

them, the British Military Administration will afford all possible co-operation in attaining them."

In Eritrea the police and other government employees were strictly prohibited from joining the Party of Reunion to Ethiopia. The British Military Administration in the Somaliland Colony, however, saw no objection to either police or other officials joining the League. This was declared on behalf of the Administration to the Four Power Commission of Enquiry. It was alleged by all witnesses opposing the League and the Administration, that the League was so highly favoured by the Administration that the great majority of police and other government employees joined it because not to belong to it was a drawback in obtaining government employment.

The striking difference between the attitude of the Administration towards the Youth League and towards the Eritrean reunion to Ethiopia can be explained in some measure by the fact that the former organisation devoted itself in the first years of its existence to charitable and educational purposes; it did not formally declare a political policy concerning the future government of the territory until after the forthcoming visit of the Four Power Commission to ascertain the views of the local population had been announced in the Press and by the Chief Administrator. The matter, however, went deeper. The first object stated in the Youth League constitution was the Unity of all Somalis; there was no statement that the Unity would be of a political character, or by what means it would be achieved, but the League's desire for the Unity of the Somalilands accorded with the policy of the British Administration. Here was a broad basis of agreement. There was no indication that the Youth League would adopt an attitude of opposition to the unity being effected under British Trusteeship. In short Somali Unity was regarded as sound policy for Somalis; therefore the Youth League could be safely encouraged.

The Unionist Party of Eritrea on the other hand was opposing the policy of the British Military Administration of that territory which favoured a British Trusteeship of the territory with the addition, if possible, of a portion of the neighbouring Ethiopian Tigré. Brigadier Stephen Longrigg*, for four years British Administrator of Eritrea, had been a particularly active protagonist of this policy, and had guided the views of his colleagues into this channel. Thus whilst the big popular Party in Ex-Italian Somaliland was considered a legitimate manifestation of the local population, and a body which the British Administration could usefully encourage, the big popular Reunion to Ethiopia Party of Eritrea, a spontaneous movement, answering to the long-held and deeply rooted aspirations of the people, was regarded by the Administration with disfavour, as inimical to official policy, a body which might in certain eventualities cause difficulties.

* See "A Short History of Eritrea," by Brigadier Stephen Longrigg (Oxford University Press).

It would be unfair towards the members of the British Administration not to recognise that many of them were animated by a sincere and wholly disinterested sense of justice in their sympathy for the struggle of the Somali people against the return of Italy. Notably the few soldiers still in Somaliland who had enlisted from non-official circles for the war emergency, and having helped to clear out the worst iniquities of Italian rule, were genuinely impressed by the brave efforts for education and public welfare made by the oppressed people to a large extent under the leadership of the Somali Youth League.

The years which had intervened since the Italian defeat in Somaliland, coupled with Press reports that the Council of Foreign Ministers was inclined to favour Italian Trusteeship in that area, had caused the exuberant war-time confidence in ultimate liberation and progress to flag sadly. Mr. Bevin's statement to the Council of Foreign Ministers, in April, 1946, favouring the union of British, Ethiopian and former Italian Somaliland under British Trusteeship, "in order to give the Somalis the chance of a decent life," was grasped as a life-line offering escape from the dreaded return of Italian rule. The ideal of the Youth League was an administration much more dynamically progressive than that of the British Somaliland Protectorate; they desired extensive opportunities of education and expanding experience of administration to prepare the people for self-rule, such as had not hitherto existed under British rule in Somaliland. Nevertheless, Mr. Bevin's words seemed to promise that Somali welfare was now to be considered in discussing the future of their homeland, moreover his proposal seemed to give weight to the advocacy of a united Somaliland by officials of the British Military Administration, and their predictions that it was destined to be established as part of the peace settlement.

These confident assertions, and continued Press discussions of Mr. Bevin's proposal, obscured in a measure the fact that the British Foreign Secretary had himself abandoned the project because of the lack of support for it in the Council of Foreign Ministers, and still more because of Ethiopia's refusal to surrender the Ogaden.

The discussion of the Italian Peace Treaty by the Paris Conference, from July 29 to October 15, 1946, was keenly followed by the Youth League leaders. The decision of the Conference that Italy must renounce all title to her former Colonies aroused new hope, despite the disappointing failure to decide what was eventually to happen to these territories, the agreement to give the Council of Foreign Ministers still another year to reach a solution—and the painful hint that, even yet, Italian rule might possibly be restored.

The announcement by Press and Radio, and by the Chief Administrator of the Colony, Brigadier R. H. Smith, that a Commission of Investigation would visit the Colony to ascertain the views of the local population aroused both hope and anxiety.