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PETITIONS CONCERNING THE TRUST TERRITORY OF THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

189th Report of the Standing Committee on Petitions

Chairman: U Paw Htin (Burma)

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1. At its 413th, 414th, 419th, 421st, 434th and 436th meetings on 13, 20 and 22 March, and on 12 and 18 April 1957, the Standing Committee on Petitions, composed of the representatives of Belgium, Burma, China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States of America, examined the petitions concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under French administration which are listed in the preceding table of contents.
2. Mr. X. Deniau participated in the examination as the Special Representative of the Administering Authority concerned.
3. The Standing Committee submits herewith to the Council its report on these petitions and recommends, in accordance with rule 90, paragraph 6, of the Council's rules of procedure, that the Council decide that no special information is required concerning the action taken on resolutions I-V.

I. Petition from the Local Committee of the "Union des Populations du Cameroun" of Mbanga (T/PET.5/529)

1. In a letter dated 12 February 1955, the petitioners make the following complaints:

(a) that "the French Colonialists lowered the prices of all Cameroonian products on the pretext that the Cameroons were demanding unity and independence";

(b) that conditions in Mbanga prison are very bad and the prisoners are beaten;

(c) that although Mbanga is a very wealthy subdivision, the town has not been improved in any way; the market is badly built and the market-boys are forced to pay 500 francs each for his ticket; the drinking fountain is reserved for "the colonists; there is nothing for the officials or the people";

(d) that wages in the Mbanga Subdivision are low and that there are many unjustified dismissals without notice.

2. In its observations (T/OBS.5/110, section 1) the Administering Authority states:

(a) that it has already taken steps to remedy the situation created by the drop in the price of cocoa and coffee on the world market including the establishment of a price stabilization fund, collection centres, action by the SAP, etc. The assertion that the Chief Regional Officer of the Mounjo Region declared that the price of the products would be fixed by Kingue Abel upon his return has absolutely no basis in fact.

(b) The diet of prisoners is planned so as to assure them of a sufficient quantity of healthful food, and prison inspection committees supervise the application of this rule at Mbanga, as in the rest of the Territory. The assertion that the prisoners are ill-treated is unfounded, and it should be noted that the petitioner refrained from giving names in support of his statements.

(c) Mbanga has a water supply system of seven drinking fountains for the use of the population, without distinction as to race or social class. Contrary to the allegations of the petitioner, Mbanga Subdivision has not been neglected in any way by the Administering Authority. Numerous and substantial improvements have been introduced which will be described in the annual report for 1956.

3. The petition was examined and discussed at the 413th, 434th and 436th meetings of the Standing Committee (documents T/C.2/SR.413, 434 and 436).
4. The Special Representative stated that since 1954 there had been a rise of only 3 per cent in the price-index of commodities, while minimum wages had increased by 50 per cent.
5. At its 436th meeting, the Committee approved by 4 votes to none, with 2 abstentions, draft resolution I, annexed to the present report, which it recommends that the Council adopt.

II. Petition from the "Union Regionale des Syndicats" of Mongo (T/PET.5/532)

1. In a letter dated 8 November 1954, the petitioners submit the following complaints:

- (a) that the clauses of the Labour Code already promulgated are not carried into effect; that attempts are made to fetter the freedom of trade unionism and heads of unions are dismissed because they belong to the C.G.T.;
- (b) that prices paid for local produce are too low while the cost of imported manufactured goods increases daily, the reason being that farmers are not represented on the committee which fixes the prices of commodities;
- (c) that the planters have no roads, schools or dispensaries to ensure the welfare of their children and have no means of transporting their produce, especially bananas, to the town, since the trucks are reserved for members of trade unions not affiliated with the C.G.T.

2. The petitioners submit, inter alia, the following requests:

- (a) abolition of the classification of land by the Water and Forestry Service;
- (b) abolition of fines for felling stakes for the construction of huts;
- (c) construction of feeder roads for produce;
- (d) increase in the number of hospitals, clinics and schools;
- (e) replacement of chiefs appointed by the Administration by elected chiefs;
- (f) that cases before the courts should be expedited.

3. In its observations (T/OBS.5/83, section 7) the Administering Authority states that it has no observations to submit with regard to the general grievances expressed by the petitioner concerning the political, economic and social progress of the Territory, since full explanations on the subject have been supplied to the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly at previous sessions as well as in the annual report to the United Nations.

4. With regard to the export of bananas by C.G.T. Trade Unions, the Administering Authority refers to its observations (T/OBS.5/100, section 3) submitted on T/PET.5/578 and 606, the relevant part of which reads as follows:

"This Syndicate (Syndicat des petits planteurs de Nlohe) has the legal status of a workers' syndicate in accordance with article 18, paragraph 2 of the Labour Code and, as such, cannot market the produce of its members.

"Nevertheless, it is correct that, with regard to the allocation of transport to banana producers for the satisfactory export of their produce, this Syndicate was, by mistake, allotted some trucks up to December 1954.

At that date, the Syndicat des petits planteurs was advised that, in view of the provisions of the above-mentioned article of the Labour Code, it should turn itself into a co-operative society if it wished to continue to benefit from the allocation of transport, like other producers' co-operatives. Only one part of its members transformed themselves into the Co-operative society of the planters of Mungo. This society, whose constitution has been approved, has, since January 1955, benefited regularly from the allocation of transport by railway."

5. The petition also dealt with the following subjects: (a) the incident at Mbouroukou in December 1953; (b) the case of the Duala airfield; (c) market fees in the Bamiléké region; (d) the land case at Bayangam involving Mr. Maurice Simo and others; and (e) the payment of taxes and dues. These five matters were examined by the Standing Committee on Petitions and the relevant decisions of the Trusteeship Council are recorded in resolutions (a) 1044 (XIV); (b) 1335 (XVI); (c) 1391 (XVI); (d) 1483 (XVII); and (e) 1485 (XVII).

6. The petition was examined and discussed at the 414th, 434th and 436th meetings of the Standing Committee (documents T/C.2/SR.414, 434 and 436).

7. The Special Representative stated that there was no committee which fixed the prices of export products such as bananas, cocoa, wood and coffee; these prices followed world market rates. With regard to some prices of commodities intended for local consumption, these were fixed by the Administration, mainly when there were shortages, after taking into consideration recommendations proposed by an advisory committee composed of the representatives of merchants and of consumers. The Special Representative further stated that the allegations of the petitioners concerning the allocation of railway wagons were without foundation; all co-operative societies are allocated transport without discrimination.

8. At the 436th meeting, the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics proposed that the following paragraph be added to the draft resolution:

"2. Invites the Administering Authority to take the necessary steps to satisfy the requests contained in the petition."

This paragraph was rejected by 3 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.

9. At its 436th meeting, the Committee approved by 4 votes to none, with 2 abstentions, draft resolution II, annexed to the present report, which it recommends that the Council adopt.

III. Petition from Mr. Simon-Pierre Ibang Mang (T/PET.5/487)

1. In a letter dated 5 November 1954, the petitioner makes various allegations concerning the medical services in Yaoundé; that there is only one maternity centre; that, although there are 20,000 Africans and only 5,000 Europeans, the latter have five of the eight wards; that African patients have to give up their beds before they are cured owing to the shortage of beds; that, sometimes, two or three patients have to share one bed while others lie uncovered on the ground; that in the consulting room there are no benches for pregnant women, who, after confinement, run away because no care is taken of the mother or the child, since the Service is interested only in the Whites; that the food is intolerable; that, formerly, taxes covered free medical treatment, but now, although taxes have increased, Africans are not treated free of charge but are only given a prescription to the chemist, who charges twice the price that such medicines cost in France.
2. The petitioner also alleges that, with regard to racial discrimination, in Yaoundé, "Africans have difficulty in finding work because jobs are reserved for European men and women; all the Administrative or commercial offices are full of white women. The unemployed African is helped by his wife, who sells a few fritters so that they can live". These women are always being arrested and fined and their fritters are thrown away or given to the prisoners.
3. Other complaints mentioned by the petitioners concern:
 - (a) Education: he wants schools in each district, in each village and in each settlement. In Yaoundé, however, there is only one kindergarten for ten districts, and on the day it was opened, only 30 children out of the 300 present were registered.
 - (b) Fall in the prices of produce: at the beginning of 1954, the price of cocoa was 210 francs per kilogramme; at the height of the season, however, it dropped to 100 francs while the cost of a litre of red wine rose from 45 to 55 francs.
 - (c) The Labour Code for the Overseas Territories: he protests against the decision of the Inspector-General of Labour in establishing a minimum wage of 15 francs an hour whereas the proposals of the Advisory Labour Commission were as follows: workers' trade unions, 24 to 36 francs an hour; employers' associations, 18 francs an hour.

/...

4. The other complaints of the petitioner concerning the activities of religious missions were examined by the Standing Committee on Petitions during the seventeenth session and the relevant decision of the Trusteeship Council is set forth in its resolution 1486 (XVII).

5. In its observations (T/OBS.5/74, section 1) the Administering Authority makes the following statements regarding the complaints listed above:

(a) Health: the allegations are completely devoid of foundation. Yaoundé has a large maternity centre and a maternal and child welfare service which is becoming increasingly popular among African women.

(b) Racial discrimination: since the petitioner fails to cite any precise instance of the ill-treatment of Africans, no reply can be made to his statements.

(c) Education: the Administering Authority is gratified to note the petitioner's desire that the number of schools should be increased. The kindergarten at Yaoundé was opened in 1953. Its services are beginning to be highly appreciated by the villagers, for it received an average of sixty children a day during 1954.

(d) Economy: the Administering Authority has already submitted its observations on the falls in price which may affect the produce sold by Africans. It is not responsible for them. On the other hand, it is not impossible that the increase in the price per litre of red wine may be the result of the particularly heavy taxes on wines and spirits.

(e) Labour: the allegations concerning wage-fixing are untrue, especially as regards the Inspector of Labour's attitude. The collective agreements provided for in the Labour Code, which have already been signed, were freely arrived at in accordance with the normal procedure.

6. The petition was examined and discussed at the 419th, 434th and 436th meetings of the Standing Committee (documents T/C.2/SR.419, 434 and 436).

7. With regard to the maternity centre in Yaoundé, the Special Representative gave the following details: this maternity centre is directed by a chief surgeon and has three midwives, two of whom are Cameroonians who have studied in France and received their degrees. There are twelve matrons and nurses on the staff and ten other attendants. There are five dormitories of ten beds each, one room with four beds, one with five beds for surgical cases and five private rooms. There is one consultation room, one delivery room, a special room for premature babies, two

special air-conditioned rooms with oxygen tents for delicate babies and a nursery. In case of complications, patients are kept in a special post-operative room. The centre has recently been redecorated. All of the rooms, except the waiting room, have electricity and running water. Each individual patient is given a bed, with mattress, sheets and blankets.

8. At its 436th meeting, the Committee approved by 4 votes to none, with 2 abstentions, draft resolution III, annexed to the present report, which it recommends that the Council adopt.

IV. Petition from Mr. Simon Mbessang (T/PET.5/413)

1. In a letter dated 18 December 1954, the petitioner, who states that he had four wives, six children and eighteen other dependents, complains that he has been unable to obtain a licence to purchase a sporting gun to destroy the wild animals which ravage his crops; that two loads of cocoa weighing fifty kilogrammes were seized at the Songmbengue market on 8 October 1954 by the Babimbi administration; and that his two large cocoa plantations suffer from brown rot which the local head of the Agricultural Department does nothing to remedy. He attributes his difficulty in obtaining a gun licence and the lack of co-operation from the Agricultural Department to the fact that he is a member of the UPC and the C.G.T. He asks for the intervention of the United Nations in order that he may obtain (a) a gun licence, (b) a loan of 300,000 francs C.F.A. from the S.A.P. to which he subscribes, (c) payment for his cocoa which was seized and (d) the necessary equipment for the upkeep of his plantations.

2. The petitioner also complains about the taxes he has to pay and asks that he be transferred from category 2 to category 4 in order to obtain a reduction. This part of his petition was taken into consideration by the Standing Committee on Petitions during the seventeenth session and the decision of the Trusteeship Council is recorded in resolution 1485 (XVII).

3. In its observations (T/OBS.5/91, section 2) the Administering Authority states that:

(a) As Mr. Mbessang made no request to the S.A.P. for a loan, he was not of course granted one. Loans are allocated by the Managing Board of that body, which is composed of members elected by the contributors. The Administration has only one vote on the Board.

(b) Mr. Mbessang having been convicted of fraud, some of his cocoa was seized in conformity with existing regulations. If he considered the seizure irregular, he should have laid the matter before the court. The Administering Authority states in this connexion that the Inspector of Products is a sworn official.

(c) The Plant Health Service teams of the Provident Society are placed free of charge at the disposal of the village economic committees, which are elected by the planters. To facilitate the work of the teams and ensure its efficacy, owners of plantations are asked to clean them before the health

service teams carry out the treatment; since Mr. Mbessang had refused to do any such maintenance work on his plantation, it was not possible to apply any treatment to it. The Administering Authority emphasizes that the work requested of the owners is very simple: it consists of freeing the plantation of weeds.

4. Mr. Mbessang correctly describes himself as a category 2 taxpayer. Incidentally, his enjoyment of that status constitutes a special privilege: under article 7 of the Tax Code he should pay category 1 tax, as a planter cultivating over 5 hectares. In point of fact his plantations amount to 8 hectares.
5. The petition was examined and discussed at the 421st and 436th meetings of the Standing Committee (documents T/C.2/SR.421 and 436).
6. The Special Representative stated that a request for a licence to purchase a fire-arm was first investigated by the local authorities and the request was then filed at the chief town of the region. Each region was allocated a quota of fire-arms and it was often found that requests for licences exceeded the quota, so that a selection had to be made taking account of the number of fire-arms already apportioned to each village throughout the region. In this particular case, the petitioner may have lived in a village for which the prescribed quota had already been filled and his request had therefore not been granted. This however did not necessarily mean that his request would not be granted in due course.
7. The Special Representative repeated the observations of the Administering Authority to the effect that at the time of the petition, the petitioner had not applied for a loan from the S.A.P. nor had he cleaned his plantation as was required before the Plant Health Service teams could carry out the treatment of his cocoa trees.
8. In reply to questions by the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as to whether the petitioner had since applied for a loan from the S.A.P.; if so, whether it had been granted; whether he had cleaned his plantation as was required; whether the Plant Health Service teams had treated his trees and whether he had received any assistance from the time of his petition up to the present, the Special Representative stated that he was not in a position to say what the situation of the petitioner was in 1957.
9. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics stated that in his opinion the task of the Special Representative was to supply the Committee with the information necessary to supplement the written observations of the

Administering Authority. He therefore wished it to be placed on record that certain questions put by him to the Special Representative had not been answered.

10. The representative of France wished it to be likewise placed on record that in the opinion of his delegation the Special Representative had replied fully to the questions put to him regarding the petitioner's situation at the time the petition had been made.

11. At its 436th meeting, the Committee approved by 4 votes to 1, with 1 abstention, draft resolution IV, annexed to the present report, which it recommends that the Council adopt.

V. Petition from Madame Marie Louise Mpaye (T/PET.5/449)

1. In a letter dated 29 October 1954, the petitioner states that her husband was dismissed from the firm of Messrs. R.W. King at Douala in January 1954 solely because he had formed a union among his firm's employees. She gives the same account as her husband (see T/PET.5/448) of his being deprived of his transport permit and states that as her husband has no means of subsistence her family is in a deplorable position. Moreover her mother, Madame Françoise Ngo Eono, who is a widow and the mother of thirteen living children, has received no assistance. All that the Administration has done is give her a medal called "Cameroonian Merit". The petitioner also complains that the Chief State Counsel of the French Republic in the Cameroons while driving his car hit her husband's parked car. The State Counsel had their hut surrounded by three police officers and six policemen for two whole days.

2. In its observations (T/OBS.5/69, section 6), the Administering Authority states that it is true that Mr. Mpaye was dismissed from his post with Messrs. King this was, however, not because he had been elected general secretary of the firm's employees but because he had been convicted of the embezzlement of 40,000 francs. What is more, the petitioner admitted his guilt and himself offered his resignation. With regard to the incident with the Chief States Counsel cited by the petitioner, the Administering Authority observes that, if the incident took place at all, it must have been a very minor one, since the police did not record it, still less call out the force. The Administering Authority adds that it will submit its observations on the situation of Mrs. Ngo Eono when it has received the necessary information.

3. With regard to the withdrawal of Mr. Mpaye's licence to carry passengers, this was the subject of a petition from Mr. Mpaye (T/PET.5/448) which was examined by the Standing Committee on Petitions during the seventeenth session, see resolution 1444 (XVII).

4. The petition was examined and discussed at the 421st and 436th meetings of the Standing Committee (documents T/C.2/SR.421 and 436).

5. The Special Representative stated that the petitioner's mother, Madame Ngo Eono, had been awarded the Cameroonian Merit medal for the exemplary manner in which she had brought up her children. She had applied for a pension but there was no law which provided for the payment of a pension to the holder of the

Cameroonian Merit medal. At the time the petition was written, Madame Eono was no longer responsible for the care of all of her children since four of her sons had become self-supporting while four of her daughters had married and were not living with her. Moreover, Madame Eono had a plantation from which she derived an adequate livelihood and she could not be considered as destitute.

6. The Special Representative also stated that no claim had been filed for compensation for the damage alleged to have been done to Mr. Mpaye's car and that the petitioner's assertion that her husband's hut had been watched by the police for two days following the accident was quite untrue.

7. It was pointed out by the Special Representative that while there was no provision for the payment of unemployment benefits in the Territory, there was a Labour Office which found work for many unemployed persons each year and to which the petitioner could apply for employment.

8. The draft resolution considered at the 435th meeting contained the following paragraph:

"2. Recommends that the Administering Authority should take the necessary steps to see to it that the petitioner's family be granted assistance and that the petitioner's husband be provided with employment so that he may support his family."

This paragraph was rejected by 4 votes to 1, with 1 abstention.

9. At its 436th meeting, the Committee approved by 4 votes to none, with 2 abstentions, draft resolution V, annexed to the present report, which it recommends that the Council adopt.

ANNEX

DRAFT RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY THE COMMITTEE

I. Petition from the Local Committee of the "Union des Populations du Cameroun" of Mbanga (T/PET.5/529)

The Trusteeship Council,

Having examined the petition from the Local Committee of the "Union des Populations du Cameroun" of Mbanga concerning the Cameroons under French administration in consultation with France as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.5/529, T/OBS.5/110, T/L.751),

Draws the attention of the petitioner to the observations of the Administering Authority and to the statement of its Special Representative in particular that since 1954, the price-index of commodities had risen by only 3 per cent, while minimum wages had been raised by 50 per cent.

II. Petition from the "Union Regionale des Syndicats" of Mongo (T/PET.5/532)

The Trusteeship Council,

Having examined the petition from the "Union Regionale des Syndicats" of Mongo concerning the Cameroons under French administration in consultation with France as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.5/532, T/OBS.5/83, T/L.751),

Draws the attention of the petitioners to the observations of the Administering Authority and to the statements of its Special Representative.

III. Petition from Mr. Simon-Pierre Ibang Mang (T/PET.5/487)

The Trusteeship Council,

Having examined the petition from Mr. Simon-Pierre Ibang Mang concerning the Cameroons under French administration in consultation with France as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.5/487, T/OBS.5/74, T/L.751),

Draws the attention of the petitioner to the observations of the Administering Authority and to the statement of its Special Representative regarding the maternity centre in Yaoundé.

IV. Petition from Mr. Simon Mbessang (T/PET.5/413)

The Trusteeship Council,

Having examined the petition from Mr. Simon Mbessang concerning the Cameroons under French administration in consultation with France as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.5/413, T/OBS.5/91, T/L.751),

1. Draws the attention of the petitioner to the observations of the Administering Authority and to the statement of its Special Representative, in particular that the granting of requests for licences to purchase fire-arms is determined by a quota according to which each village is allocated sufficient fire-arms for the protection of the villagers and their plantations and that his request for a gun licence may be granted when the quota for his particular village is unfilled;
2. Suggests to the petitioner that if he still desires a loan he should submit an application to the Managing Board of the S.A.P. and that if he still wishes to obtain the services of the Plant Health Service teams, he should comply with the regulations by first cleaning his plantation.

V. Petition from Madame Marie Louise Mpaye (T/PET.5/449)

The Trusteeship Council,

Having examined the petition from Madame Marie Louise Mpaye concerning the Cameroons under French administration in consultation with France as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.5/449, T/OBS.5/69, T/L.751),

Draws the attention of the petitioner to the observations of the Administering Authority and to the statements of its Special Representative, in particular that her husband could apply to the Labour Office for assistance in finding employment.
