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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THREE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 June 1956, at 10.35 a.m.

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Togoland under French administration (T/C.2/L.212; T/OBS.7/38 and
T/OBS.7/40)(continued)

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. de CAMARET France

Members:

Mr. SMOLDEREN Belgium

U PAW HTIN Burma

Mr. YANG China

Mr. BENDRYSHEV Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics

Mr. HANROTT United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Northern Ireland

Also present:

Mr. DOISE Special Representative of the
Administering Authority for
the Trust Territory of
Togoland under French
administration

Secretariat:

Mr. BERENDSEN Secretary of the Committee

EXAMINATION OF PETITIONS CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF TOGOLAND UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION (T/C.2/L.212; T/OBS.7/38 and T/OBS.7/40) (continued)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Doise, Special Representative of the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Togoland under French administration, took a place at the Committee table.

Document T/C.2/L.212 (continued)

IV. Petition from Mr. Assouma (T/PET.7/508)

U PAW HTLIN (Burma) asked whether it was true that the petitioner had been exiled from his country because of his political affiliations, what the nature of the dispute mentioned in paragraph 2 of the summary had been, and who had summoned the petitioner and his friends to Lomé.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said it was not true that the petitioner had been exiled for political reasons. Many Togolandese travelled between Togoland under French administration and Togoland under British administration for purely economic reasons. The petitioner was totally unknown to the Administering Authority; it was probable that he had been forced to write his petition by a political group interested in creating the impression that there were a large number of such political exiles from Togoland under French administration. The dispute the petitioner referred to was the one dealt with in petition T/PET.7/444, which the Committee had already discussed. He supposed it had been the petitioner's friends who had summoned him to Lomé; in any case, it had not been the local authorities. In that connexion, it was interesting to note that the petitioner, who said he was a political exile, had returned to Lomé in order to talk to his friends. It should be also noted that, although the incidents the petitioner claimed had forced him to leave the country had taken place in March, April and May 1953, he himself stated that he had left the country in 1952, that is, the year before those incidents.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) asked whether the incidents the petitioner referred to as having occurred at Paratoa were the same as those the Committee had discussed in connexion with petition T/PET.7/444.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) answered in the affirmative. The man referred to by the petitioner as Malouro-Jaya was Mr. Alfa Yaya; "Malouro" was a title given to religious leaders.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) suggested that the same procedure should be followed as in the case of the preceding petitions on the same subject.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked who the "Malouro Tchangaye" referred to by the petitioner was.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that he was the person who had defeated Mr. Yaya in the election for the post of chef de quartier.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked what had happened to the livestock which the petitioner claimed had been devoured by the soldiers who had come to Bafilo, and whether troops or policemen purchased their food in the villages they visited or lived off the land.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that no livestock had been confiscated in the village either by the Administration or by the traditional authorities. There had never been any soldiers in Bafilo; only two indigenous policemen had intervened during the incidents at Paratao. Policemen or soldiers sent to a village were provided with rations and did not live off the country. Moreover, the petitioner's allegations were intrinsically improbable, since Africans disliked eating in villages outside their own tribal areas, both because eating habits varied from tribe to tribe and because of superstitions connected with doing so.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked if there were any charges against the petitioner, or whether he could return home without fear of adverse consequences.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that there were no charges whatsoever against the petitioner. He was absolutely unknown to the authorities and there was nothing to prevent him from returning home.

The CHAIRMAN requested the Secretariat to draw up a resolution in the light of the discussion that had taken place.

V. Petition from the General Secretary of the "Rassemblement populaire des réfugiés du Togo français" (T/PET.7/514)

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) said that in general the petition appeared to be an attempt on the part of a small number of people to speak for a much larger number who migrated to the Gold Coast for seasonal work. Its main purpose seemed to be a request for "international status". Did that mean that the organization represented by the petitioner wished to be recognized as a political group with authority to speak internationally for Togoland under French administration?

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that even the small group the petitioner might represent was not made up of political refugees but of people who had left the Territory for personal reasons. He did not think they wished to achieve the status of a political party, since the petition itself stated that many of them had joined the political parties in the Gold Coast and Togoland under British administration, nor could they wish to be recognized as a political group entitled to speak for Togoland under French administration, since they were not living in that Territory. Perhaps the RPRTF believed itself to be eligible for a status resembling that of a non-governmental organization under the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) asked for information about the incidents mentioned in paragraph 4 of the summary.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that the allegations referred to in that paragraph were vague and imprecise. The mention of incidents at Sokodé probably related to the complaints discussed in connexion with previous petitions that individuals had been prevented from seeing the Visiting Mission, although, as had been brought out during the discussion, the local authorities had not only not prevented such interviews but had actually brought the individuals to the Visiting Mission. He knew of no incidents which had taken place at Mango.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the petitioner's main complaint was that, because of the oppressive practices of the French Administration, a number of inhabitants had been forced to leave Togoland under French administration and seek refuge in neighbouring countries where they were either unemployed or worked as scavengers, street porters, field hands, etc. In connexion with the particular cases cited on page 7 of the petition, he wished to know if anything was known of the people mentioned there as being recent political refugees.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that he had very little information about the persons referred to in the petition. Some had been mentioned by the Administering Authority in its observations on previous petitions and others apparently lived in Togoland under British administration, where they had plantations.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the petitioners said that they would "have preferred to plead on the spot". He asked whether any refugees had requested hearings by the Trusteeship Council and whether any reference had been made to their status in the Visiting Mission's report.

Mr. BERENDSEN (Secretary of the Committee) said that, to the best of his knowledge, no refugees had requested a hearing by the Trusteeship Council. The Visiting Mission, however, had granted several hearings in Togoland under British administration where it had received individuals and a delegation of the RPRTF. A brief account of what they had said appeared in the annex to the Visiting Mission's special report on the Togoland unification problem (T/1206). The Visiting Mission had not commented on the refugee question in its report but had transmitted some petitions to the Trusteeship Council.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) said that the group represented by the petitioner did not appear to be qualified for international status. As the precise purpose of the petition was not entirely clear, he suggested that the draft resolution should simply draw the petitioner's attention to the Special Representative's comments and point out that the RPRTF was not a very representative organization, since it did not represent the main body of

(Mr. Hanrott, United Kingdom)

migratory workers and was not in a position to speak for Togoland under French administration, because its members did not live there.

Mr. SMOLDEREN (Belgium) proposed that the attention of the petitioner should be drawn to the previous Trusteeship Council resolution relating to the same subject (resolution 1359 (XVI)).

Mr. YANG (China) supported the Belgian representative's proposal. The attention of the petitioner should be drawn to the Special Representative's comments and particularly to that part of resolution 1359 (XVI), which stated that, if the petitioner or such other persons as were mentioned in the petition decided to return to Togoland under French administration, no obstacles would be placed in their path.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would prepare a draft resolution taking into account the suggestions that had been made.

VI. Petition from Miss Esther Tele Tekoe (T/PET.7/471)

Mr. SMOLDEREN (Belgium) wondered whether the Local Authority was empowered to intervene in the Bank's affairs. He asked what position the petitioner had held in the Bank, how long she had been employed and why she had been dismissed.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that as the Bank was a private institution, the Local Authority had no power to interfere with its activities so long as it complied with regulations.

An inquiry undertaken by the Labour Inspectorate had revealed that the petitioner's complaints were unfounded. She had been hired to count and sort soiled banknotes that needed replacement. No specialized work had been involved. She had been employed on a part-time basis during the peak trading season when the Bank needed additional staff on account of the increased amount of money in circulation. She had been dismissed after having been given due notice and had received all the benefits to which she had been entitled.

Mr. SMOLDEREN (Belgium) said that in the circumstances the petitioner should simply be referred to the Administering Authority's observations.

Mr. YANG (China) expressed his satisfaction with the Local Authority's assurance that there was no racial discrimination in either the public or the private sector. However, the petitioner's allegation that Africans received lower wages than Europeans appeared to be inconsistent with the Local Authority's statement that the trade unions ensured that the principle of "equal pay for equal work" was complied with.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) explained that Labour Inspectors ensured compliance with the salary and wage scales in force. Wages were based on cost-of-living indices and were fixed by the Consultative Labour Commission, on which trade unions were represented. The petitioner could not have received less pay than her colleagues doing the same kind of work.

Mr. YANG (China) asked whether there was any possibility of finding other employment for the petitioner.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that the Labour Inspectorate maintained labour exchanges to assist unemployed persons to find work. He was uncertain whether the petitioner was at present employed.

The problem as a whole was psychological rather than economic, because indigenous inhabitants who had been to school usually thought of themselves as white collar workers and were unwilling to work in the fields or do housework. It was therefore quite difficult to find them the type of employment they desired.

Mr. YANG (China) asked what education the petitioner had received in view of her statement that the Administration made no provision for educated young Togoland women in the Territory.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that she had probably attended a primary school but did not know whether she had completed the primary course. It was highly unlikely that she had ever attended a secondary school.

Mr. YANG (China) suggested that the Local Authority could be requested to assist the petitioner in finding employment.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) agreed that that could be done. He was sure that the Local Authority, which was doing everything possible to find employment for educated indigenous inhabitants, would be glad to help the petitioner.

U PAW HTIN (Burma) observed that, although men and women were equal before the law, the petitioner stated that the education of girls in Togoland lost its value. That might be because the rights of women were restricted by local customs.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) explained that, for social and traditional reasons, the population did not approve of education for girls. That did not mean that the position of women in Togoland was inferior to that of men, for women enjoyed a number of privileges under the customs and could own property. However, strict observance of the customs was opposed to their participation in public affairs or their education to that end.

It was not so much a matter of finding employment for qualified women indigenous inhabitants as of overcoming local prejudice and customs. The Administering Authority had been paying great attention to the problem and special efforts had been made to promote school attendance by girls, which had had quite encouraging results. Between 1949 and 1955, for example, school attendance by boys had increased by 50 per cent while attendance by girls had increased by 72 per cent. Many girls had received a secondary education and others had been granted scholarships for study in France.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that the real problem was not how to make the indigenous inhabitants do manual work since they had been doing that kind of work all the time, but rather how to develop the country towards independence. Therefore, it was easy to understand the wishes of the indigenous inhabitants to obtain education and to participate in the administration of the Territory. The question was how to make up for the time that had been lost when the Territory had been under foreign domination and when its inhabitants had been allowed to do only manual work. The people now faced the difficult task of developing the country and they needed education and training to enable them to manage their own affairs and assume responsible positions.

He asked for some clarification of the observation that trade unions ensured that the principle of "equal pay for equal work" was complied with, and in particular, whether all workers in the Territory were members of trade unions and whether Africans and Europeans could join the same trade union.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) replied that, under French law, membership of a trade union was not compulsory. Nevertheless, almost all the salaried workers in the Territory were members. The main economic activity of the inhabitants was agriculture. The trade unions entered into collective agreements on behalf of all their members; as the activities of the workers developed, those agreements would be extended.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked whether there were in the Territory mixed trade unions with European and African members and whether such trade unions signed agreements on behalf of all the employees whom they represented irrespective of racial origin.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) replied in the affirmative.

In reply to a further question from the USSR representative, he stated that indigenous inhabitants and Europeans who did the same work received equal wages.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) asked what the extent of unemployment was in respect of male and female clerical employees.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that there was no unemployment problem in the Territory as the number of salaried workers was still small, having totalled 20,000 (18,000 males and 2,000 females) in 1954. In addition, many of the female employees married and left their occupations to manage their households.

The CHAIRMAN requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution taking into account the suggestions made.

Speaking as the representative of France, he said, with reference to a statement made by the USSR representative, that the use of the expression "foreign domination" was not applicable so far as the French Administration of Togoland was concerned.

VII. Petition from Chief Togbe Edoh Kodjo and Mr. Bowaima Boniface (T/PET.7/492)

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom), referring to the observations of the Administering Authority (T/OBS.7/38, page 3), asked what the circumstances had been that had led to the closing of the dispensary and the school at Kpessi.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) explained that school attendance and visits to the dispensary had been insufficient to justify the further maintenance of those establishments. The statement, quoted in paragraph 2 of the summary, that there were several hundred children of school age who did not attend school and that the percentage of illiteracy and vagrancy was reaching dangerous proportions was incorrect. The inhabitants of Kpessi could use the neighbouring schools and dispensaries. The school at Kpessi would be reopened if there was a favourable change in the attitude of the inhabitants towards school attendance.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) drew attention to the petitioners' allegation, quoted in paragraph 5 of the summary, that there were only "68 electors" out of a total population of 8,000 and asked whether, even assuming that the number of voters was small, there was any connexion between the number of voters and the decision of the CUT to boycott the elections.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that he did not have the figures of the registered voters by canton and circonscription, but that the number mentioned seemed intrinsically incorrect, since there were about 20,000 voters in the cercle at Atakpamé. There was little reason to believe that the CUT had boycotted the elections for the reason quoted, particularly as the CUT did not enjoy extensive support in that area.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted the petitioners' statement that there were only two schools in the canton, one with a single class and the other with two classes, and asked what the term "class" signified.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) explained that by the expression "a single class" the petitioners meant that there was only one teacher in the school. There was only one teacher because of the poor attendance.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) suggested that the Secretariat should prepare a draft resolution referring the petitioners to the Administering Authority's observations and to the Special Representative's explanations, particularly that other school and dispensary facilities were available to the inhabitants of Kpessi, and expressing the hope that the inhabitants would avail themselves of those facilities.

Mr. BENDRYSHEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) considered that the Council should recommend that the Administering Authority take the necessary steps to provide an adequate school and a hospital in Kpessi in order to satisfy the needs of the population of the area for education and medical care.

Mr. YANG (China) supported the United Kingdom suggestion.

He wondered whether the Administering Authority's observations (T/OBS.7/38, page 3) that the local authority had initiated a large-scale experiment in fundamental education had been made with reference to the petitioners' request that the Visiting Mission should use its influence with the authorities to establish, with the assistance of UNESCO, fundamental education centres in the Kpessi region.

Mr. DOISE (Special Representative) said that the wishes expressed by the petitioners seemed to be covered by the plans of the Administering Authority to develop the remote and desolate area by creating a new administrative region called "Est-Mono". Roads would be built and two new schools would be founded in 1956. Because the region was backward a large-scale experiment in fundamental education had been initiated over a wide area including the canton of Kpessi.

Mr. YANG (China) suggested that the draft resolution should also draw attention to the point just mentioned by the Special Representative.

Mr. HANROTT (United Kingdom) agreed, adding that mention should also be made in the draft resolution of the Special Representative's remark that the school at Kpessi would be reopened if the attitude of the population changed.

The CHAIRMAN requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft resolution along the lines suggested.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.