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COMMUNICATION FROM MR. SOFFO TAMOUFE ELOI CONCERNING
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

(Circulated in accordance with rule 24 of the rules
of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

YAOUNDE, 6 November 1959

Subject: Complaint against the French Government in French Equatorial Africa
and in the Cameroons.

SOFFO TAMOUFE ELOI,
c/o Post Office Box No. 959,
YAOUNDE

To the President of the United Nations International Court of Justice

Copies to: The President of the United Nations General Assembly
The President of the United Nations Trusteeship Council
The Secretary-General of the United Nations

Sir,

As I see the affairs of the world today you are the final court of appeal:
after you there is only the Infinite Being and, being infinite, He is assuredly
beyond reach, for the Being whom we commonly call the Good Lord has no say in
any earthly court of law, for if he had I should see no reason for the United
Nations to form a court of appeal. So, in appealing to you I am opening the last
door and anyone who knocks at your door is appealing to the ultimate court
of justice on earth.

Having said this, Sir,

I have the honour to submit to your impartial judgement my humble complaint
against the French Government in French Equatorial Africa and in the Cameroons

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for having driven me from pillar to post for nearly twelve years, more especially the French Government in the Cameroons for having crushed me ever since my childhood, and indeed for all time, for I have no hope in face of the slaughter now taking place in Kamerun.

I was admitted to the French school at the age of seven and on 17 October 1941 I was harshly expelled for no real reason from the Yaoundé Secondary School, as a result of jealous intrigues on the part of a brother more powerful than I; in 1944 I had to go back to French Equatorial Africa, where I obtained an appointment in the colonial Administration in Ubangi-Shari on 14 January 1946. In the course of two years of established service I held the following ranks:

By decision No. 57/CD-3 dated 24 January 1946, with effect from 14 January 1946, I was employed as a daily clerk-secretary-book-keeper-typist; by decision No. 722/CD-3 of 18 June 1946, with effect from 1 June 1946, I was graded as an office clerk with monthly salary, local allowances, and family and incidental expenses; by decision No. 1434/CP, dated 16 October 1947, with effect from 1 September 1947, I was established as a local junior writer-interpreter, probationer third class. I was appointed clerical assistant fourth class in the Civil and Financial Department on 1 January 1948 (Journal Officiel of French Equatorial Africa dated 1 January 1948).

By decision No. 382/CP dated 28 February 1948 I had to return to my place of origin, Bandjoun in the Bafoussam Subdivision, Bamiléké Region, on 30 March 1948 for three months convalescent leave.

Meanwhile on 19 May 1948, acting on the advice of the doctor in charge of my case, I applied to the Government of French Equatorial Africa, through the High Commissioner of the Republic and Head of the Territory of the Cameroons and through the Chief of the Bamiléké Region, for a transfer on grounds of health. The latter received it favourably and forwarded it with a note to that effect.

Whilst waiting for a reply and continuing my leave, a further series of abuses were perpetrated by the local administration, so flagrant and appalling that only a heart of stone could fail to be moved by them (reintroduction of hard labour, stealing cattle, horses, sheep, goats and pigs in broad daylight and auctioning them, fraudulent sales of clothing provided to ease the lot of a population left naked by the war, fraudulent purchase of the goods produced by

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these poor ignorant people; abuses and frauds prohibited by article 4 of the Act of 20 July 1922 giving France the mandate for the Cameroons.

Observing these abuses of power, of which I was a particular victim in that they were connected with my family, I expressed my views in a letter dated 24 June 1948, addressed to the President of the Representative Territorial Assembly, in which I denounced those responsible for these flagrant malpractices, and followed this by an explanatory letter dated 28 July 1948 to the High Commissioner of the Republic and by a letter, enclosing corroborative documentary evidence, to Mr. Douala-Manga-Bell, who was at that time the only Cameroonian deputy.

Although I did not expect my request to lead to anything more than a transfer, the only reply I received was a warrant for my arrest, issued on 6 January 1949, and on 30 January 1949 I was taken like a petty criminal from Douala to Bafoussam, where I was brought before the correctional court and sentenced without trial to eighteen months imprisonment; it was quite arbitrary, for when I tried to defend myself the magistrate said straight out that I need not bother: whether I was right or wrong my sentence had been decided. Whilst I struggled alone in this labyrinth of injustice and hate, the Douala Court of Appeal set aside the Bafoussam judgement on 5 July 1949, released me with a fine of 10,165 francs over and above the six and a half months I had spent in prison in Bafoussam, Dschang and Bagangté which came to an end on 15 July 1949. However, as I was defending a just cause, like the ass in the fable, I made a further appeal, which was buried once and for all beneath a stony silence. Moreover, having brought off their fell schemes and brought the weight of authority to bear upon me, they instructed the traditional authorities, which had abetted them, to have me poisoned on two successive occasions, once in 1950 and again in 1956, thus rendering me incapable of action.

Since then I have not known where I stand, and where can I breathe freely in the Kamerun of today? Up to the present time I have not received any paper discharging me other than the letter (copies of which are attached) from the French Government of French Equatorial Africa, Ubanghi-Shari, providing for the settlement of my position in the Cameroons.

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Further evidence in support of my case is provided by the fact that the four months' wages due to me have not yet been paid, i.e. one month's full pay and allowances and three months' paid leave. In June 1957 I submitted the case to the Disputes Department in Ubangi-Shari; I attach a copy of my letter. However, a registered letter sent to me from Bangui which arrived at Douala was quickly posted back to Bangui on the pretext that I was not known at Douala. So my case was once again lost in the unfathomable depths of the Administration.

At this point I venture to make a digression: what is the good of opening the mouth of some unhappy mute and cutting out his tongue to prevent his speaking? Or of opening the eyes of some unfortunate who is blind and then cutting off his head in order to prevent his seeing? Or of curing a sick man and then not letting him walk?

The benefits of so-called civilization are continually being thrust down our throats, particularly the benefits and achievements of French civilization in Kamerun, but do they really exist? To outside eyes, and for the benefit of the French, they will pass muster, but to the Cameroonians they are a complete fiasco, whatever is said or done. What the French write and say and what they do are as different as chalk and cheese. You must be in Kamerun and live like a Kamerunian in my station of life before you can really judge the significance of what I am saying. And so many of us, thousands and thousands, are in the same position.

Let me explain. When I was a child I educated myself in order to rise from obscurity, so they said. But who is better off - someone like myself who has education but no fixed abode, no home and no life, or someone who has been untouched by the delusions of education but who has his own home and his own little life. Here I am, nearly thirty-six years old, with no peace or tranquility, no security for tomorrow, merely because I voiced my opinion, and thousands of our brothers and whole villages are at present suffering from the baneful consequences of this infamous thing called education. Now there is slaughter and pillage, and villages are being decimated, because the educated have read about their rights and claim them. Why civilize us if civilization is not meant to help us to live; our forefathers lived so well without the curse of education. The civilization of France has abolished slavery only to transform us all, from

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the king down to his lowliest subject, into beasts of burden. And the fair land of France cares nothing for the miserable lives which it has not created. Do you expect us to have feet and not walk, to have ears and not hear, to have eyes and not see?

Therefore, come what may, I appeal to the French Government in the Cameroons and in French Equatorial Africa, through the international and universal justice that you represent:

- (1) To give me back my primitive life and the peace of mind of which I have been robbed by civilization, which was only a booby trap for us;
- (2) To give me back the time it has made me lose and the position I should have had if it had not led me along the wrong path;
- (3) To reconcile me with my brothers, most of whom are no longer living because they spoke of freedom.

Mr. Soffo Eloi

(Signed) (Illegible)

Five enclosures

(Signed) (illegible)

Soffo Tamoufé Eloi
c/o Stall No. 9
DOUALA MARKET

Douala, 18 June 1957

SOFFO Tamoufé Eloi, Clerical Assistant
(Journal official, January 1948)
serving in the Ubangi-Shari Office of
Direct Taxation (CD-3) Bangui

To the Chairman of the Disputes Board

Sir,

I have the honour very respectfully to submit the details of my case, which is I think an unusual and difficult one.

I am a writer-interpreter, probationer third class, serving in the Office of Direct Taxation CD-3 Bangui and have been on sick leave since December 1947. I was granted convalescent leave in the Cameroons, my country of origin; I was unable to return to my post because my state of health was uncertain.

My immediate chief, Mr. GASIGLIA, Inspector of CD-3, was kept fully informed by my letters of 26 May, 26 August and 14 September 1948; a copy of his reply dated 17 October 1948 is attached.

In fact a decision No. 1,633/CP dated 30 September 1948 was made by the Head of the Territory of Ubangi-Shari and an application for employment, No. 1961/CD-3 dated 18 November 1948, was forwarded to Mr. CHEVAUX, the Director of the Direct Taxation Office at Douala.

Everything was going smoothly as a result of the Director's approach to the High Commissioner. However, the efforts of a powerful and jealous enemy of my family, who had been my enemy since childhood and who made conflicting representations to the High Commissioner, compromised my position; he was aided and abetted by the Chief Subdivisional Officer, whom I had denounced for abusing his powers. You may refer if necessary to my files in the political affairs division of the Cameroons and in the Douala Court, where the decision was set aside.

My case is still in abeyance and I have not received any decision on my dismissal, giving reasons, or any official discharge. My pay and allowances have not yet been paid to me.

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I therefore request you to re-examine my case and, if need be, to arrange for me to be reinstated in the Cameroonian service or recalled to my duties in Ubangi-Shari, for I cannot see that my case was so serious as to warrant my being dismissed without explanation.

I carried out my duties loyally and devotedly as is evidenced by my reports and my record of advancement in the service.

Awaiting your favourable reply, I have the honour to be etc.

SOFFO

French Equatorial Africa

Ubangi-Shari

Direct Taxation

No. 1961/CD-3

Bangui, 18 November 1948

From the Inspector of Direct
Taxation and Chief of
the Ubangi-Shari
Inspectorate

To the Director of Direct
Taxation at Douala,
Cameroons

SUBJECT:

Application for employment

SOFFO TAMOUFE ELOI

You should have received an application for employment from a man named SOFFO-TAMOUFE ELOI, previously employed in the Direct Taxation Office at Bangui.

I feel I should point out that decision No. 1633/CP of 30 September 1948 by the Head of the Territory of Ubangi-Shari, dismissing the above-named "for abandonment of post" was made in the following circumstances:

Whilst on sick leave with effect from December 1947, he was granted a period of convalescent leave in the Cameroons. When this leave expired he did not return to Bangui. In the circumstances the decision to dismiss him could not be based on anything other than "abandonment of post".

This term does not in any way detract from the professional qualities of the individual concerned. He served in the Direct Taxation Office at Bangui from January 1946 to the end of 1947 and gave every satisfaction during that period; in particular, he was employed on the registration of the incoming post and on deductions at source from salaries and wages, working out the monthly payment lists from the permanent files of employers.

R.G. ASIGLIA

True copy to the person concerned

French Equatorial Africa

FRENCH REPUBLIC

Ubangi-Shari

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

Direct Taxation

Bangui, 18 November 1948

No. 1962/CD-3

From the Inspector of Direct Taxation and Head of the
Ubangi-Shari Inspectorate

To Mr. SOFFO-TAMOUFE Eloi, DOUALA, CAMEROONS.

I have the honour to transmit to you for your information the enclosed copy of a letter which I am sending today to the Director of Direct Taxation at Douala.

I hope that it will enable you to obtain an appointment in his department. It was impossible to take the decision on your dismissal in any other way or to have it changed.

(Signed): R. GASIGLIA

Bangui, 17 October 1948

My dear Soffo,

I did indeed receive your letter of 26 May in due course and am sorry I have taken so long to reply to you. My silence was due only to the very heavy pressure of work.

I also received, after a brief delay, your letters of 21 August and 14 September.

I immediately forwarded your request to the Governor to his Office, together with your last communication, and urged that the matter should be given favourable consideration.

Unfortunately, after the question had been examined by the Principal Secretary, I was informed that it was impossible to transfer you to the Cameroons since it was not the same service or authority there. Nor is there any provision in the regulations for "detached duty" in such cases.

The only possible action in the case of an official failing to return to his post on the expiration of his leave is to dismiss him from the service. This is the decision which was taken on 30 September, an extract from which is attached.

You will see from the list of addressees that a copy was sent to the High Commissioner of the Cameroons, who is therefore aware of your present situation. He has therefore been informed officially of the grade you had in French Equatorial Africa and he also knows that you no longer come under the Administration in French Equatorial Africa. Consequently there is no longer any objection to your being employed in the Cameroonian service. I do not think that will take long now and you will soon start work again at Douala.

I trust that you are in the best of health and that the climate of your own country suits you better than that of Bangui.

As for me, I have been appointed Acting Chief of Direct Taxation in French Equatorial Africa and I have to go to Brazzaville at the end of November. My replacement arrived from France a month ago and is acquainting himself with the work.

Your friends in the office wish to be specially remembered to you and
I send you my kind regards and best wishes for your health and success in
the Cameroons.

(Signed) GASIGLIA

GASIGLIA

(Inspector of Direct Taxation)

BANGUI

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BAMILEKE REGION
BAFOUSSAM SUBDIVISION

No. 10/S

BAFOUSSAM, 3 April 1948

From the Chief of the Bafoussam Subdivision
To the Director of Finance, YAOUNDE

I have the honour to enclose a certificate of cessation of payment No. 40 dated 2 March 1948 in the name of Mr. SOFFO Tamoufé Eloi, probationary writer-interpreter at Bangui, at present in Bafoussam on three months' convalescent leave.

I should be very grateful if you would let me know whether his salary can be paid through the Bafoussam special agency and advise me in due course how much he is entitled to claim for the period of his leave.

(Signed) COUROT

Certified true copy

Bafoussam, 3 August 1949

Special Agent

(Signed) (Illegible) PRISO ALAUZE DEYNIS
