

## REVIEWS

Thomas Deltombe, Manuel Domergue and Jacob Tatsitsa, *Kamerun! Une guerre cachée aux origines de la Françafrique, 1948–1971*  
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AUGUSTA CONCHIGLIA

### GHOSTS OF KAMERUN

On 9 October 2011, the Cameroonian president Paul Biya was re-elected for yet another seven-year term, amid widespread electoral violations. Aged 79, he has been in power since 1982, when he was appointed to the presidency by his predecessor, Ahmadou Ahidjo; the latter had in turn ruled the country since independence in 1960. In fifty-two years, Cameroon has had only two presidents, who have held this country of 19 million in an iron grip: behind a fraudulent, electoral façade stands a highly repressive regime which has imprisoned or killed its opponents, muzzled the press and salted away trillions of dollars in oil revenue. The balance sheet is catastrophic. Corruption is pervasive, from the apparatchiks of the ruling Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais—until 1990 the only legal political party—down to local traffic cops. According to the World Bank, 40 per cent of the population live below the official poverty line, while life expectancy, at 52, is five years shorter than in Liberia and twelve shorter than in Ghana. In 2011, Cameroon's Human Development Index ranked it 150th out of 187 countries surveyed by the UNDP.

The system over which Biya and Ahidjo have presided was founded on the brutal repression of the nationalist movement that emerged in the post-war years, the Union of the Populations of Cameroon. Officially banned by the French colonial authorities in 1955, the UPC was forced underground and took up armed struggle the following year. Between 1956 and 1971, the French army, together with local militias they had trained and armed, fought

a vicious counter-insurgency against the UPC and its supporters among the civilian population. At the time, Paris managed to impose a blackout on these events—as demonstrated by the Pompidou government’s banning, in 1972, of Cameroonian novelist Mongo Beti’s denunciation of the Ahidjo regime and its backers, *Main basse sur le Cameroun*. Even today, the reality of French involvement in large-scale conflict there in the 1950s and 60s is not recognized by officials, who speak instead of riots, ethnic confrontations or at most civil war. If the French counter-insurgency of 1956–71 remains largely taboo, it is because it retains a burning actuality: the regime it established is still very much in place.

Some shameful episodes in France’s colonial past have been belatedly recognized: in 2005, for example, the French Ambassador to Algeria apologized for the 1945 massacres in Sétif and Guelma; visiting Madagascar the same year, Jacques Chirac admitted French responsibility for the repression of an anti-colonial rising there in 1947. When it comes to Cameroon, however, the attitude has generally been one of denial: visiting the capital, Yaoundé, in 2009, the then Prime Minister François Fillon described suggestions that his country was responsible for the assassination of Cameroonian nationalists as ‘pure invention’. In October 2012, however, the French ambassador to Yaoundé changed tack, telling a Cameroonian interviewer from *Le Jour* that ‘no French official would deny this tragedy’. This bad-faith modification of the government line was prompted by *Kamerun!*, which the ambassador classed as ‘a serious work’ which ‘certainly sheds an interesting light’ on its subject—though in his view much research remained to be done on ‘these difficult years’.

The most detailed study to date of the country’s tragic fate, *Kamerun!* tells for the first time the whole story of its transition from French rule to a hollow independence under Ahidjo. The book is the product of a four-year-long collaboration between the French journalists Thomas Deltombe and Manuel Domergue, and the Cameroonian historian Jacob Tatsitsa. In 2006 Domergue, based at *Alternatives Economiques* magazine, launched himself into the French archives while Deltombe, an editor at *La Découverte* and frequent contributor to *Le Monde diplomatique*, moved to Cameroon for two years; there he met Tatsitsa, a doctoral student who had been working in the national archives—and meeting a great deal of bureaucratic resistance—on the opposition to French colonial repression in Western Cameroon. Together, Deltombe and Tatsitsa gathered hundreds of interviews from witnesses and participants in the events (films of these are available on the book’s website), and searched through the Cameroonian archives at all administrative levels. The passage of time greatly complicated their task: numerous unverified and conflicting stories were circulating both verbally and in print; many documents were in a sorry state, while some had literally crumbled away in

rural archives. On the other hand, the sheer disarray also enabled them to make some valuable finds, unearthing previously secret documents on the French military intervention or efforts to build up a local pro-French elite. The range of material marshalled by Deltombe, Domergue and Tatsitsa is impressive: across 740 pages including more than 2,000 notes, they refer to everything from local press reports to diplomatic correspondence, oral testimony to official reports drawn from private and public archives in France, Cameroon and elsewhere: Paris, Nantes, Aix-en-Provence, Vincennes, Yaoundé, Dschang, Bafoussam, Amsterdam.

Most of the previous works on the subject tend to have a shorter chronological span—Richard Joseph's *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon* (1977), for example, ends in 1956—or a more specific regional focus, as with Achille Mbembe's *La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun, 1920–1960* (1996). While the former truncates the account precisely when the armed struggle begins, the partial view offered by the latter ends up involuntarily endorsing colonial views of the 'tribal' character of the conflict. *Kamerun!* avoids both defects, covering the whole of Cameroon's territory and devoting roughly half its pages to events after 1956; it is therefore able to give a more complete analysis of the passage from colonialism to neo-colonialism. The authors also pay close attention to the regional and international context: the impact of events in the surrounding African states, in the imperial metropole and on the global stage—the fate of newly independent colonies, Cold War rivalries between the US and USSR, the rise and fall of Nasserism, the Sino-Soviet split—are all carefully weighed.

This broader canvas is integral to the book's purpose. The official narrative of French decolonization in Sub-Saharan Africa depicts a peaceful and consensual process in which all the colonies bar one—Guinea voted overwhelmingly for independence in 1958—voluntarily chose to retain ties with the Hexagone. *Kamerun!* aims to force a dramatic revision of such accounts. By relating the bloody repression of Cameroon's national movement, and the emergence of an elite totally dependent on the colonial power, the book reveals the extent to which Cameroon itself served as a laboratory for French neo-colonialism—the system, known as *Françafrique*, which has bound most of its former empire into a web of political, economic and military dependence on the ex-metropole.

Cameroon's baleful role as pioneer derived in large part from its exceptional status within the French empire. Europeans first arrived in the region in search of slaves in the 15th century; the Portuguese dubbed it 'Rio dos Camarões'—'Shrimp River'—which over time became 'Cameroon'. But no outside power established colonies there until Germany persuaded the Douala chieftains of the coast to sign up for 'protectorate' status in 1884. Berlin then rapidly extended its control into the interior; the *Schutzgebiet* of

Kamerun eventually covered an area of around 200,000 square miles, inhabited by a mosaic of different peoples speaking more than 250 languages. The northern savannah was populated mostly by Muslim pastoralists, with Christian and animist agriculturalists in the lush terrain of the South.

Berlin's rule rested on a combination of subornment of traditional chieftains and harsh labour exploitation; it was brought to an end with the First World War, as the French and British launched a combined invasion in 1914. After taking Yaoundé in 1916, the two powers divided Kamerun between them in the ratio of 85:15, France seizing the lion's share while Britain took a strip along its western edge, bordering Nigeria. With the final German defeat, the two parts of Kamerun became League of Nations mandates, which were formalized in 1922. Many of the worst practices of German colonialism continued unchanged—the use of forced labour on cocoa, banana and rubber plantations, reliance on local chiefs to extort taxes. But one key legacy of the mandate period was the experience of comparative colonialism: within a relatively short span, the population had felt the effects of German, British and French exactions, and could measure one alongside the other. The comparisons often found the French wanting—especially in the realms of infrastructure and education, where the colonial authorities were often outdone by Catholic, Protestant, Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries. They also showed Cameroonians that imperial rule was demonstrably impermanent: if one set of colonizers could be exchanged for another, why not dispense with all of them and institute a sovereign, democratic government?

*Kamerun!* is divided into four parts, beginning in 1940, when the country became a strategic base for the Free French in Africa. By 1944, with victory in Europe approaching, the colonial administration relaxed restrictions on trade unions. In Cameroon, a number of unions formed, especially in rapidly urbanizing Douala; militants from the metropolitan CGT and French Communist Party played an active role, lending the union movement a strongly anti-colonial character from the outset. The Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun, formed in 1944, was the germ of the national political movements that then began to emerge, culminating in the creation of the Union of the Populations of Cameroon in April 1948 (its founders rejected both the plural *peuples*, since this ran against the ideal of a unitary nation, and the singular *peuple*, since this presupposed a unity that did not yet exist).

The UPC's demands focused principally on the need to apply the terms of the UN Trusteeship into which Cameroon had been placed after the war. With the dissolution of the League of Nations, its mandates came under the UN's remit; though London and Paris still wielded *de facto* power, according to Chapter XII, Article 76 of the UN Charter, the trustees were supposed to

foster the 'progressive development towards self-government or independence' of the territories in question. In alliance with groups in the British Cameroons, the UPC also called for reunification of the territories currently shared between Britain and France; hence their use of the German spelling, Kamerun, as a one-word slogan denoting the proper unit to be granted sovereignty.

Within a short space of time, the UPC gained a large popular support base and a substantial membership: by 1951, it claimed 20,000 adherents, distributed across 150 local committees. Part of its success came from its focus on socio-economic matters, opposing the dispossession of peasant lands in the fertile Bamileké region in the southwest, or agitating for the right of Cameroonians to cultivate coffee. Such claims, however, met with opposition from the traditional authority structures—chiefs in the South, sultans and *lamibe* in the North—who rallied to the colonial power, disparaging the UPC as the party of 'inferior men'. The UPC thus took the side of the peasantry against the 'feudal' chieftains—as did Nkrumah's Convention People's Party in Ghana; by contrast, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire, headed by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was driven mainly by the emergent Ivorian bourgeoisie. The different social characters of the PDCI and UPC, both members of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, the federation of Francophone African parties, go some way to explaining their divergent paths. In 1950 François Mitterrand, then Minister for Overseas France, persuaded the RDA to make a 180-degree anti-Communist turn; the UPC opposed this move and retained links with the PCF, whereas Houphouët-Boigny became a staunch ally of Paris, even coining the term *Françafrique*.

Much of the UPC's expansion, however, was down to the dynamism and charisma of its secretary general, Ruben Um Nyobè. Born in 1913 in the Sanaga-Maritime region, from a modest Bassa peasant family, Um Nyobè was educated in a Presbyterian mission and worked as a clerk in the colonial administration. He entered politics as an activist in Jeucafra, a Cameroonian youth organization created by the French authorities in 1938 aimed at inciting pro-French—and anti-German—feeling; in the mid-40s he joined the Marxist study circles organized by PCF militants, and then the union movement. Deltombe, Domerge and Tatsitsa describe him as a 'remarkable polyglot'—he spoke Bassa, Ewondo, Bulu, Pidgin and French—who travelled tirelessly across his country, 'from village to village, on train, by foot, by truck', seeking to persuade his compatriots 'not through fiery tirades but by the force of reasoned arguments, founded in law and based on concrete examples from daily life.' He became a widely respected figure, popularly known as *Mpodol*, the Spokesman. Even his enemies had to concede his 'honesty and moral rigour': internal police reports describe

him as ‘a politician who sees clearly and far’, ‘a man of merit’. In public, however, the colonial authorities labelled him an ‘extremist’ and claimed he had been trained ‘behind the Iron Curtain’; in Paris, he was compared to Ho Chi Minh or Mao, though in reality, he simply refused to become Cameroon’s Houphouët-Boigny.

Um Nyobè argued consistently against the resort to violence, holding that it would be counterproductive, since both international and French law were on the Cameroonians’ side. He used to write politely to the colonial administration, pointing out how restrictions on the right of assembly were ‘against the ideal of the French Union’—at least until 1953, UPC meetings would close with members singing the *Marseillaise*—and reminding them of their responsibilities under the Trusteeship system. But he considered the UN his main interlocutor. Its Trusteeship Council sent missions to inspect the trust territories every few years, which the colonial authorities had little trouble persuading to approve their continued overlordship; likewise, France carefully selected the Cameroonians sent to represent the colony at the Council’s meetings in New York. But in 1952, Um Nyobè was able to attend, after a long battle with Paris for a visa, eventually obtained with the support of Jean-Paul Sartre; there he made the case for independence against the Cameroonian placemen sent by Paris, such as Prince Douala Manga Bell. In 1952 and 53, the UN adopted resolutions pressing the French to move towards autonomy; though toothless in themselves, they accelerated the colonial authorities’ search for reliable local relays. Since the existing pro-French alternatives to the UPC were barely credible, the nationalist movement had first to be destroyed.

Judicial harassment, police searches and forced dispersal of UPC leaders to other parts of the country were among the means the French authorities used, before finally banning the organization in July 1955. The second part of *Kamerun!* documents the repression that followed. Hundreds of UPC cadres were arrested, many of them beaten and tortured, while the leadership went underground. Um Nyobè still hoped for a political solution, while the more radical wing, including Félix Moumié, from a Bamoun aristocratic family, were convinced that the country could only be freed by an armed struggle as in Vietnam or Algeria; the French had been defeated at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, and the FLN had launched their struggle for independence that November. In late 1956, Paris organized elections in Cameroon for a new Territorial Assembly—designed, as the authors of *Kamerun!* put it, ‘to “validate” through universal suffrage the UPC’s exclusion from the political scene’. *Le Monde* pronounced itself ‘relieved’ that ‘moderate nationalists’ now had the majority, in an Assembly from which the country’s only political force with genuine popular support was debarred.

At the same time, High Commissioner Pierre Messmer launched a savage repression against the UPC, carried out by army paratroopers, the police and loyalist village militias, and focused initially on the Sanaga-Maritime region, between Douala and Yaoundé. Thousands of Cameroonians, including several UPC leaders, fled across the western border into British-held territory; for several months this provided a base from which resistance could be organized in the Bamileké region, around 100 miles north of Douala. The French accused the British of laxness or even collusion with 'subversive elements', insistently pressing London to tighten border controls and outlaw the UPC; French death squads were sent across the frontier to target *upécistes* encamped at Kumba or Bamenda. In early 1957, the British obliged, conducting raids on suspected UPC bases and, in June, formally banning the party. Its members were expelled, fleeing into exile in Sudan, Nasser's Egypt and later to Nkrumah's Ghana or Guinea.

By this time the nationalists had formed a constellation of guerrilla groups based on hundreds of local committees. Men, women and children were all part of a *maquis* that was deeply interwoven with Cameroonian social structures. In late 1957, Messmer ordered the establishment of the 'Zone de pacification de la Sanaga-Maritime', dubbed ZOPAC—a year-long suspension of colonial legality to deal with opponents who in many cases were armed with little more than machetes and clubs. This marked the implementation of the 'Revolutionary War Doctrine' ('DGR') developed by the French army after its defeat in Indochina; Deltombe, Domergue and Tatsitsa devote sustained attention to its elaboration and the subsequent careers of its main proponents, many of whom had been schooled in its methods in Algeria and Vietnam. (To give one example, Daniel Doustin, head of the civil administration in Sanaga-Maritime, had served in Indochina, and would later become governor of Chad and then head of the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire, the French secret services.)

The doctrine aimed to extirpate 'subversive' elements from the population, both physically and psychologically. The inhabitants of the ZOPAC were forcibly removed from their villages, their houses razed and crops destroyed, and gathered into concentration camps. The use of collective punishment and summary executions became systematic; 'disappearances' multiplied, while captured fighters or their relatives were repeatedly tortured to extract information. Mutilated bodies were displayed in public—severed heads often left at crossroads—to intimidate the populace. The civilian administration of the combat zone was effectively militarized, with the army taking charge of 'psychological operations'—propaganda campaigns equating the UPC with the tsetse fly; film screenings; village fairs and dances. In this it was ably assisted by the Catholic Church, which launched its own anti-communist crusade against the UPC. The authorities also forced each village

to create a 'self-defence' militia, thus making them collaborate with the colonial army against the *maquis*. Eventually, the pressure began to tell: on 13 September 1958 the French army managed to track down Um Nyobè near Boumnyebel, the village where he was born. He was shot in the back while fleeing, unarmed, through the bush. *Upécistes* made a practice of keeping dream diaries, a way of 'managing their fears and mastering "the realm of the night" and the imagination', as the authors put it. One of Um's final dreams had him waving a machete in a *macabo* field buffeted by a storm, crying 'Neither France nor any other country will be master of Cameroon!' His corpse was publicly displayed, photographed and then secretly buried in concrete. The French authorities exulted; the war was surely won.

With Um Nyobè removed from the scene, France could proceed to put its preferred puppets in place. In May 1957, Paris had appointed a Cameroonian government from among the Territorial Assembly fraudulently elected in late 1956; in February 1958, its first Prime Minister André-Marie Mbida was replaced by his Interior Minister, Ahmadou Ahidjo. *Kamerun!* quotes the former colonial administrator Guy Georgy, who recalled with pride how he had plucked Ahidjo, then working for the postal service, from obscurity at the age of 23, stuffing ballot boxes to get him into the Territorial Assembly in 1947. As a Northerner, married to the daughter of a *lamido*, Ahidjo was able to get the blessing of the Muslim aristocracy of his region, while making reassuring noises towards the Southern chiefs and the churches. He was the ideal candidate for the kind of transition Paris was planning for Cameroon, which is the subject of the book's third section.

In October 1958, the High Commissioner announced that the territory would become independent on 1 January 1960. First, however, France needed to secure UN approval for its plan to transfer sovereignty without holding elections. A final UN mission in October–December 1958, conducted under military escort, concluded that the UPC had 'virtually disappeared' and that there was no need for democratic consultation; in March 1959 the Trusteeship Council confirmed that Ahidjo and the existing parliament could remain in place. On 1 January 1960, Ahidjo became head of state of only the second francophone African country, after Guinea, to reach independence. His inauguration was attended by dignitaries from the UN, US, Soviet Union, UK and other Francophone African countries; only Nkrumah heeded the UPC's call to boycott the event. Ahidjo's speech that day was, according to the authors of *Kamerun!*, written by a Frenchman; likewise the new Constitution, modelled on that of the French Fifth Republic but still more presidentialist. Submitted to a referendum in February, the Constitution passed thanks to brazen fraud: the 'No' option received 95 per cent of the vote in Douala and 90 in Yaoundé, but there was an 80 per cent 'Yes' from the Bamileké region, whose villages were being strafed



by French aircraft at the time. Ahidjo took up residence in the old High Commissioner's palace; French officials went from being colonial administrators to 'technical advisors' with *de facto* authority over the ministers to whom they supposedly answered. The new country's armed forces, meanwhile, were officered almost entirely by Frenchmen.

Deltombe, Domergue and Tatsitsa stress the wider significance of Cameroon's path to a Potemkin independence:

For the first time, France would lead a sub-Saharan African country to an independence whose contours she herself had drawn. This course prefigured what was to happen in the months and years to come: the accession of all French territories in Africa to a formal independence, entrusted to docile leaders who would be kept in a relation of dependence, asymmetrical and clientelistic.

During the course of 1960, the rest of Francophone Africa followed in Cameroon's wake: Togo in April; Madagascar in June; in August, Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and Senegal; Mali and Mauritania in November. In most cases, France succeeded in imposing a pliable 'native' political structure. Elsewhere, inconvenient regimes would soon be brushed aside: in Togo, for example, Sylvanus Olympio, who had refused to sign 'cooperation' deals with France, was deposed and then assassinated in 1963; in oil-rich Gabon, Paris intervened in 1964 to restore the deposed Leon M'Ba; later it would back coups in Burkina Faso, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad and Mauritania, among others. In Paris, African affairs would be taken out of the purview of the Quai d'Orsay—here again Cameroon was the pioneer—and placed under the direct control of the President's men, among them Jacques Foccart and later Jean-Christophe Mitterrand.

Ahidjo's enthronement did not mark the end of the war. On the contrary, one of his first acts was to 'invite' the French army to help him escalate the repression against the nationalists. Paris deployed thousands of soldiers, and used bomber-planes to drop incendiary shells on villages suspected of harbouring guerrillas. French troops were instructed to take care to hoist the Cameroonian flag, rather than the *tricolore*, on seizing a town. In the first year after independence, the conflict intensified to the extent that the French commanding officer estimated civilian losses in the Bamileké alone at 20,000; one eyewitness quoted here said 'there were too many bodies to bury'. It was against this backdrop that Ahidjo consolidated his rule. After a referendum in February 1961, the southern portion of the British Cameroons voted to reunite with French Cameroun—the northern parts opting to join Nigeria—and later that year, the Federal Republic of Cameroon was formed. The new state required a new Constitution, which was adopted without

consultation or referendum in October. The individual liberties guaranteed in the 1960 document now disappeared.

The fourth and final section of *Kamerun!* gives a detailed portrait of the Ahidjo regime, and how 'the methods developed to wage war on the UPC were transformed into a mode of government': a militarized, 'counter-subversive neo-colonialism' in which torture and intimidation were systemic, and in which development programmes remained geared to 'pacification' long after the nationalist rebellion had ended. Deltombe, Domergue and Tatsitsa also recount the slow demise of the UPC, worn down by battles, assassinations and internal splits. Um Nyobè's deputy Félix Moumié, who had travelled to Geneva to denounce the escalating repression, was poisoned with thallium there by the French secret services in November 1960. Ernest Ouandié, another leading member of the UPC, took over the leadership and returned clandestinely to Cameroon, reorganizing a demoralized *maquis* so that it was able to keep fighting for another decade. The nationalist fighters had almost no assistance from outside: apart from the Algerian FLN, which trained some cadres, Ghana was the only regular source of foreign aid. The isolation of the UPC is a recurrent theme in the book. To a great extent this was caused by an almost total blackout on coverage of Cameroon in the French establishment press. But the French left was also weakly engaged with the nationalist cause, as Mongo Beti highlighted with venom in his *Main basse sur le Cameroun*; the contrast with, say, the FLN or the Viet Minh, or even armed struggles in Latin America, is particularly striking. Although it can partly be explained by the temporal overlap with the Algerian war, which strongly polarized opinions in the metropole, and although there were notable exceptions—Sartre and Fanon both wrote on Cameroon in *Les Temps modernes* and supported UPC leaders at various critical moments—the general record, on the left as elsewhere, is one of silence. The story of Cameroonian independence is also one of UN betrayal: one observer mission after another, carefully isolated from the people and from areas where fighting was taking place, endorsed the colonialist version of events, despite numerous missives the UPC sent to New York describing the illegality of French actions.

With Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966, the UPC lost its only reliable ally. In the meantime, the *upécistes* in exile had split into pro-Chinese and pro-Soviet camps, each claiming to be the sole legitimate representative of the movement, with the result that the UPC forfeited what little international solidarity remained: it was not even invited to the 1966 Tricontinental conference in Havana. In Cameroon itself, the noose began to tighten on the remaining UPC fighters, and in 1970 Ouandié was captured with many of his comrades; after an expeditious trial at which Ouandié refused to speak, they were all executed on 15 January 1971. In Paris, the champagne flowed; three weeks later, President Pompidou and his powerful African adviser Jacques

Foccart visited Yaoundé, the French press full of praise for Cameroonian 'democracy' and the popularity of its leader. Ahidjo had already twice been re-elected president with 100 per cent of the vote, in 1965 and 1970; in 1966, his Cameroon National Union (CNU) had become the sole legal party. In 1972, the country's federal structure was abolished in favour of a unitary state, at whose apex Ahidjo would remain for another decade, thanks to two more unopposed election triumphs in 1975 and 1980. Although the UPC did not completely disappear, it struggled to adapt and renew itself amid the harsh realities of Ahidjo's rule.

How many people died during France's secret war in Cameroon? The book's authors list a variety of sources giving different figures: in 1964, the British embassy put the casualties at 76,000 over the previous decade; in October 1962, giving a rare assessment of the conflict at a conference in Paris, *Le Monde* journalist André Blanchet put the figure at 120,000, based on testimony from a Cameroonian officer in Ahidjo's entourage. These numbers do not, however, include thousands of victims in the 1960s and 70s, when the Ahidjo regime, 'systematizing the war begun by the French, resorted to murderous practices—internment camps, torture, forced disappearances, public or extra-judicial executions—which have never been subject to a serious statistical accounting'. The lack of reliable data is itself a sign of the oblivion into which Cameroon's hidden war has fallen.

*Kamerun!* is not only the product of extraordinary research into the Cameroonian tragedy, it is also an important work on the actual mechanisms of decolonization. It offers new perspectives on the struggles for independence in Francophone Africa, highlighting little-known connections between movements and individuals—Algeria and Cameroon, for example, or Fanon and Moumié—and providing new trails of research for its readers to pursue. More than this, *Kamerun!* provides by far the most detailed portrait available of the origins and formation of *Françafrique*. As Deltombe and his co-authors observe, for most Cameroonians, 'France remains omnipresent, both in their history and in their daily life'; they know that 'for the last fifty years, the French army has ensured the continuity of Ahmadou Ahidjo's regime and then that of Paul Biya', and that French interests even today dominate the economy. As long as the French role in shaping the country's fortunes is denied, *Kamerun!* concludes, 'the ghosts of Cameroon's war will continue to haunt the present.'