

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



UNRESTRICTED

T/PET. 5/11
19 December 1949
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

PETITION FROM MR. MANUEL MARIA DO RIO
CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 84 of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the Trusteeship Council a communication dated 1 November 1949 from Mr. Manuel Maria do Rio concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French Administration, together with one addendum. This communication and the addendum were transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa.

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UNITED NATIONS
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/Manuel Maria Do Rio

Manuel Maria Do Rio
Contractor
Yaundé

Yaunde, 11 November 1949

To the Chairman of the Trusteeship Council's
Visiting Mission at present in the Cameroons,

YAUNDE.

Sir,

Having been ordered to leave the Cameroons by an expulsion order issued on 15 September 1949 by the Acting High Commissioner of the French Republic in the Cameroons, I have the honour to request the intervention of the competent office of the United Nations to secure the repeal of that decision, which embodies a serious administrative error of which I am the victim.

I am a building materials contractor of Portuguese nationality, and settled in the French Cameroons in 1938. In 1944 I moved to Berberati (French Equatorial Africa) while retaining in the French Cameroons certain business interests which entitle me to civic rights there.

At Berberati I placed my professional experience at the disposal of the Administration, and could reasonably hope for a peaceful life. In 1946, however, an Administrator (now in prison for the murder of a native) was appointed who, for reasons which are still not clear and which were perhaps to some extent political, entertained a particular hatred towards me and bitterly persecuted me until, in 1948, he obtained the order for my expulsion.

I then returned to the French Cameroons. My record was transferred from Berberati to the Cameroons, where the Administration, considering only the form without inquiring into the substance of this record, has just decided on my expulsion.

This decision wipes out at one blow eleven years of persevering effort and involves my moral and material ruin.

In the documents which I take the liberty of attaching you will find a detailed account of the facts of this sad story.

/I have informed

I have informed the Lisbon diplomatic authorities, for it is extremely urgent that I should obtain an extension of permission to stay in the country in order to enable the French Administration to clarify this lamentable affair.

Confident that you will give my petition your kind attention, I have the honour etc.

(signed) M.M. RIO

Received at United Nations Headquarters on 28 November 1949.

Attached documents:

1. Copy of letter to the Governor
of Ubanghi-Shari.
2. Chronological statement of the facts.

/MANUEL MARIA DO RIO

MANUEL MARIA DO RIO

BERBERATI

Bangui, 21 October 1948

REGISTERED

To the Governor of Ubanghi-Shari
Bangui.

Sir,

I take the liberty of submitting for your consideration a statement of the events which have taken place since my arrival at Berberati in 1944.

I hope you will deign to read it, and, if you think proper, to take the necessary steps to end the hostility displayed towards me by Mr. Auzuret, Chief District Officer at Berberati, and arrange for the repeal of the expulsion order requested by the Chief Regional Officer at Mr. Auzuret's instigation.

I have in my possession complete documentary proof of everything I say regarding myself.

I desire only to work, and, as I have always succeeded in doing except with Mr. Auzuret, to remain on good terms with the Administrators and the Administration in general.

For your information I add that by the same mail I am sending a copy of my statement to the Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa.

Hoping that you will give this matter your kind consideration, I have the honour etc.

COPY

On 4 October 1939, I was engaged, pursuant to Order No. 2579 of the High Commissioner of the French Republic in the Cameroons, as a supervisor of public works under the Government of the Cameroons. I left the public works service on 31 July 1944 of my own choice. My resignation was accepted by Decision No. 1231 of the Governor of the French Cameroons dated 24 July 1944, and I went to work with Mr. XAVIER, planter at Berberati, with whom I stayed from 1 August 1944 till 31 December 1945. I resigned from that post for the sole reason that I had never received my pay. Mr. Xavier was ordered to pay me by order of the Court of Appeal, but as he was at that time in Europe, the order to pay was returned by the

/Enforcement Officer

Enforcement Officer attached to the Court of Summary Jurisdiction at Berberati on 25 September 1948. I am still waiting for my wages.

On 26 April a concession was granted to me at Berberati by the Brazzaville authorities for the manufacture of tiles and bricks and for stock-raising and market gardening.

I made arrangements to begin all the activities I had undertaken to engage in, and maintained very good relations with the Administration, doing several jobs for it for which I received no payment.

After the arrival in 1946 of Mr. Auzuret, Chief District Officer, all went well until 15 September 1946, on which date he sent me a note asking me to go to a yard in which I had previously been working. Being very busy that day, I was unable to accede to his request. From that time on, Mr. Auzuret began to make difficulties for me and prevent me from carrying out my work.

On 24 September 1946, after an ungrounded complaint had been lodged against me by a native who alleged that he had been bitten by a dog belonging to me, Mr. Auzuret came to me with the native who had made the complaint and threatened to expel me and withdraw my concession. In the presence of my whole staff he told me that he was going to take away all my workmen and that I was "like the Germans, because Portugal was a dictatorship just like Germany".

On 20 November 1946, following an administrative circular asking the people to welcome the Governor of Ubanghi-Shari, I went to the meeting place and there in the presence of all the Europeans and the native population, Mr. Auzuret renewed his insults and threats of expulsion and withdrawal of the concession, stating that I had been expelled from the Cameroons, which was absolutely untrue. On 22 November 1946 I wrote asking the Governor for an appointment in order to explain these facts and put an end to the situation.

Mr. CORBIER, the Chief Regional Officer, told me that the Governor was busy and that I would be summoned. I never was summoned.

On 10 December 1946, Mr. Auzuret excluded me from the distribution of manioc from the villages which had been allocated to me as sources of food for my workers, who naturally left their work.

On 18 December 1946 I went to see the Chief Regional Officer about this. He confirmed that the two villages of Gadalo and Ouapo had been allocated to me, and he authorized me to continue my purchases.

/In accordance

In accordance with custom, however, I obtained the Chief District Officer's authorization to recruit workers in the village of Gamboula. I was unable to obtain them, in spite of the requests I addressed to Mr. Auzuret. After I had presented my authorization to the village chief, he informed me that Mr. Auzuret had taken it and torn it up on the spot.

Encouraged by that attitude, the natives from that time on began to be obstructive towards me.

In my concession I possessed a herd of pigs, goats and sheep.

In 1947, Mr. GERPY, a Public Works official, asked my permission to quarry stones in my concession to supply the Administration's requirements near my brick and tile works.

In September 1947, Mr. Auzuret, acting on the complaint of a native who claimed that he had been bitten by a pig belonging to me, sentenced me to a fine of 200 francs, which I paid, although the animal would hardly have bitten the native unless it had first been angered by threatening gestures or ill treatment.

On 29 January 1948, Mr. Auzuret sent an armed guard to my works with orders to take some workmen away from my yard.

On 17 May 1948 I was the victim of an accident which took place as I was crossing a bridge that was being repaired on Mr. Auzuret's orders. The road had not been closed and there was nothing to indicate the danger. I was slightly wounded, the worker who was in the lorry was seriously wounded and another was bruised. A passing lorry took me, together with the workmen, to the District Chief. Mr. Auzuret did not seem perturbed and said the road had not been open to traffic (although no circular had been issued about this) and that consequently the Administration was not responsible. I was therefore unable to make a report for insurance purposes. I was unable to obtain from the Chief Regional Officer, with whom I wished to come to an understanding, any certificate entitling me to compensation, or any reimbursement for my losses.

The fact that there had been nothing to indicate danger and no warning involved me in serious loss. I attempted to bring back my lorry. The natives, however, even those on my ^{own} staff, aware of my difficulties with the District Chief, refused to help me, in spite of the large reward I promised them. I had a violent altercation with the workman who was wounded at the time of the accident. He complained, and, displaying wounds he had sustained in the accident, said that I had struck him with the crank of the lorry, which was not true. The Chief

/Regional Officer

Regional Officer took advantage of the occasion to sentence me to a fine of 2,000 francs and fifteen days' imprisonment with stay of execution, thinking that this penalty would result in my expulsion. I appealed against the decision and the case is pending.

The next day, at about 3 in the morning, the same workman came to my house to insult and threaten me. I lodged a complaint against him, but to no purpose.

On 8 June 1948 I surprised a native in the act of killing some of my pigs. I brought a native guard, who took particulars, and then I lodged a complaint. For reasons unknown to me, no action has been taken on this complaint.

On 22 July 1948, at the request of the Officer in command of the troops at Bouar, I proceeded to inspect some land to ascertain whether bricks could be manufactured there.

I left my concession after closing my shop and installing a guard.

Eight days later, on my return from Bouar, I noticed that the wall of my shop had been pierced, and that petrol, oil and some small items had been stolen.

I discovered that a native who wanted petrol had forced an entry in that way. Two or three days later, in my absence, the inhabitants of some neighbouring villages killed several animals on my premises with arrows and spears. I had a report drawn up by a European gendarme and lodged a complaint, on which no action was taken.

On 3 August 1948 an Administration chauffeur named Paul LAVAVEY was sent by the Administrator to catch three pigs in my concession. The native guard whom I went to see told me the driver must have thought they were wild pigs. I went to see the Deputy Administrator about this, and he replied that two of the pigs had been sent to the hospital for food and one had been kept for his personal needs. On inquiring at the hospital, I learned that only one had been received and not two. One of the two had therefore disappeared.

On 9 August 1948, Mr. GERFY's workers set fire to my sheds, destroying 5,000 special tiles stored there and thus causing me damage estimated at between 180,000 and 200,000 francs.

When I went to see the Chief Regional Officer to inform him about this, he proposed to me, in order to avoid creating difficulties, that I should have the sheds rebuilt with materials and labour to be supplied. I accepted that arrangement, although I suffered considerable loss, owing to the destruction of

/the tiles

the tiles and the stoppage of work.

Having, in spite of that promise, seen neither materials nor labour, I wrote to the Chief Regional Officer on 3 September 1948. In reply to that letter I received some tiles. On 18 September 1948 I asked Mr. Gerpy by letter for some workmen to begin the work. He allocated to me a few native workers, who were withdrawn some days later. Since then my work has been at a standstill and my position seriously endangered thereby.

I have never been able to discover why Mr. Auzuret, who is at the bottom of all these difficulties, has sought only to harm me, while at the same time he helps other Europeans, whether they were of my nationality or not, and even though I have been in French Equatorial Africa since 1938, and had previously had no trouble with the administrative services, for which, as a matter of fact, I worked from 1939 to 1944.

Thus, for example, in 1947, Mr. Auzuret hushed up a serious incident that had taken place in the GOUVELA plantation whereas, if such an incident had taken place in my business, it would have had very serious consequences.

Mr. SARAIVA, the European in charge of that plantation, went to find Mr. Auzuret, whom he met in the village of Papaye. Mr. Auzuret made four natives lie down on the ground and had them whipped until they bled. In a lamentable state, the workmen were then imprisoned.

Mr. Auzuret left some armed guards with Mr. Saraiva, ordering that the same treatment should be given to all the workers who had fled to their villages. The order was carried out. The scene lasted for three days until the Chief Regional Officer learned of it and sent Auzuret himself in a car to bring back the guards.

Since it was a serious matter, the wounded natives were sent to hospital and then returned to prison.

The Chief Regional Officer having gone to Bangui and Brazzaville for some time, Mr. Auzuret deputized for him during his absence and took advantage of the occasion to release the prisoners and destroy the records relating to the matter, thus securing the removal of all records of his own and the guards' reprehensible acts.

Other more interesting cases have occurred not only in my case but also in that of Mr. Santini, planter and trader at Berberati. He lodged a complaint which resulted in a visit by the Public Prosecutor.

The machinations of Mr. Auzuret, District Chief, strike me as quite incompatible with the instructions contained in the Memorandum by the Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, published in the Journal Officiel of 1 October 1938.

* * *

On 13 November 1948, the Berberati Chief Regional Officer forced me to leave French Equatorial Africa without granting me any interval in which to settle my affairs, which I was obliged to abandon. It appears, however, that as the result of a request for stay of execution that I had addressed to the Governor, a certain interval was granted me in which to settle my affairs. Unfortunately, however, the decision to grant a period of grace was in no way conveyed to me.

* * *

I therefore returned to the Cameroons, hoping to stay there and work in peace. Unfortunately, even in the Cameroons, which I now look upon as my country, and in which I have important business interests, I experienced further troubles.

I have a lorry with which I can work and earn enough to keep myself, but I am having serious difficulty in obtaining the fuel and other necessary materials. For no reason at all, I am being deprived of the right to live.

I was even arrested and placed in the house of detention at Yaunde for no good reason, and was not released until I had furnished security in the amount of 5,000 francs.

Yet Europeans of various nations seem to have come to the Cameroons without having previously obtained a permit of residence. It would be somewhat indiscreet and unfair to mention here the names of these immigrants, which might be brought to light through an inquiry.

Manuel Maria Do Rio

ADDENDUM NO. 1

Contractor

Yaunde

Yaunde, 22 November 1949

Registered

The Chairman of the Trusteeship Council's
Visiting Mission at present in the Cameroons,
YAUNDE.

Sir,

I am writing with further reference to my letter to you of 11 November 1949.

The Police Department has now accelerated the expulsion procedure, and, ignoring the grounds I had pleaded in support of an extension of my period of residence, has notified me that I must leave the Territory before the end of the month.

I must therefore leave without having been able to bring to light the administrative error of which I am the victim, and with no chance of attending to such personal affairs as the settlement of accounts, the collection of bills, the completion of contracts, and the sale of equipment (lorries, tools).

My situation is tragic. Only your intervention could induce the local authorities to stay the expulsion order.

Trusting in your spirit of fairness and in the worth of the Institution which you represent, I have the honour etc.

(signed)(illegible)

Received at United Nations Headquarters on 1 December 1949.
