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COMMUNICATION FROM MR. PAUL Y. AGBETETE CONCERNING  
TOGOLAND UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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RASSEMBLEMENT POPULAIRE DES REFUGIES DU TOGO FRANCAIS

P.O. Box 86, HOHOE - TOGOLAND UNDER  
U.K. TRUSTEESHIP

Reference No.26/CI./D/54

Hohoe, 10 October 1954

PAUL Y. AGBETETE, GENERAL-SECRETARY OF THE R.P.R.T.F.

TO THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS FRANCE, AT PRESENT AT LOME, TOGOLAND

For information and filing

Copy to the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Subject: PETITION

Sir,

On behalf of the Rassemblement Populaire des Refugiés du Togo français in the British zone, and on my own behalf as General-Secretary of this association, I have the honour to welcome you to our country, now forsaken.

It is with a heavy heart that I find myself obliged to send you this message from our place of exile for, despite the barrier which separates us, I should have liked, on behalf of everyone, to give you this evidence in a more concrete manner.

I therefore beg you to excuse the liberty I am taking in writing to you; not because I am so aghast at my own boldness as to despair to the indulgence for which I hope, but because I fear that a message of this sort will not gain from you the full satisfaction that could be desired. I would therefore very humbly request you to pay attention not so much to the nature of the message as to the position of its senders.

I welcome the opportunity which has been offered me to recount and submit to your judgment the highly regrettable facts and incidents which have already caused so much ink to flow and which represent the reasons for our exile at this time.

I have no doubt that some word of our presence in the British zone has already reached you.

I doubt, however, whether you have been candidly informed about the lamentable situation in our country, Togoland under French trusteeship which we left in tears.

Here we form a large nucleus of refugees in British Togoland and the Gold Coast. All races are represented. Labourers and skilled workers, farmers, former officials, conseillers de circonscriptions, community chiefs, etc. etc., make up this group, which is doomed to live here and there to escape the persecution of the French Administration. The evils of which we complain are legion: withdrawal of rights, denial of the freedom of expression, abuse of authority, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, dismissals from the civil service, expulsions, deportations etc. etc.

The French Administration ill-treats us because we demand the unification and independence of Togoland. Does that mean that we wish to express anti-French feelings? Is that the reason why the French authorities have adopted such an attitude towards us, unleashing abuses and ill-treatment against us? No, Sir, we are not anti-French and our policy has only one object, Unification (and independence of Togoland).

We can only deplore the actions of the French authorities in our country, who are trying to assume rights over us by obsolete and anti-democratic methods of unhappy memory.

I realize that your reason for coming to our country is to introduce some improvements and reforms within the Administration.

I cannot stress too strongly that the representatives of France in our country are not true ambassadors of that great nation. The sad fact is that the true face of France cannot be perceived through those representatives.

If a referendum or a large-scale inquiry could be held throughout the Territory, you would appreciate the justice of my allegations. Although your visit is to be only a short one, we hope you will conscientiously sound public opinion and at least bear in mind its complaints and grievances. If we were allowed one single wish, it would be to ask you, with great respect, to honour us with a visit, if only for a short time. Such contact with us, far from disappointing you, could not fail to clarify certain points and to reveal to you some facts that are being kept secret, for I am convinced that you have not been told everything.

To conclude this statement, I must tell you that despite all the freedom which we enjoy here, we should like to return home.

I do not mean that exile has affected our morale, for here there are none of the flagrant injustices which are the order of the day in French Togoland.

I therefore hope that your visit to our country will be sufficient in itself to have a happy effect on the fate of the Togolese, and especially of all the refugees, and that you will be the means of restoring the confidence in France which we seem to have lost.

If I hope that this report of mine will have some lasting and happy effect, it is not in order that our name shall go down to posterity, but in order that our grievances may be recorded and to justify to my associates my assertion that I am, Sir, on behalf of myself and of all the refugees, your very humble servant.

For the Co-ordinating Committee

(signed) illegible

PAUL Y. AGBETETE

General-Secretary

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