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PETITION FROM MR. LIPEM LAZARE LAVOISIER CONCERNING
THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

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From: LIPEM LAZARE LAVOISIER
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To: Chairman of the Fourth Committee,
Special General Assembly of the United Nations
NEW YORK

Douala, 9 June 1955

Sir,

I hereby respectfully submit the case I had intended to present to the Visiting Mission, which I had expected to come to the Cameroons before the opening of this special session.

Noting that the United Nations is always misinformed by the Administering Authorities, I should like to describe briefly how the policy of Mr. Johannes Charles Louis Roland Pré, Governor of the Colonies, operates.

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S UNEASINESS

Since the UPC was organized in 1948, and the French Government became familiar with the three main points of its programme - immediate unification of the two Cameroons, fixing of a date for the independence of the Cameroons and the abrogation of the notorious provision in the Trusteeship Agreement to the effect that the Cameroons shall be administered "as an integral part of French territory" - that Government, greatly disturbed by the growing influence of that programme throughout the country, has been trying to find ways of thwarting it. Its deep uneasiness impelled it to change colonial governors in the Territory as casually as people change their clothes, in an attempt to find a man capable,

though it be by bloodshed, of banning the UPC from the political scene, so that the Cameroonian people should remain forever under the colonial yoke.

In the period from 1948 to 1955, three representatives of colonial policy have successively held the office of High Commissioner in the Territory and each tried to put into practice all he had learned of French colonial thinking. But the ruthless repression enforced by the first two High Commissioners, Mr. HOFFERR and Mr. André Soucadeau, is as a drop of gasoline on a small blue flame which becomes a blaze. In desperation, the French Government had to find a man, such as Guinea had known, to start the same campaign of slaughter in the Cameroons and drown in blood the progressive programme I have described.

THE CAMEROONIAN PEOPLE AND THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME

Ever since the UPC was formed, the peoples of the Cameroons have supported its official programme and have been determined to defend it with their lives against the colonialists. Their defence very properly takes the form of the thousands of petitions and motions which they send to the United Nations, the sending of petitioners to the General Assemblies to uphold the lofty national programme which is dearer to us than life itself, the silence of the chiefs and other puppets who have occasionally sent false petitions and petitioners to the United Nations to frustrate the honourable aspirations of the Cameroonian people and try to marshal international anti-communist opinion against the legitimate grievances of our people by parroting their colonial masters' refrain to the effect that the Cameroons is a country without problems except for a few agitators in the pay of Moscow who are creating disturbances and that therefore its grievances are artificial and concocted by the people. But the Cameroonian people foiled those diabolical designs. You, sir, and the members of your Committee, bear witness to the fact that in 1954 none of those self-styled petitioners succeeded in taking the floor in the United Nations to support colonialism and to condemn the Cameroonian people which is invincible in its fight for unity and independence. But the most significant fact is that the anti-communist countries which France and its accomplices had hoped to rally in the United Nations against our just grievances have realized, in the last few years in the light of events, that there is no communist party in the Cameroons and that the national movement would be violently fought

even if there were, in the same way as in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, where the national liberation movements are fought more relentlessly than the communist parties. They have realized that never in history has France voluntarily granted self-government or independence to one of the colonies it has lost and that it likewise does not intend to grant such status to those now demanding it, that there is a Cameroons problem created not by Moscow but by the Cameroonians themselves; a problem not concocted by the indigenous population, but recognized and put forward by that population; a problem in the category of pressing problems which must be resolved very rapidly. Consequently, they strongly support the position of the Cameroonian people and have determined to satisfy its claims, despite the opposition of a minority which would prefer all colonized countries to remain under the colonial yoke in perpetuity, notwithstanding the special position of some like Togoland and the Cameroons.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW

I come now to the paramount issue.

Unwilling to accept unification and independence for the Cameroons now at any cost, unable to keep the Territory under the colonial yoke forever, France found itself at a crossroads in its Cameroonian policy. Consequently, it had to entrust the administration of the country to a man who had had to swear before his appointment that he would fight the communist trend in the Cameroons, that is, a man prepared to stop, by bloodshed, the popular trend towards immediate unification and independence.

Mr. Louis Pré came forward as a candidate for that dirty job, with a detailed plan.

As soon as his appointment to the office of colonial governor of the Cameroons was announced, the elected representatives of the Territory, who are acquainted with the old methods of savage repression used by Roland Pré, formed a delegation, except for Aujoulat and Douala Manga Bell who supported Mr. Pré. The delegation informed the President of France verbally and in writing that it was opposed to the appointment of M. Pré as governor of the Cameroons. The elected representatives, aware of the widespread popular support for immediate unification and independence of the Cameroons and of the programme of M. Pré - never to be forgotten by the people of Guinea - through their spokesman,

Mr. Nine, said: if that decision goes through, blood will flow in the Cameroons. But Mr. Coty contemptuously turned a deaf ear to their warning.

Two months later, Boum Nak Pierre, who had been made Chief of the newly-arrived people of New-bell Bassa at Douala, wrote in a letter to Mr. Chauzaud in France: "The Administrators told me that if the communist trend continues, it will end in shooting".

That means that if the popular trend in support of immediate unification and independence for the Cameroons continues, it will end in artillery fire. Soon after, in Yaounde, before a crowd of more than 5,000 people who had come to court with the General Secretary of the UPC, the last-named having been greeted by a court summons when he arrived in the capital to report on his recent mission to the United Nations, the State Counsel General said: "We know better than you that we shall leave in two years from now; but we are thorns and you are the flowers and before we leave, we shall prick you". Johannes Charles Louis Roland Pré was to give effect to his plan of conspiracy against the peaceful Cameroonian people struggling for the unification and independence of their country as soon as he assumed the office of High Commissioner in December 1954. Among other things, he toured the Territory making violent speeches in which he characterized the UPC leaders as "trouble-makers", and attempted to concentrate all the UPC leaders at Douala where the head office is situated so that he could liquidate the movement's leadership at a given moment. For example, in an especially violent speech in the North, he said that "the Northern Cameroons is a young country which still needs French civilization; it is a good thing to send the trouble-makers away." The same week, the Chairman of the UPC, a doctor practising at Maroua, was transferred to Douala; the same day, from Sende, Jean Paul, teacher and editor-in-chief of Lumière, the organ of the UPC branch of the Northern Cameroons, was also transferred together with Ouandic Ernest, Vice-Chairman of the UPC. It should be noted that, before his appointment, Mr. Pré had sworn to stamp out the UPC by the time he had been in office as High Commissioner for six months. In order to accomplish this unpleasant task under the pretext of France's civilizing influence, the Administration gives much prominence to and makes much use of the expressions "order upheld by authority" and "maintenance of order."

For example, the peaceful meeting held at M'Banga on 15 May 1955 was broken up by a police squad which killed and wounded several Cameroonians. A second meeting was called for 22 May 1955. As soon as it was announced, the colonialists sent reinforcements from Douala to slaughter the poor, unarmed population. That same evening, several lackeys including Ekoun, Mongo, Mbock Vencent, BAGAL Guillaume and Maah Georges representing various political organizations of the Administration arranged a public meeting, described as an assembly to form an anti-communist front, at which they made a personal attack on UM NYOBE, General Secretary of the UPC, its President, Felix Roland Mounie, and other UPC leaders. The UPC members who wanted to listen to their anti-communist programme, as soon as they saw that it was a provocative meeting, reminiscent of events in the Ivory Coast, quietly walked out in order to avoid giving Mr. Pré the pretext which he wanted. They went off to their own meeting, which was being held in the home of MAYI Matip. As they were returning after their meeting, the anti-communist front group, having failed in its purpose, ordered the Tchadians, who were the Cameroonian civil guards, but were in civilian clothes because they were being used for purposes of provocation, to arrest some of the communists en route: that is, the UPC people returning from the meeting at Mayi Matip's house. They arrested them and began to beat them. Other patriots rushed over to save their dying comrades. They were met by a hail of bottles hurled by the Tchadians and the members of the anti-communist front. It should be added that an infantry unit which had been alerted was waiting in the New-Bell quarter and that a European gendarme kept shuttling between the place where the anti-communist front was being organized and the infantry unit. Remembering what had happened at MBANGA our compatriots succeeded in escaping as soon as the troop-laden trucks appeared.

The colonialists, in their eagerness to see blood run in Douala, entered the compound and pillaged the homes of some UPC men, while others were arrested, beaten and thrown into cars. What had begun in MBANGA on 22 May 1955 continued the next day in MOUNGO, PENDJA, LOUM, NKONGSAMBA where patriots were unceremoniously killed with no thought of what we had done when France was under Nazi occupation. The wave of violence reached MANDJO on 24 May 1955.

During the night of 23 to 24 May, at 1.15 a.m., our people guarding the UPC office were attacked by a squad of soldiers. One of the soldiers fired a shot and two comrades were wounded, one of them very seriously; the latter was immediately taken to the hospital by his friends. On 25 May, Douala was to be set afire and all the leaders and most prominent members of the UPC killed. By the morning, all the reinforcements had arrived from French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa, troops with which had served eight years in Indo-China, and the Laquintinie hospital had been given orders to keep doctors ready and wards open for casualties. About 7.30 a.m. the army was ready for action. Military convoys were parking in the New Bell quarter, which by 8 o'clock was an armed camp. Agitators spread out on all the roads injuring patriots as they went along. You would have had to be present yourself in the offices of the UPC at that tragic time to realize what happened. Our comrades came from all sides soaked in blood. They had head injuries and broken arms or legs. But our courageous chairman, Felix Roland Moumie rallied us in a short speech calling on the people to be calm and vigilant and to frustrate this colonialist provocation. A telegram was immediately sent to the President of the Territorial Assembly, which was at that time holding its regular session, laying on all the elected representatives in that body the blame for the massacres which were taking place because of their failure to take action when they knew full well that the persons being massacred were their constituents. By noon the whole of Douala was in a state of siege. Gunfire was heard, and aircraft were dropping bombs and grenades were exploding everywhere. The results of these barbarous acts were as follows: nine killed and forty injured, while so many hundreds of people were killed that it was no longer possible to bury them separately. The pits which were dug to hold the bodies bear witness to this. I know that in its report France will talk of rifles and what it calls a "rising". It should be noted that no active member of the UPC is entitled to buy a rifle. The authorities use permits to buy firearms as a means of obtaining bribes. That was the source of the rifles which the newspapers mentioned on 4 June 1955. Furthermore, the newspapers of 27 May 1955 reported that the authorities had collected a number of miscellaneous weapons, but made no mention of the machine guns or artillery which would have been used in what the colonialists

call a "rising". Inconsistencies like this prove that this is a conspiracy hatched by the colonialists against the people of the Cameroons who are struggling for the immediate unification and independence of their country. The colonialists allege that the members of the UPC set their own office on fire, destroying it with all the material inside and the cash. As witness they have produced ONE ardent supporter MBOU Marcel, a local chief in New Bell, who in order to secure that minor office had to become a sworn enemy of the UPC and a Catholic priest. Everyone knows that at this time the Protestant and Catholic missions are in the vanguard of the colonialist campaign against the UPC. Witnesses like this, known by everybody to have anti-Cameroonian sentiments the Members of the United Nations with further proof of the recent conspiracy.

To provide definite information as to those responsible for setting fire to the UPC office, I will quote here a passage from a statement made by a settler employed by the Public Works Department to our fellow-countryman Macock Jean Marc, before witnesses: "You will see; if I were in the Air Force I would go up and drop a bomb on you. Today we shall burn your office and your compound." Now they say that we caused the fire ourselves. I will leave it to our officers, who are now in hiding in the jungle, to tell you the numbers of the cars in the convoy which set fire to the office. I protest against the phrase "the events occurred" when they are still occurring. The persons detained have not yet been released but are being tortured. If our information is correct, those in exile are at the point of death. The persecution of the leaders and active members of the UPC is now being intensified. The newspapers even suggest that all the leaders should be beheaded. The newspapers of 28 May 1955 suggest "that the leaders are liable to the death penalty".

WHAT THE CAMEROONIANS ARE ASKING

When they speak of "order upheld by authority", the colonialists forget that international opinion is not unaware of what they call "authority" which was exercised for eight-years in Indo-China; in the end Mr. Mendès-France granted the Tunisians self-government and before long Algeria will be released from its bondage.

By proclaiming this state of emergency in the Cameroons a United Nations Trust Territory, category A, the French colonialists

have openly revealed their intention of keeping the Cameroons forever under the colonial yoke. In taking these measures France has contravened its own laws. Is it not provided for the safety of the human person, that the judiciary should be separate from the political and executive authorities, the police from the armed forces? Consequently, I request that the Mission should be directed to raise the Cameroonian flag, to carry out a thorough investigation for the purpose of determining exactly how many perished, to conduct general elections with a view to the formation of a Cameroonian government and to arrange for the admission of the Cameroons to the United Nations. The colonialists have sworn to exterminate us if you do not come soon. We are eagerly awaiting the arrival of this Mission, in which the people of the Cameroons have placed all their hopes..

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

(Signed) LIPEM Lazare Lavoisier
