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53

PETITION FROM THE "UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN"
CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

30 JAN 1953

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 85 and supplementary rule F of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council and to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Somaliland, a communication dated 23 December 1952 from the "Union des populations du Cameroun" concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration.

This communication forms a third supplement to the petition set forth in document T/PET.5/119.

COPY

New York, 23 December 1952

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York

Sir,

Further to my communications of 14 August, 4 October and 22 October 1952, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter, dated 31 October 1952, from Mrs. Christine Essomba. Her letter only serves to confirm the complaints contained in the correspondence referred to above and in the more recent communication I sent you from Paris on 20 November 1952. The case thus presented provides significant evidence of the interference with freedom of correspondence of which the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of Cameroons under French administration is guilty.

I take this opportunity of informing you that the communications sent to me in New York were also the object of some indecorous attention on the part of the administration, as is evidenced by the condition of the envelope enclosed herewith.^{1/}

I am enclosing also a copy of a letter dated 10 October 1952, in which I protested to the Director of Posts and Telecommunications, on behalf of the Central Office of the U.P.C., against this state of affairs. The final paragraph of the reply of the Director of Posts, which is also enclosed, makes it clear that the transfer of officials in a technical service such as the postal service is left to the whims of the repressive policy adopted by the French Administration against any persons who may show themselves favourable towards the national movement in the Cameroons.

^{1/} Note by the Secretariat: The envelope referred to is in the Secretariat files and will be made available to members of the Trusteeship Council on request.

As in the case of Mrs. Christine Essomba, your letter of 22 August was found in our post office box on 11 October,^{1/} i.e. the day after our protest by letter of 10 October 1952, to which reference has already been made. We asked for a process-server to draw up an affidavit regarding the condition of the envelope, which had no post-mark of arrival. However, the process-server from the Palais de Justice, an administrative official, refused to draw up an affidavit, on the pretext that he too often received correspondence without post-mark of arrival. Need I add that in so doing the process-server from the Public Prosecutor's office of Douala violated the regulations governing his service, which provide penalties for cases of this nature.

I therefore hope that the United Nations will request the Administering Authority to put an end to this policy of interfering with private correspondence, which is a violation of one of the most basic public freedoms, freedom of correspondence.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) illegible

Ruben UM NYOBE

General Secretary of the U.P.C.
B.P. 435 - Douala (Cameroons)

Present Address:
Hotel Tudor
New York

Received at United Nations Headquarters on 23 December 1952

^{1/} Note by the Secretariat: The letter was sent by ordinary mail.

COPY

Mrs. Christine ESSOMBA
Dressmaker
Mokolo, North Cameroons

Mokolo, 31 October 1952

To Mr. UM NYOBE Ruben
General Secretary of the U.P.C.
Douala

Sir,

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 14 August 1952 and to express my sincere thanks for your prompt action in transmitting my request to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I had thought at first that you did not intend to take any notice of my letter. I realized later, however, that your long silence of eight and a half months was due to the fact that there was some delay before you received my letter, which I see was very probably censored before it reached you.

I take this opportunity to send you herewith a letter written to me by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 29 August 1952, which I received only today. I draw your attention particularly to the envelope, which is post-marked at New York on 29 August 1952.^{1/} I conclude that the plane took two months and three days to reach Maroua.^{2/} You will note that the letter has no postmark of arrival at Douala or Yaoundé: this is deliberately omitted in order to avoid indicating the time the letter was en route before it reached Mokolo.

May I request you to inform me whether, with the present speed of travel, planes still require two months for the trip from the United States to the Cameroons.

^{1/} Note by the Secretariat: The envelope referred to is in the Secretariat files and will be made available to members of the Trusteeship Council on request.

^{2/} Note by the Secretariat: This letter was sent by ordinary mail.

It is my impression that this letter, too, was opened and read. If you share my opinion, I would respectfully request you to transmit the envelope to the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a copy of this letter, together with a statement of your personal impressions.

Hoping to hear from you soon, I have the honour to be etc.

(Signed) Ch. Essomba

C O P Y

"UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN"

Cameroons Branch of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain

B.P. 435 - Douala

Douala, 10 October 1952

To the Director of Posts and Telecommunications
Douala

Sir,

Upon the occasion of a recent protest on the part of our Central Office regarding certain defects of your service, notified by subscribers to La Voix du Cameroun, who complained that the majority of them had not received issue No. 8 of the publication, containing in particular an account of the territorial elections of 30 March 1952, although the publication was posted to them in due and proper form, you advised us to notify you in writing of the cases which we had presented orally.

We preferred to wait, in the hope that the situation would improve. Today we regretfully note that your services are merely aggravating the difficulties confronting our organization.

The few examples which we shall cite show that special steps seem to have been taken in connexion with correspondence either addressed to our organization or despatched by it. We would like to hope that this action is organized by third parties and for the benefit of third parties, without your knowledge, and in defiance of the law which it is your responsibility to implement. That is why we hope that you will take practical steps to put an end to this scandalous situation. We therefore take the liberty of drawing your attention to the following examples, among many others:

1. A letter sent to Mr. Samuel Gwodog, a business man at Sangmelima, reached him only on 26 September 1952, although it was posted on the morning of 22 September.

2. A telegram sent to Mr. Ouandié Ernest, school-master at New-Bell and therefore very well known in that neighbourhood, did not reach him until 27 September, although it was handed in at Eseka by Um Nyobe, our General Secretary, during the morning of 24 September.

3. A registered letter No. 158, sent from the Otelé Post Office and addressed to Mr. Dibonge Jabea at Buea, did not reach him until 1 October, although it was posted on 6 September.

4. A letter sent on 22 August 1952 to the General Secretary of the U.P.C. by the Secretary-General of the United Nations has never reached the addressee. It was only following a request for a reply that the United Nations Secretariat sent a copy of the letter in question to Mr. Um Nyobe, the addressee of the "lost" letter.

During the interview you had with our delegation in July, you were informed that in certain localities, Eséka, for example, users of the postal services received their correspondence through the commandant of the Brigade de Gendarmerie, and the name of Mr. Pouhé Samuel Anselme, an employee of the company Les Bois du Cameroun was mentioned as an example. You told us, however, that your service had nothing to do with politics. We are eager to believe this but we should also like to submit a number of cases which seem to contradict your statements.

In Eséka, where the present Head of the Subdivision exerts notorious pressure on the personnel of the postal service for the transmission of correspondence, Jacob Goueth, the technical agent, was sent on mission just before the elections of 30 March 1952. The political objective of that mission "for service reasons" was to prevent Goueth from voting for a candidate who was not liked by the Administration of the Territory. Subsequently the Surveillant des Lignes (a European) accused Goueth of carrying "certain newspapers" with him and Goueth was later transferred to Bafia "for service reasons". Last August, Tamba Guillaume, Comptroller and Collector of the Eséka office, was transferred to N'Gaoundere "for service reasons" with instructions to leave within twenty-four hours. On 27 September 1952, two postal officials at Eséka were expelled from the locality on the pretext that you had summoned them to Yaoundé. On arrival

they were searched by the police and apparently given a police escort. Police working in commissariats and concerned primarily with political information do not in our opinion come under the Transmission Service. The purpose of the transfer of the two officials from Eséka was certainly the same as in the case of a similar transfer of an accountant of the company Les Bois du Cameroun, who was asked to "disappear from circulation" for the duration of the second congress of the U.P.C. at Eséka, from 28 to 30 September. The two postal officials returned to Eséka by the night train of 1 October, which reached Eséka at 2 a.m. that day, the U.P.C. congress having completed its work the preceding day. Even more significant than this spectacular move, one, if not both, of the officials in question has just been transferred. On the other hand, another official in the Eséka office, a regional official formerly excluded from the register because of professional incompetence, last August received a permit from the Administering Authority for the purchase of a gun, because he is a good "official".

It is not our intention to recount to you all that occurs in your services, for we realize that you are better informed on that score than we; it is simply that we felt it necessary to establish some connexion between the changes among your personnel and the political situation of the country, in order to place greater stress on our protest against interference with the technical services responsible for the delivery of private correspondence, the inviolability of which is the golden rule in all democratic regimes. That is why, alive as we are to the injustice, if not the arbitrary action, which operates to our prejudice, as indicated in the above statement, we would be grateful if you would initiate an enquiry in order to discover the reasons which have led to the disquieting situation facing us with regard to the postal service. Finally, we would point out that the "lost" letter from the United Nations contained information on the United Nations mission which is now in the Territory; the "delayed" telegram of 24 September contained information on the congress of the U.P.C., as did also the "delayed" letter addressed to Mr. Dibonge Jabea at Buea. Furthermore, on the day that a delegation of U.P.C. members appeared in your office, a protest had just been made orally to an administrative official in charge of police services, who had expressed a desire to find out who had the keys to the post office box of the U.P.C.

Hoping that you will initiate an enquiry, as we have requested, and that you will take steps to make it unnecessary for us to have final recourse to judicial action against the responsible officials, if the present situation continues, we have the honour to be etc.

For the Office of the U.P.C.

The General Secretary

(Signed)

illegible

Ruben UM NYOBE

C O P Y

Douala, 11 October 1952

Cameroons Service of Posts and Telecommunications
Office of the Director
Number 133/D

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your complaint of 10 October 1952 and to inform you that an investigation of the various points you indicated has been initiated.

I must assure you forthwith, however, that absolute respect for the secrecy of correspondence and the most complete impartiality are the guiding principles, the rigid observance of which I invariably demand of all the personnel of my service. These provisions were, in fact, brought to the notice of all officials on 10 June 1952.

As you know, the question of the assignment and transfer of officials is within the exclusive competence of the Administering Authority. Nevertheless, I am in a position to inform you that the two recent transfers of officials from the Eséka office were effected at the express request of the persons concerned, submitted more than a month ago. It was precisely to discuss that request with them that I recently summoned the two officers concerned to my office at Yaoundé.

I have the honour to be etc.

Director of Posts and Telecommunications
of the Cameroons

(Signed) illegible
DAUSSEUR

Mr. Ruben UM NYOBE
General Secretary of the U.P.C.
B.P. 435, Douala