite of the rhetoric.

Bullied for years, the UPC was finally banned in 1955 following a wave of strikes and riots with which the party was associated. In 1956, a guerrilla war began, concentrated in the Mungo region and the Littoral province, where most of the UPC's backbone, the Bamileke and Bassa populations, lived. Echoes of the war, in which the French military was prominently involved, lasted until the 1971 torture

45 Joseph, Radical Nationalism, 197.
46 Ibid., 179.
47 Ibid., 247.
and execution of the last real U.P.C president, Ernest Ouandié.  

In December of 1952, Ruben Um Nyobe, founding president and the iconic figure of the UPC, gave an address to the United Nations General Assembly condemning French colonialism and setting out the case for Cameroonian independence. During the 1951/’52 fiscal year, Sociétés Autochtones de Prévoyance, the French administrations' organs of interaction with African farmers, received an estimated 25.5 million CFA francs in loans. During the ’52/’53 fiscal year this number shot up to 125 million and by ’53/’54 was at 223 million. Nyobe's speech is a very visible reminder of the growing radicalism of the Cameroonian population at this time, concurrent with a major outreach by French investments towards the African inhabitants of the country. As Martin Atangana noted, “Paris decided to grant Cameroon a sum of 27.5 billion CFA francs from 1954 to 1958, as part of the Second Four-Year Plan. This decision was all the more surprising since at that time the words 'independence' and 'autonomy' were increasingly heard in Cameroon.” Thus while the first FIDES plan stood out for its excessive investments in infrastructure, the second FIDES plan was part of a broader governing strategy that would define Cameroon's trajectory into the '70s. While French control of the Cameroonian economy was retained or reinforced, and its accomplishments were occasionally trumpeted as great boons to this economy, paternalistic rural engagement programs sought to co-opt radicalism and discontent in the territory. Yet like the first FIDES program, it did not meaningfully seek to place Cameroonian in charge of their own development programs, or move them into prominence into the national economy. Rather, French planners conceived of development schemes managed by the French, using materials supplied by French companies, and having work executed by African workers, in

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48 As my notes attest, Joseph offers the definitive account of the social and political origins of the UPC, though unfortunately, his account stops short of the guerilla war which began in 1956. One polemical overview of this conflict and the slow death of the UPC is Cameroonian novelist Mongo Beti's Main Basse sur le Cameroun (Paris: Francois Maspero Press, 1972), and the war has also seen an increasing amount of Francophone literature, the subject of a book by French activist Francois-Xavier Verschave's organization Agir Ici entitled France-Cameroun: Croisement Dangereux! (Paris: Harmattan 1995) as well as a prominent topic in Verschave's own La Francafrique: Le plus long scandale de la republique (Paris: Editions Stock, 1998). Recently, Kamerun! Une guerre cachee aux origines de la Francafrique (Paris: La Decouverte, 2011) has promised a more thorough appraisal of this little-mentioned conflict.  

49 ANOM 2FIDES/808.  
50 Atangana, French Investment, 54.
keeping with a paternalistic 'managing style,' and a reluctance to threaten French control.

Two of the major institutions through which the French investments in rural production in Cameroon were realized were the Sociétés Autochtones de Prévoyance and the modernization sectors. The SAPs were supposed to operate in ways analogous to rural producer cooperatives while also extending credit to African farmers.\(^{51}\) As institutions, they had existed since 1937, and before under different names, yet they never succeeded in gaining the support of the African countryside. Overseen by Frenchmen, their monopolies on selling produce went disregarded in spite of the favorable prices they offered. Annual subventions to the SAPs were required of all families in the circumscription, whether or not they used its services (though many were legally obligated to sell through them). The activities of the modernization sectors were more varied. For instance, it was through modernization sectors that major investments were made in northern riziculture as well as in two palm-oil processing plants and a quinine station. Yet modernization sectors also tasked themselves with the “modernization of the mentality of the farmer by teaching him the most perfected methods of working.”\(^{52}\) In some cases, the activities of these institutions were functionally indistinguishable. The modernization sector of the West was given funds under the second FIDES plan for technical actions, management training, and collection paths. The SAPs near the area were given funding for exactly the same purposes.\(^{53}\) These two institutions absorbed more than half of the agricultural production budget from 1953 to 1956, and two thirds from 1956 to 1959, with other expenses going towards projects similar to ones they undertook, such as the construction of stocking hangars, phytosanitary stations, and educational centers.\(^{54}\)

Some of the rural production projects funded by FIDES were no doubt eminently useful. A significant portion of money given to both SAPs and modernization sectors went to developing local road networks to facilitate hauling export crops, and investments in phytosanitary treatment of African


\(^{52}\) See Directeur du Controle Financier's notes on the 5 May 1956 committee meeting, ANOM 1FIDES/49.

\(^{53}\) ANOM 2FIDES/29.

\(^{54}\) ANOM 2FIDES/29.
plants put them on more even footing with their better-funded European counterparts. One modernization sector noted in 1953 that “unlike what happened in 1950-1951 and 1952 when the cooperative, completely bankrupt, couldn't treat the plantations of its members, two treatments have been applied this year by the European manager on the cooperative lands of Baigon, Koupa-Minke, Komelap and Koupara.”

Numerous hangars for crops constructed around the country no doubt ameliorated the quality of exports. However, by and large, both the SAPs and the modernization sectors failed to address many of the problems African farms had. The above report also noted how

“up to the present, only European planters have been practicing mechanized agriculture, efficiently replacing rarer and rarer labor. Several plantations once abandoned have recommenced activity. The Africans possess only simple tools, with the exception of 3 who own European-type concessions and who possess well-equipped coffee-processing factories in which they treat their product and that of their compatriots.”

Undercapitalization appears to have been a major limiting factor of African farms' productivity. Indeed, one colonial administrator described how “The Crédit Agricole [a branch of the public banking system dealing with rural credit] has primarily served the interests that offered the most real guarantees, which is to say, European colonists.”

European coffee plantations were on average twice as productive, on a per-hectare basis, as African ones, as a result of mechanization and fertilizer use, funded in part by credit institutions from which African farmers were cut off. While modernization sectors and SAPs helped provide farmers access to certain resources, it was on a restrictive basis. As a counter-example, on the banana plantations of the Littoral where the Bamileke had highly developed cooperatives, their self-financed accrual of 124 tractors between 1952 and 1956 corresponded to a 25-point gain in the share of the banana export market. One could argue that SAPs and modernization sectors were focused

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55 ANOM 2FIDES/808.
56 ANOM 2FIDES/808.
57 ANOM 1FIDES/512.
58 ANOM 1FIDES/49 and 2FIDES/808.
on educating Africans as a preliminary step towards providing them better access to new machinery and loans, except that education remained a major part of the rural development program from the beginning of the 2nd FIDES plan through Cameroonian independence. Meanwhile, the first funds for rural industrialization appeared only in the 1958/1959 fiscal year. 8.5 million francs CFA out of a total of 1,180.1 million invested in rural production went to this project that year. The failure of these organizations to appeal to Africans is apparent from frequent administrative complaints. One noted how “the Africans are completely disinterested in the collective plantations established for their profit; it will consequently be difficult to maintain them,” while the Secteur de Modernisation Agricole de la Zone Maritime’s 1959 annual report commented on how “the effort to create mutual credit cooperatives for the maintenance of plantations... has been a failure, the planters not wanting to group themselves, and saying that they didn't have the money for the initial investment. For the creation of new plantations.... the Credit du Cameroun informed me that this organism.... doesn't offer long term loans... [the representative] also noted upon a visit to Dibombari the planters' lack of interest in the plantations already created.”

Official cooperatives, as opposed to the largely independent Bamileke ones, provided some forum for African autonomy, but still had their finances managed by the local SAPs, who despite their oversight of cooperative finance received the vast majority of agricultural investments- which is to say, most loans were only made on condition that they be managed by a European. As one administrator noted, it was very difficult to loan to an African because “his mentality is reluctant to accept the idea of sooner or later reimbursing the loan received.”

The failure of the SAPs and modernization sectors to meaningfully win the sympathies of the rural African populations does not in theory negate the possibility of useful applications of investments in agricultural production. For instance, several modernization sectors promoted the growth and

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59 ANOM 2FIDES/808.
60 See “Les Capitaux Authochtones et Leur Mobilisation Dans l'Économie Rurale: une Experience de Credit Mutuel Agricole au Cameroun Sous Tutelle Française” by M. Christol, Administrateur en Chef de la France d'Outre Mer, 1957 in 2FIDES/808. The Cameroon National Archives also have a wealth of documentation on the SAPs. See in particular 2AC3747, 2AC4326, 2AC4445 and 3AC1672, for instance, on the legal structures and village-level administrative tensions of these organizations.
marketing of various foodstuffs, an early hint of what would become a priority of the Ahidjo government, developing food self-sufficiency. As Jane Guyer notes, the SAP in the Nyong-et-Sanaga circumscription was crucial in developing networks of food transportation and distribution and managing sales to meet demand in Yaounde, something the private sector would have been reluctant to do due to the low profits available. Yet not all the schemes were well-conceived, and not all of the section leaders were liable to execute the schemes well. The technologically intensive irrigation project to create riziculture in the country's arid north was never able to produce competitively, driving up national food prices for dubious advances in food security. Beyond this poorly-conceived, expensive example, many modernization sectors had to deal with dysfunctional operational structures and underqualified staff. The director of financial control for the Secteur de Modernisation des Cacaoyères explained how SEMAC, wary of the permanence of its FIDES funding and anxious to guarantee its income, “has rapidly become in fact an instrument of production,” abandoning its efforts to educate Africans and simply working and taxing them. In another context, this same man went on to diagnose the broader problems of the modernization sectors:

“Everyone in this country occupies themselves with cocoa, coffee, palm or other operations. Everyone comes up with solutions which, in the final analysis, often prove worse paths with serious consequences... The modernization sectors... depend on people without a single technical qualification (rural posts); other sectors are currently managed by non-technicians (Palmerie Sectors of Edea), or dangerous dreamers (SEMCA) or people incapable, in spite of their good will, to make up for their technical insufficiency (SEMRY) or those who have never felt obliged to solicit, in drafting their program of agricultural work, the opinions or thoughts of those for whom this is a profession... All of these operations ultimately translate into a waste of credits without any profit for the

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62 ANOM 1FIDES/49.
Cameroonian people."  

Technically insufficient aid workers in positions of minimal accountability persistently characterize France's development investments, as we will see at greater length below. In sum the rural production programs in Cameroon tended to be paternalistic and to lack feedback mechanisms, the latter point proving a thorn in the side of efforts like SEMRY's, which found out belatedly that rice would not sell to northern consumers. Fundamentally, investments in rural production were investments in French programs for African production more than in African farmers themselves. This exclusivity had negative impacts on the conception, reception, and performance of these programs.

The 1952 report of the General Labor Inspection of Cameroon states that “Due to the insufficiency of his production, his instability and frequent absences, and the obligation of his employer to have recourse to European managers, the Cameroonian worker is expensive. The solution to the problem presented as such can only be a vast effort to ameliorate the professional quality of workers. This is the task currently being undertaken by several parts of the administration.” At the time there were an estimated 130,000 salaried Cameroonian. A decade later, in spite of the major investments of the second FIDES program, this number had increased by only 25,000, a significantly slower growth rate slower than that of the population. Whether this vast effort had failed or other problems had interfered, the decade of economic change had a negligible impact on the African population of Cameroon. Analyzing the industrialization efforts of the FIDES plans with this knowledge in mind, it becomes clear that attentiveness to African economic needs and formation of African workers was in practice a secondary priority to the reinforcement of an ultimately racialist economic order working in the interest of French industry.

There was industrial development in Cameroon during the '50s. Loans were provided to French forestry companies to develop sawmills, which provided a paucity of jobs to Africans due to

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63 ANOM 1FIDES/49.  
64 1AFFPOL/2099.  
65 ANOM BIB SOM D/30309.
technological innovations. A French cigarette-manufacturing company began operations at Bastos in Yaounde, and Les Brasseries du Cameroun began selling large volumes of beer. The CCFOM loans provided to the subsidiary of French chocolate manufacturer Cacao Barry, the Société Industriel des Cacaos, presumably went to developing their treatment plant for low-grade cocoa. By 1963 these industries along with Pechiney-Ugine's subsidiary ALUCAM constituted a major part of the industrial sector of the Cameroonian economy. With the exception of cigarettes and beer, all these products were designed for export markets.

In this section I will trace the association of FIDES grants and CCFOM loans with European interests, as well as the exclusion of Cameroonian from the private sector of the economy as laborers, entrepreneurs and consumers. First, however, another prominent ambiguity in imposing a binary on French and African interests deserves mention- the semi-public companies established by CCFOM. Martin Atangana treats them as unambiguous agents of French interest but this may be an oversimplification. For instance, the Société Immobilière du Cameroun played an important role in constructing low-income housing in Douala, like the Nyong-et-Sanaga SAP offering a needed service for a financially weak demographic. ENELCAM, functionally the nation's electric provider and operator of the hydroelectric dams at Edea, was partially owned by the Cameroonian state with major shares held by Électricité de France. This is consistent with the theory that France wanted to retain control of the private sector in Cameroon, but nonetheless ENELCAM provided a needed service for domestic use. ENELCAM's own operational style reflects that of the private sector at the time. One annual report noted how all managers at ENELCAM were French, explaining that “an attempt to put an autochtonous agent in charge of the small distribution in Edea was a failure,” implying that Africanizing the cadres was far from a priority. However, in ENELCAM's case its semi-public status ultimately did nothing

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66 1AFFECO/452. 1FIDES/85 details loans to sawmills, p. 140 in Joseph, Radical Nationalism details the lack of employment opportunities they provided.

67 CADN Yaounde SCAC 596.

68 ANOM 1AFFECO/87.
but facilitate its subjection to ALUCAM's whims. The airports installed in Yaounde and Douala, as well as a few other cities, were to be serviced by subsidiaries of Air France, whose employment practices would cause a much more dramatic crisis in 1971. In general semi-public companies were more inclined to provide services to the population of Cameroon, unlike many industrial outfits that merely produced semi-processed exports. But they were not exempt from the general private sector tendency to exclude Africans from managerial ranks.

Perhaps the most infamous private creation is ALUCAM, Pechiney-Ugine's subsidiary aluminum-processing plant. However ALUCAM, which will be discussed at length below, was not the first enterprise functionally created by FIDES and the CCFOM exclusively to serve the interests of France. SOFICAM appealed to the FIDES in 1951 for an investment of 10,500,000 FCFA in establishing jute plantations in Cameroon, noting that France, which had the world's 3rd largest jute industry, was being beaten on the global market by East Pakistani producers exploiting unfairly cheap labor sources. Making reference to the damage the French jute industry had suffered in World War II and the vast extent of its current metropolitan significance, the loan application detailed the FIDES' patriotic duty to develop jute plantations in Cameroonian economy through propaganda differed from pre-WWII tactics of controlling what farmers produced, but at no point was the question of the industry's use to Cameroon, or even suitableness to that territory, emphasized. Replacing one cash crop for African farmers with another, SOFICAM aspired to at worst be innocuous to the Cameroonian economy, but this affair nonetheless demonstrates whose interests guided the dispensation of FIDES funds. SOFICAM ultimately went under due to world jute prices that were much lower than anticipated.

69 ANOM 1FIDES/512.
ALUCAM has been lambasted in great detail by both Richard Joseph and Martin Atangana, not to mention the UPC, and is the most unambiguous example of both FIDES and the CCFOM acting in the interests of a major metropolitan industry without offering anything of value to the Cameroonian economy. With CCFOM-funded research determining the viability of a second hydroelectric dam at the Edea waterfalls, Pechiney-Ugine created a subsidiary aluminum-processing plant called ALUCAM.\textsuperscript{71}

Electricity prices in France had increased to the point where the electro-intensive process of manufacturing aluminum was no longer profitable. Pechiney, along with CCFOM, invested the funds to create a second hydroelectric dam at Edea (at which point the territory was unable to retain a majority share in ENELCAM), contracting 90\% of this new dam's electricity at drastically below market price. ALUCAM, requiring approximately 1,200 construction workers, retained only around 300 of them for the functional plant. Using alumina imported from France, it manufactured completed aluminum and exported nearly all of it back. This caused many to laud it as a reversal of the colonial pact. However, economist Philippe Hugon explained ALUCAM in 1968 as such:

“technically remarkable... it distributes only 5\% of its revenue as salaries. The alumina is imported from Fria, the aluminum is exported. The profits, largely tax-exempt, are repatriated. The factory appears as an enclave of an external economy on the Cameroonian territory.”\textsuperscript{72}

ENELCAM suffered from the contracts it was forced into with ALUCAM by an administration anxious to help the new capital-intensive industry. ALUCAM consumed 95.6\% of energy furnished by ENELCAM, yet provided only 43\% of the latter's receipts- ALUCAM functionally caused the price of electricity nationwide to increase so that it could be cheaply supplied.\textsuperscript{73} ALUCAM and other capital-intensive industries also contributed to a statistical perception of Cameroonian labor as inordinately

\textsuperscript{71} ANOM 1AFFECO/542. This would not be the only time that public investments would go towards research intended to benefit private companies.

\textsuperscript{72} Hugon, \textit{Analyse du Sous-Developpement}, VI.

\textsuperscript{73} ANOM 1FIDES/87.
expensive, due to the enormous investment volume corresponding to the creation of one job.\footnote{Richard Joseph, ed., \textit{Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadu Ahidjo} (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), 147.}

CCFOM continued its investments in French lumber companies and mineral research stations intended to benefit French industries, while low salaries prevented Cameroonian market demand from emerging as a real force fostering the growth of a legal, domestically-oriented cash economy. These low salaries, in conjunction with high inflation rates, also combined to prevent indigenous savings which might have fostered local investment.

Ahmadu Ahidjo gained the premiership from André Mbida, the first Cameroonian to hold that office, in 1958, and did not relinquish it until 1982. On January 1, 1960, he signed a succession of cooperation accords with France and declared Cameroon's independence. Among other things, this declaration changed the financial basis of the French development aid program. As Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch puts it, “there, in fact, lies the principal change: there was no longer any question of the former territories' funding the FAC.”\footnote{Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “The Transfer of Economic Power,” 114.} It was financed on a year-by-year basis, so the four-year-plans of the FIDES gave way to close French association with Ahidjo's Five-Year Plans for Cameroon and annual FAC subventions. Both the French managing style, assuring French control over the development process, and an exclusionary French control of private industry, remained characteristic of the use of the FAC. In 1976, the Ministry of Cooperation reported that “over the last few years, FAC aid to Cameroon has gone principally to infrastructural development, higher technical education, and rural development,” a series of priorities, with higher education standing in for social infrastructure, almost unchanged from 1953.\footnote{CADN Yaounde SCAC/2.} At independence, the Director of Economic Affairs, director of the Prime Minister's cabinet, the director of the cabinet of the Ministry of the Interior and the director of the cabinet for the Ministry of Economic Planning, among other high-ranking government officials, were French citizens, in functions that strongly promoted continuity both in the Cameroonian government's Five-Year plans for economic development and the implementation of FIDES projects. The
administration's four-tiered tax incentive regime strongly promoted foreign capital investment in spite of the continuing failure of these projects to provide meaningful economic advantages to Cameroon (ALUCAM benefitted from Regime D, the most advantageous) and Cameroon remained in the CFA Franc zone, surrendering monetary and fiscal sovereignty to France in exchange for the free convertibility of the CFA and metropolitan Franc, facilitating the ongoing repatriation of profit by French companies. Before examining the continued prominence of these companies and the role of French aid money in facilitating this, it is worth re-examining the way administrative structures of aid remained paternalistic, reinforcing an orthodoxy of French control.

One major irony of Ahidjo's Cameroon was its collaboration with French aid programs in spite of its purported emphasis on 'Cameroonization,' moving Cameroonians into important public and private sector positions. This emphasis was a product of the political imperative of the Ahidjo regime to appear to exercise independence, so as to not feed into UPC propaganda calling the regime a puppet to France's neo-colonial policies. This imperative was understood by agents of French cooperation as well; one internal report of the Mission de coopération et d'action culturelle stresses that “we must therefore not act in Cameroon in a way which suggests authority. Ours must be an action of technical persuasion. The point, above all, is to make the political agitation in the Eastern regions fail. Therefore above all we must convince our partners of the disinterested nature of our aid.” Hence the director of this Mission was sure to chastise the director of the IRCT in Maroua for requesting FAC credits directly from the Mission, rather than through the Cameroonian government. “The FAC credits are put at the disposition of the Cameroonian Government which alone is authorized to use them, in agreement with the representative of FAC, our mission.” This desire to put Cameroonians in positions of ownership also fueled the creation of a national university in Yaounde in 1962, using French aid credits. Yet French

77 Joseph, Gaullist Africa.
78 “Rapport concernant l'orientation et l'amélioration de l'aide et de la coopération au Cameroon. » CADN Yaounde SCAC 2.
79 CADN SCAC 368.
public personnel declined by only 500 in the first 16 years of Cameroon's independence, going from approximately 1,800 functionaries in 1960 to 1,314 coopérants in direct and indirect assistance in 1976, in spite of the fact that the government had voiced requests to 'Cameroonize' posts immediately upon the country's succession to independence. The largest irony of this was that France was increasingly reliant on VSNA personnel as coopérants. The VSNA or Volontaires du Service National Actif, started in 1965 as an alternative form of national service for French citizens, were young lycée and college-graduates put into positions of technical and educational cooperation. Following an internal review of cooperation programs in 1975, one functionary commented that “the report of the reflexion group is too lax concerning the abusive employment of VSN personnel. This subject worries, if not irritates, many of our partners. If for budgetary reasons we can't reduce their number, could we not at least envision training them, as M. Abelin promised to do when he visited Cameroon in December?” For the volunteers were as liked by the French for being cheap as they were disliked by their hosts due to their lack of technical skill. “Young people, who in France would be deemed unqualified for posts analogous to those they occupy in Cameroon find themselves, in education or in technical assistance, in superior positions to older nationals,” in spite of the creation of a national university and governmental pushes for ‘Cameroonization’. The majority of French coopérants were simply depriving presumably qualified Cameroonian candidates of a position. It is worth remarking that VSN in Cameroon declined to only 91 in 1980, suggesting that between internal review and the Cameroonian government's decision to only accept VSN that it specifically requested, the program declined in importance.

The Societe d'Aide Technique et de Coopération was an organ created in 1956 as a simple recruitment company. Along with the prevalence of VSNA it demonstrates the pervasive use of French

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80 ANOM 2FIDES/156, CADN Yaounde SCAC 2.
82 CADN SCAC 2.
83 Ibid.
aid money on French personnel, and reticence to put Africans into positions of authority. For instance, when the *Union des Cooperatives du Café Arabica de l'Ouest*, a grand federal assembly of cooperatives, requested that SATEC find them a manager for a fixed and relatively small salary, it instead contracted one M. Muzeau, a former French colonial administrator, requesting FAC funds then provided to make up the considerable difference between what UCCAO had offered and what M. Muzeau required. In a 1972 overview of its activities, SATEC claimed that “notably in the agricultural sector, SATEC, which when it started took recourse often to agents recruited in the metropole, now largely favors the promotion of locally recruited agents.” Yet in 1975 it recruited French metropolitan agents for riziculture studies, to direct a banana cooperative, to head the agricultural bank, and a technical director for a Bamoun foodstuffs cooperative, placing French experts in almost all of the positions it recounted recruiting for that year, and absorbing FAC agricultural credits with their salaries. In 1974 it rebuffed the government's suggestions that it attempt to 'Cameroonize' its own staff, claiming that this would reduce its effectiveness. Cameroon's rural development, it seems, remained a subject best dealt with by the French.

It is legitimately probable that Cameroon had a dirth of qualified workers upon its accession to independence. The problem is not that Cameroonian weren't immediately charged with all crucial functions in their polity. The problem is rather that French development aid was not meaningfully working to put them there, whether by providing them qualifications that would have actual, internationally-recognized currency or by trying to find ways to recognize qualifications in individuals through non-traditional means.

French influence in the Cameroonian private sector was no doubt fostered by this tendency, and also guilty of it. We have already seen that France owned 45-55% of private capital in Cameroon in

84 CADN SCAC 277.
85 SCAC 277.
1977, providing around 121 of 163 billion dollars of foreign investments in Cameroon in that year.\textsuperscript{86} In 1974, Cameroonians represented 93.7\% of the national workforce (outside of agriculture), and yet only 15.9\% of the cadres supérieurs, who were 82\% French. Techniciens supérieurs were 75\% French, 25\% African. Ahidjo famously noted in the text of the 4\textsuperscript{th} Plan that “with 93.7\% of the workforce, Cameroonians receive only 70.6\% of the salaries.”\textsuperscript{87} Inflation continued to outpace wage increases, so Cameroonians' real wages fell throughout the ’60s.\textsuperscript{88} This racialist economic order was reinforced by tendencies that I’ve already described. Thus a reflection group considering CCCE loans in 1974 noted that “we have often been obligated to turn down the Cameroonian business because it has lacked references or sufficient guarantees with respect to technical background or financial means.”\textsuperscript{89} Cameroonians were also not respected as employees, as we’ve already noted with respect to SATEC. The French Ambassador to Cameroon, writing to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs following a visit to ALUCAM in 1972, noted that “the Cameroonian worker is serious and hardworking, but as soon as he accedes to any position of command however modest, he considers himself as delivered from work and contents himself with reaping the benefits of his authority. This is why the Africanization of the Master's degree personnel, which seems to proceed apace, in fact is going rather slowly; 43 Masters, 2 engineers employed, one being trained as an administrative manager.”\textsuperscript{90}

Certain Africanization initiatives of the administration paid more dividends. For instance, SATEC took part in a major initiative which began in 1968 to finance small and medium-sized Cameroonian businesses. From 1968 to 1974, 40 small Cameroonian businesses that SATEC assisted registered to benefit for the governmental tax breaks for small and medium industries, of a total of 44 Cameroonian businesses and 59 businesses overall to benefit.\textsuperscript{91} Yet while this was some progress in

\textsuperscript{86} CADN Ambassade 199.
\textsuperscript{88} Yaounde SCAC 2.
\textsuperscript{89} Ambassade 92.
\textsuperscript{90} CADN Ambassade 199, SCAC 277.
direction that even French administrative personnel admitted that the Cameroonian economy needed to go, it still makes clear that even at small levels of the economy Cameroonians were moving slowly into commercial prominence, and were dealing with an administration that, with an investment code designed to attract to foreign capital, had added some less-comprehensive benefits that certain African firms could qualify for as an afterthought.92

While African businesses and laborers slowly ascended their own nation's economic ranks, French aid money pursued other priorities. To its credit, it frequently explored avenues for agricultural diversification, though it relied on the same sort of top-down efforts that underlay SOFICAM. Thus Saint-Louis' interests in a sugar refinery, or Creusot-Loire's interest in developing tomato cultivation and marketing tomato juice, were explored using French public funds and the support of institutions like SATEC or the investment guarantee agency, COFACE.93 Pineapple cultivation was studied and encouraged and inquiries were made into producing pineapple byproducts.94 Studies into the development of a Cameroonian steel industry were undertaken when Creusot-Loire indicated its interest in creating factories, particularly to compete with the growing Japanese market. Nothing came of it.95 Guarantees were provided for investments in petrol research, in which the French had interests, wood companies continued to benefit from loans, and commercial fishing was explored, as an undertaking of French companies, for export markets.96 While some of these pursuits suggested an attention to interacting with Cameroonian demand (a difficult task due to prevalent low wages), which is more than can be said for undertakings of the second FIDES program, they were universally publicly financed explorations into profit opportunities for French metropolitan firms, the major expenditures on 'development possibilities' provided by the French. Consistent with a planning agency controlled by the French and an approach to administering aid in which Cameroon required French directors, France's

92 SCAC 243 details the benefits the Petits et Moyennes Enterprises could benefit from, normally similar to those offered to major economic actors but less generous.
93 Ambassade 199. SCAC 277.
94 Ambassade 184.
95 Ambassade 184.
96 SCAC 596.
vision for Cameroon's economic development required French industry.

Yet the clearest indications that concerns for French industry drove French aid priorities come from the noises made by the ambassadorial and aid-mission staff regarding French market shares in Cameroon. After independence, tied aid money from countries other than France stimulated ambassadorial anxiety. “American credits are in reality tied to the delivery of tractors, the significance of which, to the French delegation, gravely threatens the interests of French industry in the years to come. Under these conditions, the President of the French delegation would like to apply, in the most restrictive manner.... the obligation to use, for the execution of works financed by the Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (FAC), French material.” Other ambassadorial texts speak of the “foreign menace,” including that of Canada, or Japanese penetration into the Cameroonian automobile market, and the French embassy kept close tabs on non-French aid, tied as it was to non-French materials. One G. Wattel, of the Cooperation Mission, in addition to working with the Minister of Economic Planning to prevent the creation of a Volkswagen plant on Cameroonian territory, also was involved in trying to keep match-producer UNALOR out of Cameroon in 1970 so that it didn't wage a 'price war' with the French Société Industrielle Forestière des Alumettes. What exactly would be disadvantageous for economic development about competition and lower prices in the consumer market was unclear.

It is also clear that France had cornered the infrastructure industry in Cameroon, implying strongly that this was a pertinent factor in its emphasis in the first FIDES plan. In 1972, the commercial counselor for the French embassy wrote to the French director of external economic relations on the Cameroonian National Civil Engineering Park:

“An important program of purchasing material for civil engineering projects.... foreseen in the 3rd Five Year Plan, is of the highest interest to French industry.

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97 SCAC 4.
98 Ambassade 199.
99 Ambassade 90.
100 SCAC 246.
101 SCAC 596.
“We cannot forget that the National Civil Engineering Park is a French creation, born of French financial interventions (the FAC has contributed 465 million FCFA up to the present), trained and managed by the French (25 coopérants representing a combined annual salary of around 250 million Francs CFA) and destined to maintain roads to whose construction the FAC has contributed, since 1960, 3 billion Francs CFA.”

The French embassy's focused attention to threats to France's control of Cameroon's private industry strongly suggests that it was in the interest of their private enterprises that the French were there. Development aid from other countries was seen as an ill for Cameroon, as it implied the opening up of Cameroonian markets to purchases outside of France. French aid's consistent support of new initiatives which offered clear benefits to French companies suggests a similar thesis. France clearly controlled a majority of the Cameroonian private sector for the entire period in question, and French aid consistently required its recipients to buy French products. In spite of substantial investments, Cameroonian employment augmented at a slow pace, domestic savings rates were low, and Cameroonian entrance into business was sluggish.

It does not seem realistic to say that French aid to Cameroon had a clearly negative impact on the latter's economic growth, nor that it provided no benefits for the latter's population. A more realistic claim is that the French consistently administered it with their own economic interests in mind, as indeed they'd been doing since 1919 and that French aid had negative effects on the structure of Cameroonian economic growth, changing conditions of possibility and probability in ways that were probably detrimental to Africans, especially compared to what French aid claimed to be and what it could have been. The French failed to help Africans overcome disadvantaged positions by developing alternative structures of capitalization of farmers or small businesses, preferring paternalistic agricultural programs and support of French companies. They declined to foster an internal economic structure except when, in cases like Creusot-Loire's tomato processing plant, it was in the interests of

102 SCAC 596.
their industries. In this paper I have argued that the emphases, modalities, and goals of French development aid since Cameroon's independence are very closely tied to the interests of the French private sector in Cameroon, and have been from the beginning of the FIDES. I have also argued that this aid was consistently administered in a paternalistic way reinforcing the authority of the French in Cameroon and permitting them to act to shore up their hegemony in the Cameroonian private sector. An unanswered question about French aid concerns the orders of magnitude of French priorities: was the retention of French control in Cameroon, as reinforced through the implementation of aid projects, about securing France's control of the private sector in Cameroon, or was retaining control of the private sector, especially if it was unprofitable, simply a smaller part of a broader post-colonial effort that France led in Africa to retain global influence? It is a debate with murky terms that has not seen a clear answer in analyses of France's post-colonial ties to Africa. Nonetheless we can safely say that, with the amount of aid money that went to the salaries of French coopérants in Cameroon and the amount that was simply transferred back to France as a company's profit, French aid to Cameroon was fundamentally about France.

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103 John Chipman, quoted earlier, is an influential advocate of the position that it is not, extending a hypothesis articulated by Henri Brunschwig in *Mythes et Réalités de l'Impérialisme colonial français* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1960).
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