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PETITIONS CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE CAMEROONS
UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. Petition from Notables of the Village of Mvog-Nok (T/PET.5/399) dated 16 October 1954

1. This petition contains in the first instance a statement that Mr. Ruben Um Nyobé is entitled to speak on behalf of the Cameroons people before the General Assembly of the United Nations and that other Cameroonians who are going to the General Assembly are not so qualified. The petitioners then complain, in general terms, of forced labour on the roads, high taxes, confiscation of vehicles, alienation of land in favour of European planters, of racial discrimination as regards punishment for the same sort of offences, the primitive conditions of Cameroonian prisoners and deception by Catholic clergy in preparing petitions.
2. In its observations (T/OBS.5/68, section 4), the Administering Authority describes these complaints as confused and gratuitous and states that it has no comment to make.
3. The petitioners charge that the villagers of Mvog-Nok had collected 130,000 francs CFA to hire a caterpillar tractor to help them construct roads, but that up to the time of writing, they had received nothing in return for the money.
4. The Administering Authority states that it is true that in order to build a road bridge, the Mvog-Nok community collected the sum of 132,000 francs to pay for the hire of a caterpillar tractor. That sum was later increased to 160,000 francs. The villagers placed the sum with their Provident Society until the payment was due. The Administration, far from attempting to mis-appropriate the money, as the petitioners appear to insinuate, encouraged the villagers' initiative by arranging for a survey to be made, supplying cement and piping, paying the additional cost of excavation and settling the labour costs.
5. Finally the petitioners complain that the families of many ex-servicemen killed during the "1937-1944" war have been given no assistance. They mention in this instance the family of the late Essomba Mbala, whose younger son has been refused assistance, either in the form of a job or a loan, although he is without means.
6. In its observations, the Administering Authority states that the family of Assomba Mbala is unknown in the area, but that it is continuing its inquiries on that point. It adds that the names of many of the signatories of the petition are unknown in the community.

II. Petition from Mr. Etienne Njounkam (T/PET.5/402) dated 22 November 1954

1. The petitioner states that on 14 March 1953 he bought a motor vehicle for 650,000 francs with which to undertake transport jobs and subsequently paid a total of 200,000 francs for the licence and insurance. He then applied to the local authorities for a transport licence, but so far without result, although other purchasers of vehicles receive such licences within six days. His family is now in great hardship, while the vehicle remains parked in front of his yard.

2. The petitioner also complains about taxes and the system of markets (see separate section on this subject) and after expressing dissatisfaction with the present situation in the Cameroons gives his support to Mr. Um Nyobé and Mr. Abel Kingué in their stand for the unification and independence of the Cameroons.

3. In its observations (T/OBS.5/65, Section 1), the Administering Authority states that the transport licence requested by the petitioner was refused because the applicant had previously that year committed two offences under the Order of 18 June 1940 governing the public transport of persons.

4. The Administering Authority states that the petitioner is a well-to-do trader whose standard of living is well above the average. In addition to the car referred to in his petition, he is the owner of a Citroën lorry which he used for goods transport from 1950 to 1955. He is also the owner of a shop in Douala. As for the Renault car No. 1431-C3, purchased in 1953, and in which he was not licensed to carry passengers, he handed it over on 20 November 1954 (a date prior to that of the petition) to another person, who had an accident with the car in which three persons were killed and eleven injured.

III. Petition from Mr. Maurice Betondjou (T/PET.5/407)

1. The petitioner writing from Douala prison, complains that he has been convicted of theft of a packet, although he is innocent, on the evidence of a compatriot who was attempting to clear himself. On appeal to the Court of Appeals at Yaoundé, his sentence was increased to three years' imprisonment and five years' local banishment.

2. The Administering Authority states in its observations (T/OBS.5/65, section 4) that in the course of the preliminary hearings Betoudjou admitted that he had participated in a theft and at no time during the hearings did he withdraw that statement. His sentence was increased on appeal in view of the circumstances of the theft and of a previous conviction of the offender for theft in 1952.

IV. Petition from Mr. Simon Pierre Owono (T/PET.5/431) dated 10 December 1954

1. The petitioner, a teacher, begins with a general criticism of conditions in the Cameroons complaining that the Country is no longer under the Trusteeship System, but under occupation and that human rights are not being observed there. He then criticizes the educational system in the Territory with particular reference to his own case. He complains that the director of education is not interested in recruiting properly qualified indigenous staff. He himself has been a first-class assistant teacher for more than 11 years despite the good reports he has received, his clean record and the very favourable reports made by inspectors (one of which he attaches). He attributes this lack of promotion to his political opinions.

2. The petitioner complains also that the director in reply to his application for a post-graduate fellowship at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts said to him "I cannot grant you a fellowship because we have not come to the Cameroons to play favourites. How would it benefit France if you became an artist?"

3. The petitioner claims also that excessive fares are charged in school busses and concludes by authorizing Mr. Um Nyobe and Mr. Abel Kingué to speak on behalf of the people of the Cameroons.

4. In its observations (T/CBS.5/63, section 2),¹ the Administering Authority states that Mr. Simon Owono's petition is quite without foundation. The only true statement is that the petitioner's promotion has been delayed. This delay is due, not to his political opinions, but:

(a) to his alcoholism;

(b) to the fact that he was sentenced a month's imprisonment by the

Ebolowa Magistrate's Court in 1946 for "the manufacture and clandestine

sale of maize wine" and insulting behaviour to an official in the exercise of his duty;

(c) to the fact that he was summoned before the Disciplinary Council and dismissed, on the same grounds, on 2 February 1946.

Mr. Owono was reinstated with effect from 13 April 1946 and his seniority restored as an act of clemency. The manner in which he has performed his duties has clearly not qualified him for rapid promotion.

V. Petition from Mr. Isidore Yumo (T/PET.5/445) dated 10 October 1954

1. The petitioner expresses support for the representatives of the UPC appearing before the General Assembly at its ninth session and for the programme of that Party. He protests against the fact that certain Africans who he considers as "Government lackeys" and "representatives of puppet movements" have from time to time made visits to the United Nations or to France.

2. The petitioner claims that the misery in which the peoples of the Cameroons live is indescribable. In the Bamiléké country the inhabitants are not allowed freely to purchase maize, a traditional foodstuff and the export of this product to the neighbouring region is strictly forbidden. He himself was forced to pay a 6,000 franc fine, without receipt, to an auxiliary gendarme on the pretext that he had loaded maize at Bafang. He also complains of the market tax on non-urban markets and of the sale of Douala Air Field to France.^{1/}

3. He also asks why do Cameronian identity papers bear the initials CUF (Citizen of French Union) since the Cameroons is not a Territory of the French Union?

^{1/} In this connexion the Committee will recall that by resolution 1356 (XVI) the Council noted the statement of the representative of the Administering Authority that at the present time the Government of France did not intend to buy the land in question but intended to lease it for a period of 99 years.

4. In its observations (T/OBS.5/69, section 3) the Administering Authority states that it is possible that proceedings were taken against Mr. Yumo for exporting maize out of the Bamiléké region. The production of this densely populated region is usually just about enough to feed the population. The export of maize is prohibited when stocks are so low that there is a danger of a difficult transition period before the new harvest. It is not true that the provident societies or the Ccnpagnie Pastorale are entitled to export maize in these circumstances. The provident societies have nothing at all to do with trading in maize and the Ccnpagnie Pastorale enjoys no privileges or monopolies of any kind whatsoever. The Administering Authority states that it has no other observations to make on this petition.

VI. Petitions from Mr. Hyacinthe Mpaye (T/PET.5/448) and from Madame Marie Louise Mpaye (T/PET.5/449) dated 13 October and 29 October 1954 respectively

1. The author of T/PET.5/448 states that he has owned a car used as a taxi since 23 January 1953 and that he was authorized to carry passengers by order No. 3021 of the French High Commissioner dated 10 June 1953; this authorization was suddenly cancelled by order No. 2897 of 3 June 1954 after an interval of 11 months and 23 days. He states that the reason for this was that the police suspected that his car was being used to facilitate the movements of the Secretary-General of the UPC on his travels to publicize the work done by the United Nations at its recent sessions. All police posts were notified of the number of his car and it was impounded on 5 January 1954, the reason being no 1954 licence and illegal transport from 1 to 5 January 1954. He maintains that the 1953 licences did not expire until April 1954 and even the rate for 1954 licences had not been fixed.

2. His car was released only a week later and with a charge of 700 francs a day. He was then told by the Chief of the Transport Office that the latter had sent a request to cancel his transport permit and that henceforth he was to carry no more passengers. He is also said to have told the petitioner "We have no intention of helping our enemies".

3. The petitioner argues that a man in business cannot choose his customers and protests that he is now being deprived of his means of livelihood because he refuses to submit to the integration policy. He states that he is only one among thousands of his compatriots who have suffered the same fate and mentions Mr. Marcus Mouaha as another.

4. The petitioner commissions Mr. Um Nyobe to express his demands before the General Assembly.

5. The author of T/PET.5/449 who is the wife of the previous petitioner states that her husband was dismissed from the firm at Douala in January 1954 solely because he had formed a union among his firm's employees. She gives the same account as her husband of his being deprived of his transport permit and states that as her husband has no means of subsistence her family is in a deplorable position. Moreover her mother, Madame Françoise Ngo Eono, who is a widow and the mother of thirteen living children, has received no assistance. All that the Administration has done is give her a medal called "Cameroonian Merit". The petitioner also complains that the Chief State Counsel of the French Republic in the Cameroons while driving his car hit her husband's parked car. The State Counsel had their hut surrounded by three police officers and six policemen for two whole days.

6. In its observations on these petitions (T/OBS.5/69, sections 5 and 6) the Administering Authority states that Mr. Mpaye was granted a licence to carry passengers in June 1953. His vehicle was inspected by the competent board and was declared on 14 January 1954 to be unfit for carrying passengers for safety reasons. In a letter of the same date, a photostat of which is attached, the petitioner admitted that his vehicle was in bad condition and stated that he would take it out of service until it had been repaired. On the following day, 15 January, it was established that Mr. Mpaye was still using this vehicle to carry passengers. In accordance with the regulations in force, the vehicle was impounded. As the petitioner did not subsequently resubmit his vehicle to the inspection board, his licence was withdrawn in accordance with the laws in force.

7. The Administering Authority further states that it is true that Mr. Mpaye was dismissed from his post with Messrs. King; this was, however, not because he had been convicted of the embezzlement of 40,000 francs. What is more, the petitioner admitted his guilt and himself offered his resignation.

8. With regard to the incident with the Chief States Counsel cited by the petitioner, the Administering Authority observes that, if the incident took place at all, it must have been a very minor one, since the police did not record it, still less call out the force.
9. The Administering Authority adds that it will submit its observations on the situation of Mrs. Ngo Eone when it has received the necessary information.

VII. Petition from Mr. Moise Waffo (T/PET.5/450) dated 24 January 1955

1. The petitioner complains that on 18 February 1954 he was in his house with some friends who had come for a UPC meeting, when Mr. Alphonse Siewe, a former catechist of the Catholic Mission, accompanied by several other persons, arrived before his door and tried to stop people from entering. Then, acting under Mr. Siewe's orders, they broke in. They seized hold of him by his clothing and beat him severely. Damage was caused and one of his chairs was broken. A sum of 97,000 francs (ninety-seven thousand francs) was stolen from his coat. They also tried to kill him. He gives the names of four witnesses.
2. The petitioner further states that on 23 February he lodged a complaint with the Magistrate's Court with extended powers at Nkongsamba against Mr. Siewe and two others for assault and battery, theft, and breaking and entering. The only result of his complaint was that he was nonsuited by the examining Magistrate on 29 July 1954. He lodged an appeal as a civil plaintiff on 5 August 1954 and deposited 5,000 francs as security for costs. The judgement of the Yaoundé Court of Appeal confirmed the nonsuit of 29 July 1954 ordered by the examining Magistrate at Nkongsamba. He had to pay costs of 4810 francs. He feels obliged to point out that no member of the UPC can lodge a complaint against a member of the Administration and win his suit.
3. The petitioner asks that this matter should be brought before all the Members of the United Nations so that he may obtain satisfaction and so that the guilty may be punished. He encloses a copy of the judgement of the Court of Appeal.
4. The petitioner also requests the unification and independence of the Cameroons.
5. In document T/CBS.5/67, section 3, the Administering Authority states that it has no observations to add to the text of the judgement, a copy of which the

petitioner attached to his complaint and which shows that the theft of which Mr. Waffo claims to have been the victim could not be proved.

VIII. Petition from the Yabiens people of Eséka (T/PET.5/452) dated 30 October 1954

1. The petitioners complain that in their isolated forest-covered area there is no motorable road, no dispensary and no public school, despite the existence of a large population. In order to sell their sacks of cocoa or palm nuts at the nearest market at Mangengues (near Eséka), they have to make a three day journey, bent beneath the weight of their burdens; as a result they contract "all manner of diseases, from which we die without receiving any medical attention".
2. Although they have no roads in their own area, they were obliged, by forced labour, to take part in building several main roads in the subdivision, in the course of which many of them died.
3. The petitioners also complain that elephants lay waste their plantations time after time, "not to speak of the buffaloes and gorillas, which contribute to the general destruction". The Administering Authority has done nothing about these disasters beyond repeating vague promises.
4. In its observations (T/OBS.5/69, section 7), the Administering Authority agrees that it is true that the area bounded by the quadrilateral formed by the Edéa-Mbanga-Eséka-Lolodorf-Kribi-Edéa roads is not well served with passable highways. It is not the only area in that position. Despite the magnitude of the financial burden that they throw upon France and the Territory, the investment programmes for the Cameroons are bound to be carried out gradually. A link between Mangengues and Songmbong is one of the schemes now going forward and will partly meet the petitioners' requests.

IX. Petition from Mr. John Bilong (T/PET.5/453) dated 24 January 1955

1. The petitioner charges that on 3 September 1954 he was arbitrarily arrested, savagely beaten, tortured and wilfully injured by the Chief of the Edéa Region,

by the Chief Subdivisional Officer at Babimbi and by an Administration chauffeur and was then imprisoned for two days at Ngambe because he belonged to the UPC and the CGT.

2. He complains that during his arrest he carried boxes for the Administration and was compelled to sleep naked on the floor, having gone without supper. The Chief Subdivision Officer bullied him in his office by beating him, threatened him with torture or shooting, made him sign certain papers which he forbade him to read and, when his injuries began to bleed, had him tied up. The petitioner attaches a list of witnesses and a certificate from the Chief Medical Officer of the Region to the effect that he was suffering from bruises on the left side of the face, ulceration of the mouth and hypacusia, but that he was not disabled.

3. The petitioner further complains that when his wife came to visit him carrying a baby aged two months, she was beaten up by two of the Chief Subdivisional Officer's subordinates and was deprived of her umbrella.

4. In its observations (T/OBS.5/69, section 8), the Administering Authority states the petitioner sent a copy of his petition to the magistrate in September 1954. He was invited by the judicial authority to institute civil proceedings, but he never appeared. An order to remove the case from the list was therefore issued on 23 June 1955.

X. Petition from Chief Samuel Ebolla and others (T/PET.5/454) undated

1. The petitioners complain that on 10 November 1954 the Chief Subdivisional Officer at Douala summoned the chefs de quartier and notables of Douala to sign a motion of protest against the UPC. Several chiefs were persuaded to sign "the fateful document, which the colonialists had prudently prepared in advance", but one notable refused, maintaining that Mr. Um Nyobé was the true representative of the Cameroonian people.

2. The petitioners go on to complain in general terms that the French administration uses oppressive methods and is conspiring to annex the Territory. It asks for a popular referendum to settle the future of the Territory.

3. In its observations (T/OBS.5/70, section 1), the Administering Authority denies the facts alleged in this petition which are pure fabrications on the part

of the author or authors of this document. Chief Samuel Ebolla, on being shown this petition, stated that he had never sent petitions to the United Nations; he protested against the use made of his name and position in the petition.

XI. Petition from the Liyomba Bantu Animist Church (T/PET.5/459) dated 29 October 1954

1. The petitioners state that their church was founded to promote the practice of animism adopted to the principles of modern civilization. They express the opinion that an African, whatever his belief in other creeds, is always an animist. In order to permit Cameroonians to attain moral independence they have since December 1952 asked the Administering Authority to authorize them to establish a Traditional Institute of Cameroonian Habits and Customs together with a primary school, but the plans for these schools have been shelved.
2. In its observations (T/OBS.5/70, section 2,) the Administering Authority states that the "Liyomba Church" association was in fact refused permission to open a school. This association is merely a ridiculously small sect and does not offer the necessary guarantees.
3. The petitioners further claim that customary marriages are no longer respected. They give as an example the case of Mr. Isaac Ndoh. When he registered his child on 2 October 1954, the official wrote down on the certificate "Father unknown", since there was no legal marriage certificate.
4. In this connexion, the Administering Authority states that the Registrar refused to enter Mr. Ndoh's name as that of the father of the child whose birth he wished to report, because Mr. Ndoh was unable to produce his marriage certificate, production of which is required by the regulations. Mr. Ndoh was informed that he was free to apply, as is the normal procedure in such cases to the Court of First Instance for an order establishing the paternal relationship.
5. Finally, the petitioners complain that the Administering Authority and "the pessimistic religions" are seeking to prevent the emancipation and unification of the Cameroons. They therefore authorize Mr. Ruben Um Nyobé to speak on their behalf.

XII. Petition from the Charles Antongana Professional School (T/PET.5/460)
dated 3 December 1954.

1. The petitioners state that the Training School, which was founded by a wholly Cameroonian association, should give instruction in commercial subjects, masonry and architecture, in addition to the present subjects of automobile mechanics, carpentry, assembly and mechanical drawings. Capable teachers should be engaged and a sports ground, dining rooms and dormitories should be provided.
2. The petitioners complain that the Director of Education has withdrawn pupils from the school and that none of the 160 pupils is a scholarship holder. Because of the intervention of the Director, no date has been fixed for the opening of the 1954/55 school year.
3. The petitioners state that as a result of hard manual work, their grandfathers and fathers succeeded in paying the school fees amounting to 9,000 francs for day scholars and 27,000 francs for boarders, as well as for school supplies. They consider, however, that all private schools and their pupils should receive grants similar to those given to public schools and the pupils who attend them.
4. In its observations (T/OBS.5/70, section 4), the Administering Authority states the Charles Atongana School is administered by the Vocational Training Association (Société d'Education Professionnelle) of Yaoundé which was formed in 1949 for the purpose of "training and promoting the training of persons in the occupations necessary for the economic and social development of the Cameroons". It appears that the ambitions of the organizers were out of proportion to the means at their disposal, even though they received a grant from the Territorial budget. In fact a number of pupils sent to the school had subsequently to be transferred to official educational institutions. Moreover, the school has never offered any candidates for the examination for the certificate of occupational proficiency (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle).
5. The Administration is now studying, in conjunction with the Association concerned, ways and means of enabling this school to function normally when term begins again next October.