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PETITION FROM MR. PROSPER DJETE CONCERNING
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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From: UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN
Cameroonian branch of the Rassemblement démocratique africain
MBOUDA CENTRAL COMMITTEE via BAMENDA

To: The Secretary-General of the United Nations.
New York

Bamenda, 16 December 1955

Sir,

As the General Assembly approaches the close of its session, the Cameroonian people are still living in forests and caves where they may find a moment's respite from the abominable slaughter which the French Government has been relentlessly perpetrating since the terrible night of 25 May 1955. The United Nations has received too many petitions on this subject for me to press the point.

The deplorable incidents of last May were provoked by the French authorities for the purpose of creating an atmosphere of terror, almost a state of siege, and of stifling the freedom of expression of the Cameroonian peoples at the time when the United Nations Visiting Mission was passing through the Territory, so greatly did the powers that be fear that truth would triumph. Thus, the day after the tragic incidents, Douala, Yaoundé, Nkongsamba, Dschang and the other principal towns of the Cameroons became military objectives besieged by troops armed to the teeth. The manhunt started, and resulted in cramming the prisons with thousands of patriots whose sole crime was to love their country.

That is why the United Nations Visiting Mission worked in a disturbed atmosphere. The French authorities did not hesitate, in the presence of the Mission, to arrest patriots who had dared to submit petitions calling for the

immediate unification and independence of the Cameroons. Repression has been rampant since the Visiting Mission's departure, as before its arrival. The silence of the United Nations encourages the continuation of this deplorable state of affairs.

On 21 October last, the police went to Baham (Bafoussa Subdivision) by night and arrested two patriots, one of them Pierre Noupewou, a survivor of last May's shootings, who still bore the fresh scars of the bullets which had almost killed him. The French Government feared that our comrade might show the scars from his wounds to the Visiting Mission as an irrefutable proof of the slaughter to which the Cameroonian people had been subjected. Our friends were manacled and taken to Bafoussam, where they were held for five days in the detention pen. Strict orders had been given not to feed them. Furthermore, every day the guards, obeying orders, administered to each of them fifty strokes of the sjambok; they then poured water on the cement floor of the cell and made their victims lie down on it. Since it is generally very cold in Bafoussam, it is easy to imagine the fate in store for the patriots and the serious diseases to which their bodies, already so greatly weakened by other physical tortures, are being exposed. Ever since they were taken to prison, our comrades have been fed - without soup - or what is called being fed, once a day. This is a significant point. The political prisoners are in a dilemma: if they refuse the food, they are clubbed by the guards; if they choke it down, the guards are still there to whip them. By these dishonourable methods, an attempt is being made to extort "confessions" from our friends in order to produce "evidence" of the so-called "armed rebellion". The latest news reaching us clearly indicates that the lives of Pierre Noupewou and his co-defendants are in great danger, especially as, despite the fact that they are political prisoners, they are being forced to work hard from six in the morning to six at night without respite. There is no respite even on Sunday. This attitude of the French authorities is further proof of the persistence of racial discrimination, because in France any citizen prosecuted for his political opinions is given the treatment accorded to political prisoners (régime de pistole). What reason, other than racial discrimination, can be found in the Cameroons for denying those favouring immediate Unification and Independence the benefit of the treatment accorded to political prisoners? Furthermore, even if our comrades were denied the right to be considered as political prisoners for racial reasons,

another legal argument militates in their favour: in French criminal law, so long as sentence has not been pronounced, the prisoners, who are presumed innocent (see article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), may not be subjected to forced labour.

We are worried about what will happen to our comrades, all the more as in most colonialist prisons political prisoners are dying at a frightening rate. For having exercised the right of petition provided in the United Nations Charter, a patriot, beaten within an inch of his life, is hospitalized at Foumban. In the Nkongsamba prison, Monique Kamen, pregnant when arrested, had a miscarriage as a result of beatings. It will be remembered that Jacques Ngom received 100 strokes of the sjambok (whip made of ox sinews) in the Douala prison. At Mokolo (Northern Cameroons), the political prisoners, crowded together by the hundreds in stinking cells, await death, which slowly but surely is carrying them off.

In protesting strongly against the French Government's policy of force, a policy which contravenes the provisions of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we dare to hope that the United Nations will step in to put an end to barbarous methods which have been practised only too long. The best solution, the only one which will allow our people not to have to live in terror of their lives, is to settle the Cameroonian problem once and for all, by recognizing the legitimate aspirations towards unification and independence of the Cameroons expressed in the Joint Proclamation of 22 April 1955.

I have the honour to be, etc.

For the Mbouda Central Committee

(Signed) Prosper Djete

Chairman

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Extract from the Daily Times Cameroons Edition, issue No. 12,191
dated Monday, 28 November 1955 (page 3)

500 French soldiers are reported near Bamenda.

More than 500 French soldiers have been sited along the Customs Post at Santa, twelve miles from Bamenda.

No one has been able to explain their mission but it is believed that they have been posted there to capture French Cameroons refugees seeking asylum in the British sector.

Hundreds of these refugees are now in Bamenda where they met the Visiting Mission and presented an address of welcome.

The address complained of persecutions, intimidation and suppression of their rights and liberties by the French authorities. They called on the Trusteeship Council to protect and guarantee them freedom of speech and association.

They alleged that the French authorities prevented them from meeting the Visiting Mission when they toured the French Cameroons.

Another memorandum submitted by the refugees, in collaboration with Mr. Foncha's Kamerun National Democratic Party, called for unification of the British and French Cameroons.

A spokesman of the refugees told the "Daily Times" that they preferred to work with the K.N.D.P. on the question of unification.

Extract from the Daily Times, Cameroons Edition, issue No. 12,192
dated Tuesday, 29 November 1955 (page 3)

"Refugee" captured by French Police.

Monsieur Pier NUPCWE, a French Cameroons "refugee" who escaped shooting and took asylum in Bamenda during the recent "coffee riot" in French Cameroons, has been captured by French police at the frontier, near Bafusam.

Nupowe, it is understood, was trying to make a secret return home in order to raise funds when the police grabbed him.

Another "refugee", whose name was not disclosed, has been arrested by the French Police.
