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PETITION FROM MR. JEAN TOFFOU CONCERNING THE
CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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TO:

The President of the United Nations
Trusteeship Council

DOUALA, 31 May 1955

At this time when the entire Cameroonian population is being subjected to the scheme devised by Roland PRE for the destruction of the National Movement, I am writing to you in all good faith and with complete objectivity to inform you of the true state of affairs in the country.

When Roland PRE applied for the post of French High Commissioner in the Cameroons, he doubtless did not have a very clear idea of the political situation in the Territory, and in particular, of recent developments in that situation as a result of a remarkable campaign conducted by the Union des Populations du Cameroun (U.P.C.). And when he arrived in the Territory, to his great disadvantage, he hastened the course of events by successive inept and ill-advised dictatorial measures which, by bringing his prestige to the lowest ebb, have quite naturally enhanced to the utmost the prestige of the U.P.C. which, moreover, had not waited for these developments before expanding to absolutely terrific proportions.

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Confronted with this state of affairs, Roland PRE saw no other means than his notorious scheme of repeated provocation to bring about a model programme of repression which was to culminate in the sentencing of the "hard heads" of the National Movement to the severest penalties (even the death penalty) and to reduce the entire population to silence.... compulsory silence.

In this way, the campaign of provocation started in April with the instigation of completely unlawful searches, the dispersal of meetings held in private premises - since, for quite some time now there has been no question of the U.P.C.'s receiving permission to meet in a public place - arbitrary arrests, the preparation of great trials on trumped-up charges. And the African people of the Cameroons displayed such patience that the agents seeking to provoke the people have been obliged to continue although their efforts failed to succeed.

At MBANGA and NKONGSAMBA, the leaders of the U.P.C. were arrested, purely and simply, and thrown into prison without the slightest reason or precedent for this action and the mere move on the part of a few relatives and friends to inquire into the cause of these arrests was sufficient pretext for the police to open fire.

At DOUALA, the whole town knew for at least a week that the district in which the U.P.C. had its headquarters, a district inhabited by some of the leaders and many of the members of this movement was to be burned and razed. And when some of the members went to the place out of mere curiosity - for the "spectacle" was to be a fine sight - that was more than sufficient cause for opening fire. And then the fact that some of the relatives went to seek their dead was sufficient cause for the people to undergo a fresh fusillade. The French Administration in the Cameroons, the Administration of Roland PRE, the High Commissioner of Crime (he is no longer called by any other name) has purely and simply exerted force against the unarmed Cameroonian people. There were a number of dead and wounded, the official figures being 10 killed and 40 wounded at DOUALA and 4 killed and 20 wounded at YACUNDE. And you know that to discover the truth, these figures should be multiplied by ten. And the figures for MBANGA, NKONGSAMBA, LOUM, PENJA, NGAMBE and other towns have not even been announced yet.

The Administration's programme of provocation has been carried out in exactly the same way in all the centres of the Territory where incidents have occurred, in order to give the impression that this was a revolt planned by the Cameroonians, which is what Roland PRE alleges. But who would dare to believe that the Cameroonians, politically mature as they are, and completely without arms, would have thought of rebelling against a police administration of this type and against settlers ready to bear arms against them? And this at a time when the United Nations Visiting Mission, charged with special powers, was after its visit to the Cameroons to find a solution to the nation's problem? At a time when the Cameroonian question was thus within an inch of being solved? At a time when the Cameroonian people, conscious of their political capacity, had just issued the JOINT PROCLAMATION of 22 April calling purely and simply for the end of the trusteeship regime and the organization of a Cameroonian State with its own parliament and government? At a time when this same people, having just chosen national flag - and later a national anthem - was about to hoist the flag in the public square before the whole Cameroonian population which supports this flag without the slightest reservation?

Obviously, Roland PRE, the High Commissioner simply wished to stop all this. He wanted to rid himself by force of a political enemy with stronger arguments than his, supported by the righteousness of its cause. He wanted systematically to block the very powerful activity of the National Movement by this horrible, odious and indescribably low procedure. In reading these words, taken from the PRESSE DU CAMEROUN, the settlers' newspaper, issue No. 1516 of 26 May 1955, you will readily see that Roland PRE had made all his preparations to strike the great, the final blow which was inexorably to bring him victory, to wipe out the National Movement definitively and with it the Cameroons national problem: "... The measures taken several weeks ago, for the supervision of the dispatch of telegrams and the notices requesting persons possessing firearms to take precautions, seem to show that there was some prior warning of the events to come." You can clearly see that the Cameroonian people were to be massacred without even having the opportunity to tell the whole world. And Roland PRE thinks that the only solution for the national aspirations of the Cameroons is to drown them in blood.

The High Commissioner also wanted to find a reason for burning the U.P.C. headquarters and its leaders' district, for which he issued orders. That is why the FRESSE DU CAMEROUN, issue No. 1517 of 27 May 1955, states: "In conclusion, Mr. Roland PRE referred to the problem of light and air in the New-Bell district, which are required both for the health of the inhabitants and by the rules of town planning, pointing out that this centre of agitation is not really a traditional district but a mixture of peoples with no social structure." And to think that this same Roland PRE now claims that it was the U.P.C. leaders themselves who set fire to their headquarters and their homes of their own free will!! This High Commissioner who set the fire himself at 9.30 p.m. and who watched it until 11.30 p.m., who ordered his police to fire on anyone who attempted to save anything whatsoever from the flames and who did not allow the firemen, who were present from the start of the fire, to intervene until the U.P.C. premises and approximately 200 houses had been completely destroyed by the flames. And how could the U.P.C. members have started a fire at 9.30 p.m. when the curfew decreed during a state of emergency was already in effect and the police were consequently empowered to fire at anyone without warning after 9 p.m.?

The actions of Roland PRE, the High Commissioner of Crime have so seriously undermined his popularity in the eyes of the entire population that unless urgent steps are taken for his repatriation and that of his entire staff, particularly his delegate at Douala, PERILHOU, the Special Commissioner (meaning Political Commissioner) of the town of VERSIERE, Mr. LABORDE, the State Counsel who has been in permanent conference with the High Commissioner for several weeks preparing for the trials now in process, Judges such as Mr. CAU, the Deputy State Counsel at Yaounde, Mr. BARNICAUD, who stated recently that "this is a test of strength between the U.P.C. and the Administration" and all those French officials who are accomplices in Roland PRE's crimes, and there are many of them, the conditions now prevailing in the Cameroons may cause irreparable harm.

The entire population of DOUALA is upset by the indescribable spectacle of men, women and children wandering through every street, carrying trunks, furniture and various objects, some of which are partly burned, and who do not know where

to go. You should therefore take the necessary steps with regard to these incidents which occur continuously and use all the legal means in your power to put an end to such a deplorable situation. The few U.P.C. leaders who have not been arrested yet can no longer live, except in hiding. Those who have already been arrested are transferred to the prisons as far away as possible in the Territory, obviously so that they cannot do any harm while they are waiting to be sentenced to death. The U.P.C. has practically been outlawed and the police regime which now obtains in the Cameroons holds out no promise for the future of our people.

In the hope that the conditions I have just described will not leave you indifferent and thanking you for your attention, I have the honour to be etc.

(Signed)

TOFFOU Jean

Poste restante

DOUALA
