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PETITION FROM THE PARIS LOCAL COMMITTEE OF THE "UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN" CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN
Cameroonian branch of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain
PARIS COMMITTEE

No. 033/UPC/CBT/B

PARIS, 7 June 1955

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations
NEWYORK

Sir,

We set forth below the text of a concise account of the bloody events which have been occurring throughout the Cameroons under French administration, and especially in the Douala region.

"Douala, 30 May 1955

To the Local Committee of the UPC of PARIS

Dear Comrades,

We, members of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, having formed an underground resistance committee, have the honour to give you below a concise summary of the bloody events which began on 21 May and plunged the Cameroons into mourning. The policy of provocation and repression pursued in the Cameroons by the French Governor Roland PRE was always meant to lead up to a shooting; and the

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Cameroonian people have been fired upon these last few days at Douala and continue to be fired upon everywhere else.

On 21 May the rumour spread that the colonialists were going to burn down our office for no reason. This caused such discontent among the people that in the end a preventive motion was adopted.

On 22 May our office was subjected to another search. All the tables were broken and the files scattered pell-mell, machines and other equipment were damaged, the doors and windows were smashed.

Popular protest grew and a group assembled to form delegations to be sent to the Authorities - an attempt which was a dismal failure. In lieu of reply, a detachment of mobile guards, armed to the teeth, fired several volleys into the crowd. On that day the Cameroonian people lost seven men on the spot, while thirty more were to die later of their wounds.

On 23 May gardes mobiles from all corners of the country converged on Douala, to the great astonishment of the Cameroonians. That same day, strict orders were given to the Douala post offices to censor telegrams to New York and Paris; a curious detail is that Roland PRE himself censored these telegrams in the post-office at night (standing behind the Cameroonian telegraph operators) so that the telegrams sent by the Cameroonian people to the United Nations and to Paris, in the amount of 60,000 fr. CFA, are held up at the post-office at Roland PRE's order. In the evening of the same day, the guards provoked a street battle with much bloodshed: skulls were fractured, arms and legs were broken and slashed.

On 24 May, a new automobile with a loud speaker warned the people that the office was again going to be destroyed the following day. Further measures were taken to protect the house, which the people had built themselves with their own money. The guards came armed with clubs and rifles, axes and heavy knives. The people, having taken up posts within the premises, tried to resist and check all these attempts at intimidation. The Chairman of the Union des Populations du Cameroun exhorted the Cameroonians to remain calm. He succeeded. During this time, guards directed by the leaders of the puppet movements, the COORDINATION DES

INDEPENDANTS CAMEROUNAIS (INDECAM for short) and the EVOLUTION SOCIALE CAMEROUNAIS (Esocam), were driving through the streets and lanes to study the lay of the land.

On 25 May curfew was proclaimed at Douala by Deputy High-Commissioner PERILHOU, at the orders of Roland PRE, in the following terms:

"By order of the High Commissioner, a curfew shall be established at Douala, beginning 25 May, from 7 p.m. to 6.30 a.m. The military are authorized to use weapons against prowlers."

Well, dear comrades, this was the last straw, and Roland PRE's forces were given a free hand.

The people obeyed these orders scrupulously. Then something was done that had never happened before in the entire history of the Cameroonian People. When the poor people went to bed, each in his own house, Roland PRE's troops took advantage of the lull to massacre them at will. The soldiers broke down the doors with their rifle butts and axes, dragged the people (men and women alike) outside, shot them at close range and set their houses on fire. It was a scene of indescribable horror. The screams, sobs and moans of men, women and children burned alive made this dreadful situation still worse. On the morrow of this one night of suffering the Cameroonian people found that it had lost more than 300 persons, whose bodies the captain of the fire brigade had picked up at once and thrown into a big pit that had been dug somewhere outside the country without the Cameroonians' knowledge. Towards 8 o'clock on 26 May fresh detachments arrived in front of the office and arrested everyone they could lay hands on, including Theodore M. MATIP, Administrative Secretary of the Union des Populations du Cameroun, and his sister, Marthe Ngo BAHIDA. A sad day indeed! There were dead bodies everywhere.

27 May. During the night from 26 to 27 May, a petrol lorry arrived before the U.P.C. office. The men who watched the office were on the look-out. Two well-armed detachments came. First, petrol was poured on the thatched roofs of the neighbouring huts. Then the guards set them on fire. More misery for those

poor people! Two shots were fired at the Office; the premises were aflame and the watchers fled in alarm. Fugitives (men, women and children) were fired upon from all sides. That day, we had another 200 dead. Several persons were burned alive with their things.

28 and 29 May. The slaughter continued.

Over 200 telegrams to various parts of the world, mostly to the Security and Trusteeship Councils, were held up, although the telegraph office accepted payment for them.

We therefore beg you, dear comrades, to alert our friends of the Paris C.G.T., immediately and also the Union des Femmes françaises, using the scant information we are now able to transmit to you. We ask you also to inform the United Nations and the world capitals of the events taking place in the Cameroons. The killing goes on day and night, without respite.

The arrested men and women have been exiled at Maroua."

This is the partial information we have been able to obtain, for postal communication is still suspended.

We request the United Nations to intervene as soon as possible, for the French Government intends to take justice into its own hands and speaks of punishing the leaders of the Union des Populations du Cameroun who are represented to public opinion as having been the cause of the trouble and bloodshed in the Cameroons.

We have the honour to be, etc.

For the Committee of the U.P.C.

(signed)

Jean GWODOG
Vice-Chairman

(signed)

H. Marcel BOT ba NJOCK
Secretary

(signed)

F. NTONE NKONGO
Treasurer

(Seal: Paris Local Committee)
