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COMMUNICATION FROM THE "UNION REGIONALE DES SYNDICATS CGT DU DIAMARE"
CONCERNING THE CAMERCONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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DIAMARE

MAROUA, 1 November 1954

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MAROUA (CAMERCONS)

CO20/USCC/URDI

To: The **Interregional**. Inspector of Labour (Northern Section) YAOUNDE
Subject: The formation of new trade unions
Failure to apply the provisions of the Act of 15 December 1952 in the
Diamaré Region.

Sir,

Following your brief interview with the delegation of the
Union Régionale des Syndicats CGT du DIAMARE during your visit to Maroua,
we formed the following trade unions:

- (a) Privately employed day labourers
- (b) Chauffeurs and mechanics
- (c) Day labourers in public employment.

and we enclose their statutes.

I believe that by making these amendments in accordance with your
recommendations we shall have succeeded in giving these trade unions some
legal status although the Chief Subdivisional Officer who is acting
representative of the Inspector of Labour does not dare to acknowledge
the receipt of our statutes.

55-04221

I take this opportunity to describe the general trade union situation in the Region, where trade union freedom, despite the promises you received from the local authorities, is purely theoretical and has no foundation in fact. Thus through the Lamido, who depends on the power of the local authorities, workers are not only forbidden to wear badges but, what is more important, they are also forbidden to attend trade union meetings. On 17 October 1954, when some United Nations records were being played, the Lamido of Maroua sent a band of mercenaries to arrest and tie up all Foulbé workers wearing C.G.T. badges. Some workers inform me that they have been threatened by their chefs de quartier who, acting on behalf of and for the Lamido, ordered them to resign from the C.G.T. which violates the Peuhl custom. Accordingly we wonder whether this Labour Code is inapplicable in the Northern Cameroons simply because Lamibés live there. We wonder what are the limits of FRANCE's mission of civilization when a French law passed by a French Parliament is not put into effect in a "part of the Territory" for which France is responsible. I know that the traditional chiefs, being civil servants, must bear allegiance to the Administration upon which they depend. The question is therefore whether the Administration was implicated in these acts, as the leaders of the outrage of 17 October still remain unpunished and as, apart from the complaints lodged by the victims, the Public Prosecutor, on learning that such serious offences had been committed, should have taken action against the assailants. This silence of the authorities is incriminating.

Moreover, working hours are completely disregarded in private employment; workers work more than 40 hours a week and are paid for 40 hours of work only. The formal provisions of article 112 of the Labour Code are in general violated by all enterprises because, whenever a worker claims payment for overtime, he is threatened with dismissal. Thus all workers have to choose between asserting their rights and dismissal. If a person (worker) asserts the rights to which he is entitled under the Act of 15 December 1952, he is dismissed and if he wishes to retain his job, he has to submit to a form of slavery not provided for in the Code, that is to say to obey his employers in violation of the Act, to work more than 40 hours a week and receive wages for 40 hours

of work, and to submit to beatings and insults from the employers or their European representatives.

A whole book could be written on the subeect of dismissal. The Code provides that no person can be dismissed on account of membership or non-membership of a particular trade union. However enterprises have adopted the pretty practice of dismissing any trade union ~~member~~ or official on the fine pretext of "reduction of staff or abolition of posts". Thus our comrade MVENG Laurent, the Deputy Secretary of the Office Workers' Trade Union has just been dismissed without legitimate reasons from the C.C.D.E.E. for his trade union activities and on the pretext of a "reduction of posts or staff", as may be seen from the ccpy of his certificate. Our personal investigation revealed that this company is seeking a worker to replace him on condition that the replacement is not a member of the C.G.T.C. Similarly, our comrade LIKENG Jules-Simon, who is at present at YAOUNDE and who was Secretary of the Garde Camerounaise since 1946 has been dismissed because of a "reduction of posts" despite his excellent technical references, while four day labourers are being taken on in his place, thus increasing the budgetary expenditure of this service. This was done because, in the words of the Commandant of the Guard, "the Maroua authorities informed me that you are a trade union member". That is therefore a sufficient reason for mismissing a worker in a country the indigenous inhabitants of which have allegedly been guaranteed security of employment. LIKENG's superior went further and stated that he was heartbroken to lose his employee who was completing his long years of praiseworthy service, but that the decision had come from "higher quarters" (sic). The "higher quarters" had told him not to give the real reason for the dismissal but to use the expression "abolition of posts" and accordingly we are justified in wondering who gave the order or who invented it. Our comrade YEBGA Jean, Secretary of the Administration Day Labourers Trade Union will be dismissed tomorrow for the same reason because "higher quarters" gave the same orders. Thus the Administration and the private employers work together and use the same methods to undermine, and learn the same manoeuvres to flout, trade union freedom and to outlaw all members of the C.G.T.

Sir, the Act gives you sufficient power to protect workers threatened with dismissal on account of their trade union activities. The administrative authorities, which should compel private enterprises to enforce the Act for the implementation of which they are responsible, are the first to support them in imposing severe conditions in order to dismiss workers who are already in the depths of misery (wages of 35 francs a day in an area where a kilogramme of rice costs 50 francs, a kilogramme of meat costs 60 francs and a litre of oil costs 85 francs).

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Félix-Roland MOUNIE
Legal Adviser
For the Secretary-General

Copies:

Inspector General of Labour and Social Legislation, DOUALA

Secretary-General of the Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun

Secretary-General of the United Nations, New York
