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PETITION FROM NOTABLES OF THE VILLAGE OF OBOKOÉ I CONCERNING
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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Assembly of nationals of presumed Cameroonian origin,
extreme gravity of the political atmosphere maintained
in the Cameroons by the Administering Authority under
the sign of the French Union

Village of Obokoé I, Nyong and Sanaga Region

1. In the economic and commercial field

There have been some improvements in certain towns of the Territory, but some places are still in a dreadful plight where the road system has never been kept up. A certain amount of modernization has been done in the big towns of the Territory for the benefit of the French Europeans.

It is very difficult for an association of Cameroonians to be importers or exporters. The indigenous inhabitants have great difficulty in obtaining transport authorizations, licences and patents, and they end up by merely being customers of big foreign firms. The indigenous carriers who try to make progress are bowed down under the weight of competition from the European firms. They are the only ones the traffic police pounce on and in the end they give up. We want transport to be improved as much as the others do and we should like the indigenous inhabitants to get substantial encouragement. But advances are granted only to candidates who agree with the Administration's policy, and they do not usually repay them; so that is made the excuse to ruin the good people who want to help their country forward.

2. In the social field

In spite of the Trusteeship Council's recommendations and the French Constitution of 1946, measures of racial segregation are still forced on the Cameroons, which is administered as an integral part of French territory under article 4 of the Trusteeship Agreement, the indigénat system exists under the cloak of justice. The judicial police officials and their deputies apply the law to the indigenous inhabitants with excessive severity. Furthermore, the courts are now prejudiced against blacks, which is not the case for Europeans. When a white man is accused of murder, he is very soon released without bail, while bail is refused to a black accused of mere larceny or assault and battery. Even though he has complied with all the formalities, an indigenous inhabitant awaiting trial is detained in custody for at least from ten to eighteen months; some are released in the end, but without receiving damages. In the prisons, fifty to sixty persons are confined in cells with only fifteen cubic metres of air space and are deprived of air and of good medical attention. In these veritable concentration camps, persons awaiting trial and common criminals die of moral suffering and physical privation, without the prison commission even troubling to make a move. The commission visits these establishments three years later at the earliest, although millions are earmarked in the local budget every year for the maintenance of these camps. On the other hand, white prisoners are never searched and each one has a small room, with bedding and light. The whites who are condemned to solitary confinement with hard labour see to it the black prisoners do the hardest tasks. And there is another more serious and more dangerous point: the Administration sends indigenous Cameroonian criminals to certain parts of the Territory and provides no assistance or requisition order when they are released, so that the wretched creatures have no means of returning to their homes, which are from 400 to 700 kilometres away. In doing so, does the Administration not tempt them to commit another offence? No Cameroonian ever benefits by the amnesty of 14 July, so that the years drag on with no remission.

3. Cameroonians who try to gain advancement in some jobs are always accused of incompetence and lack of conscientiousness by the former European colonists who see their labour force dwindling day by day.

Cameroonians meet with difficulty after difficulty when they try to improve their social position. Actually, we know that we do not possess the best qualifications in some fields, but it is well known there are a large number of

indigenous male nurses who, although they speak little French, do miracles in surgical work, and have been practising for years without mishap. The present younger generation of the Cameroons has been corrupted by frequenting several places of entertainment from which the authorities had not thought to debar them. Complaints are heard on every hand about the future of these young people who are difficult to correct; some laws have been proposed but, to conclude: everything must drag on so that there can be sabotage with a view to preventing the development of our country.

We ask for the immediate revision of the Trusteeship Agreements authorizing the French Government to administer the Cameroons as an integral part of the French Union.

Now the Catholic church is gradually corrupting a few faithful Cameroonians living in the bush, spreading political pessimism, forces them to sign blank papers on which to base false reports that the Cameroonian people allegedly accept this local life within the French Union.

In reality, no church, whether Catholic or American Protestant, should ever intervene in political affairs; this is the right we claim from the United Nations, the Trusteeship Council and the Fourth Committee.

We are happy to affirm in good faith and untrammelled our independence and unification, far from the lying reports of colonialists who are unknown to us.

The Notables of the Village of Obokoé 1, Yaoundé Subdivision,

14 October 1954.

(Here follows a list of twenty names)

Composed by Ondoa Ngono Romvald,
a motherless and fatherless Cameroonian.
