

# UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL



Distr.  
GENERAL

T/OBS.5/5  
20 March 1953  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

## PETITIONS CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

### Observations of the French Government as Administering Authority

Secretariat note: These observations refer to the following petitions:

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1. Unsigned petition from the Union des populations camerounaises, M'Balmayo section (T/PET.5/R.5)

(1) The Administering Authority states that the sentence imposed on ABESSO LO NKOUDOU has nothing to do with the fact that the person concerned addressed petitions to the United Nations.

(2) ABESSO LO NKOUDOU was sentenced in September 1952 by the M'Balmayo police court to four days' imprisonment for opposing the Administration and to four days imprisonment for contempt of court. When the party concerned lodged an appeal his sentence was increased by a fine of 20,000 francs. As the sentence was confirmed, ABESSO LO NKOUDOU was imprisoned on 26 November 1952.

2. Petition from Mr. Mfouboun Amadou (T/PET.5/120)

(1) The Administering Authority points out that in this petition the Union des Populations du Cameroun raises a matter dating back to May 1951: the opposition at that time to the appointment of a Bamoun paramount chief.

(2) Paramount chief NJIKOUOTOU Ousmanou of the MANGHA-FOUNBOT chiefdom died on 1 February 1951. The appointment of a successor proved to be a delicate matter, as the peoples of the chiefdom were divided in their allegiance between two rival families, each with its own candidate and each plotting to have him fill the vacant post.

(3) In conformity with the legislation in force, the successor was elected by the village chiefs on 20 February 1951. NSANGOU Issa obtained a majority. There was therefore no question of a chief being "imposed" by the Administration. He was properly elected by the village chiefs. This so-called "imposition" is only a propaganda manoeuvre by the U.P.C. to stir up trouble among the villagers. The petitioner discloses his own strategem: after speaking about the imposition of a chief by the Administration against the people's will, he refers to intrigue and corruption among the Bamouns during the elections. He even implies that the Section Chief is involved! Several charges of corruption were subsequently made against various voters. They could not be considered for want of evidence. We might add that none of them involved the Administration.

- (4) The Administration, being aware of the certain opposition which the newly elected chief would encounter, waited before declaring NSANGOU Issa officially appointed, in order to give tempers time to cool. But the ground was particularly favourable for agitators sowing the seeds of dissension among an easily excitable population.
- (5) On 27 April 1951, the High Commissioner officially appointed NSANGOU Issa paramount chief of the MANCHA-FOUMBOT chiefdom. On 17 May 1951 the official presentation of the new chief took place. According to custom NSANGOU Issa took the name of his father and became Chief NJIKOUOTOU Issa, to whom the petition refers.
- (6) Everything went off calmly. The numerous spectators were departing and the new chief had withdrawn on horseback, escorted by his kin, when a group of agitators led by the petitioner, a member of the U.P.C., suddenly came forward, took the Section Chief aside and protested against the appointment of the chief.
- (7) It is true that, in order to avoid any further occurrences, forces of law and order were sent to Foubot during the following days, but the number of guards did not exceed one hundred. The petitioner's reference to the "state of siege" can only be pure imagination. There has never been anything of the kind at Foubot. A group of guards left the region some days later and the others remained on the spot to deal with any eventuality, but were employed on construction work and did not leave their quarters.
- (8) Seventeen charges were made as a result of this incident. The petitioner and the second local leader of the U.P.C, were among those against whom charges were made. The charges were as follows:

Assault and battery. Acts of violence committed against police officers.	
Participation in unlawful and armed assemblies . . . . .	8
Same offences as above plus contempt of the authorities in the exercise of their duties. . . . .	3
Same offences as the first plus aggravated theft . . . . .	3
Incitement to tumultuous assembly and rebellion . . . . .	2
Contempt of the authorities . . . . .	1

(9) The Fouban senior justice of the peace gave a ruling on these charges on 29 May. The sentences varied from 3 to 20 months imprisonment for the more serious offences.

(10) The Administering Authority explains that action was taken to avoid any friction between the two rival clans. At present the supporters of the paramount chief's opponent have been subjected to his authority. Calm has continued to reign at Founbot and the public order had not been again disturbed since 17 May 1951.

3. Petition from the African Veterans' Association of the Bamiléké region  
(T/PET.5/124)

(1) In connexion with the protest of the Bamiléké veterans against the dismissal of one of their comrades who is a civil servant, the Administering Authority feels bound to point out that the legislation and regulations in force protect officials of the Administration against arbitrary action. An official who has committed a serious offence must be brought before a board of inquiry consisting of officials of equivalent grade and status in order to be judged by his peers. The chief of the Territory imposes a penalty only after taking note of the findings of the board of inquiry. If the official considers that he has been unjustly punished, he may appeal to the Appeals Board and make a second appeal to the Council of State.

(2) Mr. GOUNE Félix was duly brought before a board of inquiry following a charge by his superiors. He had complete freedom to defend himself, first before the board's investigating officer and then before the board itself. The board's procedure offers the accused the widest facilities to defend himself: he may request the summoning of witnesses, which cannot be refused, and call on the assistance of a counsel for the defence, who may be a lawyer if the accused so desires. This assistance also cannot be refused.

(3) Only after noting the findings of the board of inquiry did the High Commissioner decide to dismiss Mr. GOUNE Félix by order No. 5593 of 28 October 1952.

(4) There is thus nothing illegal about the punishment imposed on Mr. GOUNE Félix; it was strictly in accordance with normal procedure. If Mr. GOUNE Félix regarded his punishment as illegal and unjustified, it was open to him to appeal through the legal channels.

(5) It should be added that, as an exception, partly because of the family situation of Mr. GOUNE Félix and partly because of his military record the director of the postal and telecommunications services was asked to consider the possibility of employing him as post office supervisor or assistant radio operator.

(6) Although the dismissal of Mr. GOUNE Félix from the civil and financial services was necessary because of the impossibility of employing him in a civil service post which he was unable to fill, it seemed that the party concerned, a qualified ex-radio operator (radio sergeant) might be useful in the postal service.

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