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PETITION FROM MR. JOHN AMATE ATAYI, PRESIDENT OF
THE "PARTI TOGOLAIS DU PROGRESS"
CONCERNING TOGOLAND UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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 of the Trust Territory of Somaliland, a communication dated 26 August 1951 from Mr. John Amate Atayi, President of the "Parti Togolais du Progrès" concerning the Trust Territory of Togoland under French administration.

COPY

"PARTI TOGOLAIS DU PROGRES"

Lome, 26 August 1951

Secretary-General of
the United Nations
New York

Dear Sir,

Two weeks ago, a tragic incident occurred which brought mourning to the village of Agbétiko. Its repercussions, felt throughout the territory, deeply perturbed the entire population of Togoland, accustomed as it is to calm, order and tranquillity and not to acts of terrorism and outbreaks of violence with their toll of human lives.

The motives which led up to this sad event, the slogans which excited men's minds and certain manoeuvres used to bring the event about had been observed throughout the southern part of the country and had aroused serious fears concerning the outcome of the widespread campaign of agitation. Even before the Abgétiko incident, we were receiving complaints from friends in the interior who feared that this open incitement to hatred might have a tragic ending. As the danger took shape, their appeals grew more insistent, and on 20 August we were compelled to abandon our usual reserve and to bring the resulting situation to your notice.

In our letter of 20 August, we explained, objectively and dispassionately, who was responsible. It was clearly and undeniably, the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise which on 23 August 1951 added still another crime to its account.

These are the facts: the old chief of the village of Vogan, Paul Kalipé, died about two months ago, but according to a long-established and respected custom, his death has not yet been disclosed; it will be made public only after a certain time-limit which expires on 4 September next; in other words, the chief will die only on that day. Until then, he presumably continues to reign, and the throne is not vacant. When it is, a regent will take over until the enthronement of a new chief, who may be the regent himself, confirmed or another person of the chief's family, if custom and tradition, so dear to the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise are to be respected.

/The regent

The regent who has been appointed is Jacob Kalipe, son of the late chief, who many years ago, in his father's lifetime, was appointed sub-chief of Vogan in order to assist him. During his father's long illness, Jacob Kalipe so administered this large centre that his authority and prestige have grown and that the esteem and affection in which he was generally held and which had led to his appointment as sub-chief of Vogan, have likewise increased. Like other members of his family, Jacob Kalipe could quite legitimately claim to succeed his father. He is in a very strong position, owing also to his generally recognized administrative ability, and will certainly gain the votes of a great majority of the population.

Although, as we have said, the throne is not yet vacant, the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise, knowing that it could not oppose the people's verdict with any hope of success, has chosen to impose by force, contrary to all custom, a certain Amouzou Zébada, purporting to be a cousin of the dead chief, a man who is certainly senile, devoid of all personality, and who takes no part in the conduct of village affairs. His chief merit in the eyes of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise is that he is a former councillor who revolted against the deceased chief and was thrust aside by him long ago.

Be that as it may, it is for the family council and later for the village council to choose a new chief from among the existing candidates, in the manner prescribed by custom.

The Comité de l'Unité Togolaise, however, did not wait; as soon as it learned of Kalipe's death it proclaimed old Amouzou Zébada chief of Vogan, and rallied round him the malcontents who are this party's usual supporters. A number of sudden attacks were made in an effort to spread terror throughout the village, to intimidate Jacob Kalipe, and even to seize him. He was forbidden ever again to preside over the customary court, as he has done for a long time. Jacob Kalipe has made every concession compatible with the maintenance of public order and with his dignity, in order to avoid disturbances, but he could not bow before this illegal injunction, made by unprincipled private individuals. To have done so would have meant to relinquish all authority, to bring anarchy into a peaceful and hard-working village and to accept the law laid down by unscrupulous agitators. Jacob Kalipe defied them, an action for which no one can blame him, and convened the court for Thursday, 23 August, with a European policeman and two guards in attendance to preserve order.

A mob of men and women, fired with fanaticism, immediately invaded the hall and prevented the court from sitting. Jacob Kalipé, the president, did not press the issue; he adjourned the meeting and retired to his home. The rioters were triumphant and would not stop. It was necessary to re-establish order and call for help from Anecho for that purpose. It was then discovered that the telephone lines had been previously cut in three places. A group of about ten guards came and was quickly submerged by the rising tide. A reinforcement of about ten more guards hurried over from Anecho, but they were unable to restore order. Violently attacked by the crowd, severely wounded, one of them left for dead, the twenty guards, faced as they were by an unleashed mob armed with sticks, work knives, daggers, trade and sporting guns, were forced to give up any attempt to scatter the demonstrators and withdrew to the administrative post. They were, however, pursued and harassed; the signal to attack was accompanied by cries of: "Go on, you can kill them, the U.N. has forbidden the French to fire a single shot." The guards threw grenades against a wall and fired warning shots into the air, but this only increased the fury of the rioters, some of whom were shouting: "Look, they are firing blanks, go on, wipe them out, they won't hurt you." The mob obeyed blindly and the guards, who were in great danger, finally fired. Eight persons, including two women, were mortally wounded. It was only when they saw men fall that the poor peasants realized the consequences of their action and fled headlong across the fields, losing at once all their courage and conviction. Until the last moment, they had believed, deluded by their leaders, that their aggression would go unpunished.

We sincerely regret the deaths of our compatriots, but the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise had meant that day to be a day of bloodshed. Their plan had been to paralyze the public order services in order to be free to take Jacob Kalipé's house by storm and to massacre the loyalists. We are therefore regretfully compelled to recognize that this unfortunate death toll was the lesser evil and that the number of dead would have been far greater if the rioters had not been checked in their madness.

We are extremely sorry that poor ignorant peasants should have paid so heavily for the misdeeds of agitators who, like cowards, saw to their own in safety. In vain do we look in these incidents for any trace of patriotism, disinterestedness or even reason which might evoke sympathy. They are nothing

but acts of terrorism and banditry which any sensible person will repudiate.

The Comité de l'Unité Togolaise is flagrantly guilty of the events which took place both in Vogan and in Agbétiko, and premeditation has been fully established.

About twenty days before the riot a Togoland policeman predicted that shots would soon be fired in Vogan. He is not a soothsayer, but a brother of the chairman of the Anécho section of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise and therefore knows the secrets of the conspirators.

A few days before Thursday, 23 August, the chiefs of the conspirators came to Anecho in order to conclude a blood pact with the chairman of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise of Anécho.

Earlier, the leaders of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise of Vogan and of Anécho and a dissenting son of the dead chief left the cercle in order not to be mixed up in the affair planned for the next day. The telephone wires were certainly not cut by chance.

Finally, the organization of the rioters and the arms used by them on the day of the event were evidence of a carefully prepared plan. We could continue the list, but it should be enough to say that, in view of the gravity of the situation, disillusioned conspirators have talked and secrets have been divulged.

It is worthy of note that in a village of 15,000 inhabitants, only about 500 persons took part in the rioting. Obviously the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise commands an insignificant minority and the riots are not an expression of general discontent among the population.

Such is the atmosphere of permanent unrest which the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise intends to spread throughout the country in order to make people believe, contrary to the evidence, that things have gone badly since its defeat in the last elections.

Such is the heavy weight of responsibility borne by this party. It has found favour with the Trusteeship Council, which is deceived into thinking that it represents a disinterested nationalist sentiment, whereas in fact it is a group of adventurers with base intentions, serving certain interests which today are well known and which are not those of Togoland.

/In our

In our letter of 20 August we drew attention to the moral responsibility of the Trusteeship Council, in whose shadow all these actions are perpetrated. In Agbétiko and in Vogan, the agitators invoke the Trusteeship Council as their shield. We know that this is not so, but it is impossible to convince the "C.U.T." crowd, as well as the population, which has long thought that the Ewe movement had been discredited.

This state of mind is a logical consequence of the propaganda waged by the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise, which in public speeches makes frequent mention of letters from America and insolently flaunts the warm friendship of a certain member of the Trusteeship Council.

The Council's equivocations have lent support to these assertions. At a recent public meeting in Lomé a speaker said that a high personage of the Trusteeship Council had written to the party that "the Ewe question will always remain open and its settlement is in your own hands". We do not put trust in rumours, but the followers of the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise do, and the result has been Agbétiko yesterday and Vogan today. That is far too much for our calm and hard-working country which needs peace and tranquillity in order to shape its future.

We are convinced that the Trusteeship Council will deplore these events which have brought bloodshed to our country as much as we do and that it will put an end to them by closing the case of the Ewes, thus freeing itself of the responsibility which the Comité de l'Unité Togolaise has imposed upon it without its knowledge. That is what we respectfully ask of the United Nations, in the hope that our voice, the voice of the majority of Togolanders, will at last be heard.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) John A. Atayi

John Amate ATAYI

Président of the Parti Togolais du Progrès