

Though the opposition of the people to Italian rule was general, the Italians now bestirred themselves with tremendous activity to win over a show of support from their Somali employees in the various enterprises of the Colony and particularly in the former Italian native soldiery and police, most of all their ex-“Banda” irregulars, who under British Administration to a large extent lacked employment.

#### **Somali Youth League Programme: Unity of all Somalilands**

For the leaders of the Somali Youth League it was imperative to formulate a policy for the future government of the ex-Colony and to obtain the acceptance of their members to it.

They declared for the union of all the Somalilands under a ten years United Nations Trusteeship administered by the Four Powers who had assumed the right to determine their fate: Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States.

The brief temporary trusteeship was reluctantly admitted to be necessary owing to the illiteracy and lack of administrative experience among the Somali people.

The demand for Four Power Trusteeship was obvious enough; Mr. Bevin had abandoned the British claim on the score of Ethiopia's refusal to surrender the Ogaden. It was hoped to win the support of all Four Powers for Somali unity by requesting a Trusteeship of them all. Moreover, the four together, it was hoped, might check each other's desire to retain the territory permanently and the cost of progressive development would be shared.

British Administrators who had given their approval to the Youth League were not estranged from it by the appeal for a Four Power instead of a British Trusteeship. They were not at all disturbed by the proposal; if the principle of a “Great Somaliland” under a single administration were adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers, the United Kingdom Government, having the British Protectorate to offer to the scheme, being actually in possession of the whole area, and having conquered it from Italy, would be in a strong position to claim the Trusteeship—always provided no more practical solution could gain acceptance. Many British Administrators throughout East Africa were under the influence of propagandists like Brigadier Stephen Longrigg,\* who was strenuously campaigning to create a new British Trust Territory by a combination of ex-Italian Eritrea and the Ethiopian Tigre Province. They were inclined to think in terms of a reduced Ethiopian Empire, rather than of any extension of Ethiopian territory. The continued British occupation of the Ethiopian Ogaden, which had substantially out-lived World War hostilities in East Africa, lent colour to the belief, then widely current among British

\* Cf. e.g., Stephen H. Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea* (Oxford, 1945), also letter to the “Spectator,” “I favour the proposed United Somalia . . . in no event should I approve the attachment of the Muslim Ogaden to Ethiopia,” also letters to the “Times,” etc.

officials in East Africa, that British Administration of Ethiopian Somaliland was destined to be permanent. They were not disposed to follow the Foreign Secretary in his tacit abandonment of the plan for a single administration on the ground of Ethiopia's refusal. To them this was merely a phase in the course of rendering permanent a British Administration which was already in being.

#### **Aspiration for Unity**

The aspiration of the Somali Youth League for the unity of the Somali territories was a natural extension of their desire for unity among the Somali people, and the abolition of tribal feuds, which they had been endeavouring to effect within the Somaliland Colony. To achieve that unity they were prepared to expend all sorts of effort and persuasion to overcome reactionary influences among their own people and the narrow tribal mentality, which in some cases, was disposed to regard almost as foreigners the Somalis of another tribe, or another area.

Mr. Bevin's protest against the artificial frontiers which divide British, Ethiopian and Italian Somaliland required no emphasis to the Somalis. Created by European Colonisation in the late nineteenth century, these barriers were so inimical to the roving life of the Somali people that provisions had to be included in all the boundary agreements between Ethiopia and the Colonial Powers who had occupied the coasts, providing for the Somali tribes to pass and repass the frontiers to and from their long accustomed seasonal grazing areas. The difficulty of dealing with divers governments, each using a different official language, was also felt, but the abolition of these inconveniences was far from comprising all their desires for the new era of liberation in which they had been led to hope.

In their claim to the union of the Somalilands they did not content themselves, like Mr. Bevin, with the proposal to unify British, Ethiopian and ex-Italian Somaliland; they added also French Somaliland to their claim.

They did not realise that this merely made their project for unity still more visionary, and that as matters stood it lacked all possibility of realisation, because France and Ethiopia\* were both unwilling to cede their Somali territories, and the United Nations Charter expressly prohibits placing under Trusteeship territory belonging to States which are members of the United Nations Organisation. Here is the relevant Clause of the Charter:

\* “Ethiopia could not admit that any question should arise concerning the return to her of territories comprising the Ethiopian Ogaden province, which were as a purely war-time measure contributed as an ally and without compensation to the effective prosecution of the war and should no more fall within the scope of the Peace Conference than similar war-time contributions of territories made by other allies.”—Emperor Haile Sellassie in a Press interview.