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PETITION FROM MR. J. EMILE KOHN CONCERNING  
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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of procedure for the Trusteeship Council)

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Cameroons

Douala, <sup>1/</sup>9 August 1955

Petition

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations

New York, U.S.A.

Sir,

I have the honour to submit to your high authority full details of the recent events in the Cameroons, events which led to tragedies plunging our whole people into mourning.

I shall try to state the case without exaggerating or placing the wrong construction on the nature of these events, as each side always accuses the other of doing, but being really objective about the facts, and taking into account the opinion of the workers and all the other sections of the population, and also the statements made to the press by people holding different views. It may be positively stated, without twisting the facts, that the cruel situation now prevailing in the Cameroons is a result of the strong-arm policy used against our people by the Administration under Mr. Roland Pré, then High Commissioner of France in our Territory.

It is perfectly clear that the reasons for the use of this policy of force against our populations are quite well known, not only in the United Nations but to both the French Government and world public opinion. In view of the

1/ Note by the Secretariat: This communication was sent from Paris, France

actions of Mr. Roland Pré, the local authorities representing the French Government are trying by all the means in their power to decline responsibility for these dreadful events and to implicate (a) the national movement (UPC); (b) the CGT (USCC); the women's movement (UDEFEC); and the youth movement (JDC).

But the evidence and identical proofs concerning the recent events have been recounted to you in many petitions, sent, I believe, not only by the committees of the UPC, but by other social strata of the population as well. So that to make a serious analysis I rather think that a brief outline of these characteristic acts, which the Administration had been perpetrating against our people before 25 May 1955, that historic day, will make it clear that the local authorities had openly engaged in threats and provocation, in order to pave the way for putting their plan of aggression into effect. That is all the more obvious from the fact that since the arrival of Mr. Roland Pré in the Territory, as you know and will agree, our people's indignation has been unceasingly demonstrated by petitions and various letters drawing the matter to your particular attention, as the representative of the United Nations, and protesting against such a policy. I am sure that these repeated protests and all the other demonstrations against this aggression will have reached you. Mr. Pré immediately launched violent attacks on the CGT, the national movement, the JDC and the UDEFEC.

In the economic field, he has often imposed inhuman social measures, and subjected the workers to unprecedented ill-treatment when they claimed their lawful rights, examples being the imprisonment of the strikers at Dizangué and Manoka, the confiscation of the property and trade union funds of the USCC (CGT), the unjust legal proceedings taken against active members, leaders and officers of the USCO. In fact, the denial of freedom to the trade unions has become common practice, and a kind of martial law. A paradoxical fact is the expulsion of the USCC (CGT) from the house which it had been occupying for ten years at Bonadjo, forcing it to transfer to two tiny rooms in the outskirts of Douala. But it is now being threatened anew with expulsion from that small house, and may have to move further out from the commercial centre of the town.

When a delegation was sent to the Chief Regional Officer of Wouri Dla to protest against the measures taken against the USCC and the denial of trade union freedom, he let it be understood that those were orders from a higher authority, aimed at expelling the USCC. He added that that trade union organization had enjoyed the use of convenient premises for a long time, like the other trade unions. Despite the offer from the Administration, the USCC is opposed to all the measures taken by the Administration in respect of labour.

In the political field, the High Commissioner Roland Pré lost no opportunity, in the course of his journeys, always undertaken for political purposes, of persecuting all Cameroonians who were known to support the national movement, as follows:

- (a) mass destruction of the dwellings of the active members of the UPC and the JDC;
  - (b) judicial proceedings against the officers of the UPC and the JDC;
  - (c) breaking up of the general meetings and rallies organized by the UPC.
- On these occasions, the people were attacked with clubs (7/11/54-18/5/55) at Douala, etc.
- (d) arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of active members and the population;
  - (e) disciplinary transfers of all officials belonging to progressive parties or the UPC. These became a daily occurrence;
  - (f) repeated suspension of officials because they were brothers or close relatives of active members of the UPC;
  - (g) encouragement of "political movements" supporting the Administration, by means of subsidies or bribes to their officers, with which they buy guns or build bars;
  - (h) flat refusal of all favours etc. to members of the progressive movements.

In the social field, there have been no measures for the assimilation of the population into the social life of the country. On the other hand, before each session of the Territorial Assembly, there are always official statements in the press of how anxious Mr. Roland Pré is to see developments in this field.

It is clear that these statements which are made so often in the press and before the public, are, goodness knows, made only to pull wool over the people's

eyes. The real reason for making them is, that the United Nations can be told that its principles have been put into effect. But every year enormous sums are set aside for the Territory's budget and for the FIDES. The fact is, that most of these sums are used to meet the needs of Europeans, instead of being spent by the Administration on the construction of economic roads, dispensaries, schools for the benefit of the people and the promotion of the country's economic development, or to provide the workers with a minimum wage which would supply their elementary needs. At the order of Mr. Roland Pré, there has been an increase in the number of police and gendarmierie stations throughout the country, particularly at Douala and Yaoundé. In those two towns, these stations have been built in the African quarters only, and their purpose is to ill-treat the people and to prevent them from holding meetings or joining the UPC.

In the cultural field, Mr. Pré, to my certain knowledge, has not even thought of setting up any cultural institutions, or even of encouraging the present caricatures of such institutions, which exist in name only. Thus, the social services pile up credits and squander them at the whims of the white ladies who are supposed to be officials in those services. In a well-known quarter of Douala, near the residence of the "Paramount" Chief Mongo Joseph, a social welfare centre has been built with raffia (local material). If one goes up to this centre, to see how it operates, it is only fair to say that it looks like a pig-sty. And if by any chance a centre is built and properly kept up, it is highly probable that it will be attended only by European children or those who are favoured by the Administration.

In all justice, you must realize that the various acts and events recorded in this petition are just an illustration of many others. This clearly shows that the Administering Authority, far from exercising trusteeship in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Charter, is engaged in delaying action with the purpose of undermining the development of the country to the detriment of the population which desires the speedy emancipation of the Cameroons.

Consequently, the responsibility for recent events, however grave they may be, must be borne by the instigators of the strong-arm policy.

With regard to the achievements of the French Government (the Administering Authority) in the Cameroons, which the French representative on the Trusteeship Council never fails to stress at each session of the United Nations General

Assembly, our people, far from being ungrateful, but sincere and honest, is not backward in paying them their proper tribute of acknowledgment. But considering the length of time (since the signature of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919), that the Cameroons has been a French colony, and also bearing in mind the exploitation of the natural resources of our country, no honest man, judging by the facts, can fail to find a lack of balance. So that those statements are not in accordance with reality, and do not conform to the principles of the United Nations Charter. They should not therefore be accorded any sympathy or turn the United Nations aside from the pursuit of its true ends.

After this explanation as regards the events which occurred last May, I cannot refrain from expressing my wishes, and those of the great majority of the people in our Territory, which is that your attention should be drawn to the need to condemn the aggressive policy pursued in the Cameroons recently, and to take action to safeguard the future of the Territory.

In that connexion, I would ask you to take into consideration all the measures proposed by the UPC and the other progressive movements; that consideration should in particular be based on the JOINT PROCLAMATION, which you have in your possession.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(signed)

J. Emile KOHN

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