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## PETITIONS CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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\* indicates that the acknowledgement of receipt of the petition or any other correspondence concerning it have been returned to the Secretariat, as they could not be delivered to the addressee.

\*\* indicates that the address indicated on the petition does not seem sufficient.

I. Petition from Mr. Gilbert Yana Yana (T/PET.5/608)\*\*,

1. The petitioner states in his letter of 14 May 1955 that he was one of the fifty students admitted by the Cameroonian Railways on 19 October 1953 for the first term at the apprenticeship centre at Bassa (Douala), after passing an entrance examination. He complains that "before setting foot in the school each child had to undergo an examination of the genitalia". He encloses a copy of the apprenticeship contract signed on 28 October by his guardian, acting on his behalf, and the Railways.
2. The petitioner protests against the system of fines applied at the apprenticeship centre in defiance of the Order of 16 November 1956, under which employers are forbidden to fine their employees. He states that, as there is no boarding establishment, the apprentices are given tickets so that they may obtain food at the municipal restaurant, but anyone who loses his ticket is liable to a fine of from fifty to 150 francs. He gives several cases of fines, with dates, including the following: 31 January 1954, eighteen students fined fifty francs each for being five minutes late and 19 November 1954, ten students suffering from stomach ache caused by the rice served at the restaurant and seeking medical attention fined 100 francs each. He states that students are fined for losing instruments and have to pay for tools broken during tests.
3. The petitioner says it is because of the "greed" of the Director of the Railways that there is no boarding establishment; he adds that there are no professors, no competent, honest, objective and sincere leaders. He says he received no reply to an anonymous letter he wrote on 7 February 1955 to the Director of the Railways, describing what was going on in the centre. He also states that he sent other anonymous letters to the Director-General of the Chemins de Fer de la FOM (Railways of Overseas France) and to the representative of the High Commissioner.
4. The petitioner states that he was denounced and expelled from the centre on 26 March 1955 because of his vehement protests against what was happening there. He is worried about his future in view of the fact that he has lost two years of apprenticeship, which were contracted for.
5. The petitioner calls for the immediate reunification and independence of the Cameroons. He protests against the "arbitrary charges brought against the leaders

of the National Cameroonian Movement," and cites the case of Nkoum Mécla, an active member, who "was hit with a rifle butt in the lower part of the stomach by a European policeman; she was taken to Laquintinie hospital and they do not know whether she will live."

(Note by the Secretariat: The incident in front of a Palace of Justice, to which the petitioner is apparently referring, has already been discussed by the Trusteeship Council; see document T/C.2/L.216, section 6, and resolution 1481 (XVII) of the Trusteeship Council.)

6. The Administering Authority points out (T/OBS.5/100, section 4) that the petitioner was an apprentice at the Cameroonian Railways' apprenticeship centre. By a decision dated 2 April 1955, he was expelled from the Centre for a serious breach of discipline. While he was at the Centre, he had drawn attention to himself on several occasions by his lack of discipline and his brutal treatment of his fellow-apprentices. He had been punished for striking one of his comrades, for making unauthorized use of trains and for sending - allegedly on behalf of his fellow-students - anonymous letters to the higher authorities with insulting remarks about his teachers.

7. The Administering Authority adds that the boarding school system was not in effect at the time that the petitioner attended the Centre and his allegations in that regard are pure fantasy.

## II. Petition from Mr. Etienne Mbock (T/PET.5/697)

1. In his letter dated 7 July 1955 the petitioner states that on the morning of 25 May 1955, in view of the intensified "colonialist campaign of repression and provocation", he handed in to the office of the Union des populations du Cameroun at Douala the unsold copies of newspapers and manuals which he had for sale, together with other articles which were his personal property (bicycle, camera, typewriter, raincoat, lamp).

2. The petitioner emphasizes that "before they burned down the UPC premises, the colonialists first removed all their contents to their own quarters", including his personal property. He asked the Administration to return his property but

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it categorically refused. He asks the United Nations to intervene with the French Government on his behalf.

3. The petitioner refers to a previous petition, dated 7 November 1954, in which also he complained of the confiscation of manuals. (Note by the Secretariat: This petition (T/PET.5/451) was considered at the seventeenth session of the Trusteeship Council; see documents T/OBS.5/66, T/L.624, T/C.2/SR.290 and resolution 1479 (XVII)).

4. The Administering Authority states (T/OBS.5/88, section 2) that on 26 May, at the statutory hour, a search was made at the headquarters of the UPC Executive Committee, where the police seized several typewriters. Mr. Etienne Mbock never made any request for restitution of the personal property that might have been taken at that time and which he mentions in his petition. Moreover, he would have had to present proof of his right of ownership of the articles. Details concerning the search were supplied in connexion with the discussion of petition T/PET.5/635 at the seventeenth session of the Trusteeship Council (see document T/OBS.5/71, section 1).

### III. Petition from the Local Committee of the Evolution sociale camerounaise of Sakbayémé (T/PET.5/716)

1. This petition, dated 21 June 1955, discusses the question of responsibility in connexion with the closing of the American Protestant Mission Hospital at Sakbayémé in 1954. The petitioners commend the services rendered to the people by Dr. Rheimer, the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital, and state that the strike threatened by members of the UPC forced Dr. Rheimer to close the hospital temporarily. (Note by the Secretariat: This question has already been considered by the Trusteeship Council, at its sixteenth session; see document T/L.597, section 5, paragraphs 17 to 22, and resolution 1337 (XVI)).

2. The Administering Authority (in T/OBS.5/84, section 5) would draw attention to its observations already submitted on the Sakbayémé hospital incident, which is the subject of Trusteeship Council resolution 1337 (XVI) (see document T/L.597, section 5, paragraphs 17 to 22).

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IV. Petition from Mr. Jean Deschamel Nthep, Mr. Jacques Yissipo and others  
(T/PET.5/825 and Add.1)

1. In a letter dated 13 October 1955, signed by six people (T/PET.5/825), the prisoners in Yaoundé prison complain of the conditions in the prison where they are serving sentences: lack of air and light in the windowless cells, where it is impossible to lie down; petrol drums used as toilets and emptied every three months; insufficient, badly prepared food, served in old tins; unhealthy sleeping accommodation; forced labour fit for beasts of burden. They emphasize that, in contrast, the European prisoners have electric light and proper sanitary appliances and are served by African prisoners. They request that the United Nations Visiting Mission inspect all the prisons in the Territory, and they call for the immediate release of all political prisoners, the lifting of the ban on the movements which have been dissolved and the immediate unification and independence of the Cameroons.
2. In another letter, dated 12 November 1955 (T/PET.5/825/Add.1), the petitioners protest against the Visiting Mission's refusal to give a hearing to the political prisoners in the various prisons of the Territory, in spite of the many requests for hearings and the steps taken by Dzukam Chrétien before his arrest on 1 November. They also protest against the "deaths, mass arrests and tortures" which have gone on under the very eyes of the Visiting Mission without any intervention on the part of its members.
3. With their second letter the petitioners enclose a copy of a motion addressed to the State Counsel General in the Cameroons, dated 12 November 1955, with eighty-three signatures, giving further details on their prison conditions and protesting against the fact that the European common criminals and thieves are better treated than they are. They protest against the search of their cells carried out during the night of 5 November and ask for the return of the petitions addressed to the United Nations Visiting Mission, the packets of cigarettes and matches and the letters from their lawyers, which they allege were seized during the search. They call for an end to discriminatory practice in the prisons of the Territory.
4. In the same motion, the petitioners protest against the arrests of patriots at police stations or gendarmerie headquarters, where they are subjected to

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torture and refused medical attention. They demand the "political régime to which they are entitled, so that there may be no more cases like that of Ngameny Michel, who died in the most wretched conditions". Finally, they protest against the fact that the Visiting Mission was prevented by the Government from coming to see them, on the pretext that there was an epidemic in the prison, when there was nothing of the kind.

5. The petitioners enclose with their second letter a copy of a communication dated 27 December 1955 to the State Counsel General in the Cameroons, with eighty-four signatures, in which they complain of being unjustly held in prison and give examples of the grounds used as a pretext for arresting seven of them. In the same communication, they describe tortures suffered by some of them at the gendarmerie and at the police station. They recall their previous protests with regard to the conditions in their prison and state that the Administration deliberately set fire to their huts and looted the shops of those who were shopkeepers.

6. In this communication of 27 December 1955, to the State Counsel General, the petitioners also state that the "prisons of the Cameroons are supply depots", where the administrators, gendarmes, policemen and colonialists recruit free labour - servants and manual labourers - among the prisoners. They ask for the cancellation of the legal proceedings against their comrades; the release of political prisoners and the repatriation of those who have been deported; the punishment of the guilty; reimbursement for goods seized and reconstruction of houses burned down; and the payment in full of the wages due to arrested persons who were employed by the Administration or by private enterprise.

V. Petition from the Fédération des travailleurs agricoles, forestiers et paysans du Cameroun (T/PET.5/826)

1. In a letter dated 22 October 1955, the petitioners state that as soon as the United Nations Visiting Mission arrived, on 18 October, the Administering Authority had the political prisoners removed from the prison at New-Bell, Douala, to a "very isolated spot, twelve kilometres from the city", with the exception of Jacques Ngom, General Secretary of the Union des syndicats confédérés du Cameroun and Théodore Mayi Matip, Permanent Secretary of the Union des population du Cameroun.

2. The petitioners request the United Nations to instruct the Visiting Mission to ask the Administering Authority to let them see the political prisoners who have been transferred.
3. The Administering Authority declares (T/OBS.5/84, section 7) the petitioners' allegations that prisoners were removed when the Visiting Mission was at Douala to be absolutely unfounded. The Mission visited prisons in the Territory whenever it wished to do so.

VI. Petitions from Mr. Martin Potish (T/PET.5/829), the Union de la jeunesse Banen Mboppe (T/PET.5/830) and Mr. Elie Kiegwa (T/PET.5/832)

1. These three petitions all allege that the Cameroonian people were given no opportunity to speak freely to the United Nations Visiting Mission in November 1955.
2. In a letter dated 12 November 1955 (T/PET.5/829), Mr. Martin Potish protests against the way in which the Mission held hearings in the presence of the Administering Authority and against the system whereby the Visiting Mission only receives petitions from groups introduced by the local authorities. He states that, at Yaoundé, Eséka and Douala, some Cameroonians who tried to break through the barriers erected by the Administration to prevent them from seeing the United Nations delegates were arrested and maltreated in front of the members of the Mission, who did not even protest. The petitioner goes on to say that the Cameroonian people are forced to send direct to New York or to deliver to the British Cameroons the petitions they were unable to hand to the Mission. He also says that, before and during the stay of the Mission in any locality, armed military patrols intimidated the people and prevented them from expressing their wishes freely to the members of the Mission.
3. The Administering Authority states (T/OBS.5/84, section 8) that the petitioner's allegations are absolutely unfounded and are merely figments of his imagination. The Administering Authority erected no "barriers" between the people of the Cameroons and the Visiting Mission. The Visiting Mission was free to receive the people and their petitions.

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4. In another letter, undated (T/PET.5/830), the Union de la jeunesse Banen Mbope says that the Visiting Mission, which arrived at Douala on 8 November 1955, stayed only an hour and a half, during which it conferred with a few colonialist chiefs and "action was taken against the rest of the population at the instance of the commissioners and their mercenaries." The petitioners add that the Mission did not make a single visit and that the meeting-place was an administration office, surrounded by police. On behalf of all the 500 inhabitants of Banen, they call for immediate unification and independence.

5. The Administering Authority says (T/OBS.5/84, section 9) that it has no observations to make on this petition, as the mendacious allegations it contains are purely imaginary. The people were not molested in any way during the Visiting Mission's sojourn in the Territory. No pressure, either direct or indirect, was brought to bear on the indigenous inhabitants with a view to stifling free expression of opinion.

6. In a letter dated 15 November 1955 (T/PET.5/832), Mr. Elie Kiegwa complains that the Cameroonian people have not set eyes on the Visiting Mission and that the armed forces brought to the Cameroons by the Administering Authority prevented the Cameroonian people from speaking freely to the Mission. He alleges that at Douala the people were given no opportunity to submit petitions to the Mission; that at Pendja, Mbango and Loum, on 13 November 1955, in the presence of the Chairman of the Visiting Mission, troops blocked the road and turned back any who tried to reach the Visiting Mission in order to submit petitions; and that foreigners living in the Cameroons appeared before the Visiting Mission, and were received on a number of occasions. The petitioner declares that he no longer recognizes France as Administering Authority.

7. The Administering Authority states (T/OBS.5/84, section 10) that it has no observations to make on this petition, as the mendacious allegations it contains are purely imaginary. It refers the petitioner to its observations on petitions T/PET.5/829 and T/PET.5/830. (See paras. 3 and 5 above).

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VII. Petition from Luc Bayiha Nganbe and others (T/PET.5/831)

1. In a letter dated 16 October 1955, the petitioners - six political prisoners detained in custody at Mokolo - describe the circumstances under which they were arrested and sentenced. They say that on 25 May 1955 when the curfew was ordered at Douala, some of their comrades were forced to spend the night in the local UPC office and that the following morning they were arrested and their huts and the UPC office were destroyed by armed troops. In the evening of the same day, after being subjected to "torture and threats", they say they were forced in the police office to sign reports drawn up by armed police inspectors. On 27 May, they say that without being questioned, they were sentenced for illegally carrying arms, the lightest penalty being two years' imprisonment. On 29 May, they allege that they were transferred from the police office at Mokolo prison with other prisoners, ten already sentenced and eight awaiting trial, including one woman, Marthe Bahida. The petitioners call for the immediate unification and independence of the Cameroons and condemn every petitioner who opposes their national claims before the United Nations General Assembly.

2. The petitioners append to their petition a copy of a letter addressed by them, on 26 September 1955, to the Procureur Général stating that on 21 June three prisoners of "war" had been put in fetters because the word "independence" was written on the wall of their cell and that another had been subjected to the same treatment from 14 to 22 August 1955 because he had been the last to return to his cell. In this letter they complain that they were forced to put their hands up and stand naked whenever Europeans entered their cells and that they were threatened and intimidated on 11 August 1955, when two unknown armed French gendarmes questioned them.

VIII. Petition from Mr. Joseph Temndié (T/PET.5/837)

1. The petitioner states in his letter of 29 November 1955 that on 24 May, when he was proceeding to Mambo in connexion with his business, troops from Tchad - which were stationed throughout the Cameroons - seized him and took various articles representing a total sum of 914,800 francs, of which he encloses the list.

2. The petitioner further states that he was sentenced "without due cause" in Loumé Subdivision to two years' imprisonment, that he lodged an appeal at

at Yaoundé and was released on 8 September 1955, but that during his absence two members of his family had died of hunger and curable diseases. In return for all the injuries and losses caused by the French administration, he demands the immediate independence and unification of the Cameroons.

3. The Administering Authority states (T/OBS.5/100, section 5) that it is not true that Temndié Joseph was arrested in the village of Mambo where he is completely unknown. The name of the petitioner is not to be found in any gendarmerie or police files, which would seem to prove that his allegations are entirely fantastic.

4. The Administering Authority further states that macabo for Douala is purchased only in the Loum area and not at Mambo, while with the sum of 890,000 francs, of which Temndié Joseph claims to be the owner, he could have purchased 180 tons of macabo, a transaction so far unheard of in the Mbanga Subdivision.

#### IX. Petition from the World Federation of Trade Unions (T/PET.5/844)

1. In a letter dated 29 December 1955, the petitioners state that they were informed by the World Federation of Teachers' Unions that Edouard Essouma, late General Secretary of the Gaboon Teachers' Union, was then in prison in the Cameroons under French administration.

2. They allege that Mr. Essouma, delegate to the World Conference of Teachers in Vienna in 1953, had spent his last vacation at Ebolowa (Cameroons) where he was born. On his way to Yaoundé in September, he was waiting for the car near the Manangong bridge which was then under repair. Allegedly he objected to the conduct of the Deputy District Commissioner who was laying about him with his stick to speed up the work and had struck a woman carrying a meal to one of the workers. According to the petitioner, the Deputy District Commissioner aimed a blow at Essouma "who defended himself"; he then went "to report to the District Commissioner who decided to arrest Edouard Essouma for 'rebellion'".

3. The petitioners further state that according to their information Essouma was arrested on 19 November 1955 at the M'Bigou (Gaboon) boys' school, no warrant

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being produced for his arrest, and that he is at present being held at Ebolowa "strictly incommunicado".

4. The petitioners request the immediate release of Edouard Essouma.

5. The Administering Authority points out (T/OBS.5/90, section 2), in reply to this petition, that Mr. Essouma was arrested on 19 August 1955 for being drunk and disorderly, assaulting a police officer and resisting authority. It is true that Mr. Essouma was arrested near the Manangong bridge in the Ebolowa Subdivision. Mr. Essouma was given the benefit of the doubt and discharged by decision of the court at Ebolowa on 24 April 1956, having been provisionally released earlier.

X. Petition from Mrs. Julienne Ngo Nogha Batind (T/PET.5/855)

1. Mrs. Batind states in her letter of 10 December 1955 that her husband, ex-Chairman of the UPC Central Committee at Ndog Bessol, was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment in 1954 for refusing to allow his forests to be exploited for the benefit of the French colonialists. On his release from prison, he was allegedly once again hunted down by the Administration and was obliged to leave his village on 28 July 1955. According to the petitioner her family had no news of him until 7 November 1955, when he was arrested at Eseka, tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, five years' local banishment and a fine of 2,000 francs for raising the Cameroonian flag in front of the United Nations Visiting Mission. According to the Administration, he escaped from prison, but the petitioner presumes that he was caught, "assassinated one night and buried somewhere or other".

2. The petitioner adds that, during the night of 2 to 3 December 1955, the local authorities came and set fire to the four huts which her husband had built for her and almost burned her mother-in-law inside one of the huts on the pretext that her husband's escape was the result of a family plot.

3. Mrs. Batind asks the United Nations to act promptly before the entire family is wiped out, because the inhabitants of the Canton have been forbidden to give them shelter on pain of having their dwellings burned down and being tortured. She would like to have at least partial compensation for the damage done to her.

4. The Administering Authority points out (T/OBS.5/100, section 100) that three sentences were pronounced against Batind Paulin:

On 30 December 1949, he was sentenced by the court at Eseka to three months' imprisonment and a fine of 5,000 francs for the illegal felling of trees;

On 19 October 1955, he was sentenced by the Yaoundé Court of Appeal to seven months' imprisonment for threats, defacing a bridge and contempt of court;

On 10 November 1955, he was sentenced by the court at Eseka to two years' imprisonment and a fine of 4,000 francs and five-years' local banishment for violence and assault and battery committed upon the person of an administrative magistrate in the exercise of his duties.

5. The Administering Authority adds that Mr. Batind Paulin escaped on 26 November 1955 from custody at Eseka after appealing against the last-mentioned sentence. Mr. Batind Paulin never lodged a complaint with the investigating magistrate or the judges of the Court of Appeal concerning the torture to which he was allegedly subjected in the prison at Eseka.

6. The Administering Authority has no knowledge of the destruction of four huts belonging to Mr. Batind.

XI. Petition from Mr. Zachée Nkoma (T/PET.5/856)

1. The petitioner states, in a letter dated 15 January 1956, that there was a third accident involving the sinking of a canoe carrying a group of people to the clinic at Sakbayémé for medical examination on 19 December 1955 because "the much-vaunted motor-boat was not running." Only two men and one woman were saved with the help of other canoes. The other passengers, including the wife of the petitioner's eldest brother were drowned.

2. The petitioner calls for an end to the "policy of terror, intimidation and provocation of African opposition" and supports the Joint Proclamation of 22 April 1955 claiming the immediate independence of the Cameroons and its unification.

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3. The Administering Authority (T/OBS.5/85, section 2) denies the petitioner's allegations that the motor-ferry was not working on 19 December 1955, the date of the accident at Sakbayémé. The Administration ferry was working perfectly and had carried a great many people and a great deal of produce from the Sakbayémé Bank. A fairly large number of people on the other bank of the river, for whom there had been no room on the Administration ferry on the previous crossing, asked a man to take them across the Sanaga in a canoe. Everybody wanted to get into the boat in order to cross without delay and the overloaded canoe capsized on the bank before it had even reached mid-stream. In this accident, for which the population alone and not the Administration is to blame, two people were drowned, one of them related to the petitioner.

XII. Petition from the Chairman of the Market-Gardeners' Co-operative of Yaoundé (T/PET.5/857)

1. In a letter dated 30 January 1956, the petitioner, Mr. Foe Gorgon, states that on 3 December 1955 he submitted a joint petition from the market-gardeners of the area of Nyong and Sanaga to the United Nations Visiting Mission, and that to his great surprise he was arrested on 12 January 1956 along with several other market-gardeners and taken to the central police station, where he was told that the Visiting Mission had referred the petition to the Administering Authority. The petitioner protests against this abuse of confidence and requests the United Nations to send without delay an "impartial delegate" to study the matter on the spot.

2. In his letter of 31 January 1956, appended to the former, the petitioner urges the United Nations to send a delegate to verify on the spot the fact that a number of petitions calling for the immediate unification and independence of the Cameroons were handed over by the Visiting Mission to the Administering Authority. The petitioner states that the market-gardeners live in an atmosphere of insecurity and that there are increasingly numerous arrests and acts of provocation.

3. The petitioner appends a copy of the letter he sent on 31 January 1956 to the Procureur Général, complaining of the distressing situation of the Market-

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Gardeners Co-operative for the last six years. Protests lodged by the officers of the Co-operative since early in 1955 have gone unheeded. The petitioner states that the Cameroonian is completely defenceless if his only weapon, the right of petition, is taken from him. He also complains about browbeating by the European ladies to whom they sell their vegetables and about acts of provocation which are becoming increasingly numerous in their Co-operative.

4. In his telegram of 4 February 1956, the petitioner requests that the "Secretary-General be sent officially" to help to set up a free Cameroonian State in an independent Cameroons.

5. In its observations (T/OBS.5/85, section 3) the Administering Authority states that there is absolutely no justification for the petitioner's allegations concerning the arrest of Mr. Foe Gorgon. Mr. Foe Gorgon, Chairman of the Market-Gardeners' Co-operative of Yaoundé (COPEMA), has never been arrested, nor has any other member of the Co-operative. He was only the subject of an identity check by the Superintendent of Police.

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