

Article 78, Chapter 12

"The trusteeship system shall not apply to territories which have become members of the United Nations, relationship among which shall be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality."

People of the Ogaden Unwilling to Lose Ethiopian Citizenship

In their demand for Somali unity through a "Somali State" under Four Power Trusteeship, the Youth Club of the ex-Colony ignored the wishes and the interests of the Somalis of the Ogaden, who were appealing urgently to be restored to Ethiopian administration.

The proposed trusteeship was manifestly unacceptable to the people of the Ogaden, for it invited them to abandon their status as citizens of an independent self-governing nation for the greatly inferior position of a subject people under a foreign trustee, with the added disability of complete uncertainty as to how, or by what Power or Powers the Trusteeship would be administered.

Even had the people of the Ethiopian Ogaden and the Government in Addis Ababa been willing to accept the proposed surrender of Ethiopian territory, a course against which they were completely determined, the project to which the Youth Club of the Italian Colony had committed themselves was remote and doubtful in the extreme. Neither Mr. Bevin, nor any other member of the Council of Foreign Ministers, had foreshadowed any possibility of the early establishment of an independent Somali State, or mentioned any terms for the proposed Trusteeship. Mr. Bevin had quite clearly emphasised what he conceived to be the benefits of a British administration which would "organise things" for these poor nomads. His offer to add the British Protectorate to the scheme was entirely conditional upon the whole area being placed under British Trusteeship.

Moreover, even were the creation of an independent Somali State within a few years a probability, it could offer to the people of the Ogaden no inducement comparable to the great losses they would sustain if they were deprived thereby of Ethiopian citizenship. They would be impoverished, both economically and culturally, if divided from the prosperous, well-watered and temperate Ethiopian highlands, whence they obtain cereals and other commodities which the Somalilands do not produce in sufficient quantities, if at all. The Muslim schools and culture of Harar, Dire Dawa, and particularly Addis Ababa, are valued throughout the Ogaden. The view of Mohammed Abubaker El Morgani, supreme leader of the Muslim Church in Eritrea, that the welfare of his people lies in unity with Ethiopia, is shared by Muslims throughout Ethiopia.

A Wiser Plan

The wisdom of seeking union with the Somalis of the Ogaden without demanding their severance from the rest of Ethiopia, the strength and prosperity to be achieved by unity also with Ethiopia, was obscured by propaganda and short-term personal self-interest.

The Youth League did not realise their only means of securing unity with the Ogaden was by uniting the ex-Italian Colony to the Ethiopian State to which the Ogaden is attached. Lacking administrative experience and economic knowledge, they did not know that the ex-Italian Colony had no prospect of becoming a prosperous independent State, and that the British Government, having combined with it the Ogaden and the British Protectorate, had been obliged to subsidise each of these areas during the seven years of their administration, despite the rigid economies and stern efforts to balance expenditure and revenue, which had caused both hardship and complaint. Even the temporary Four Power Trusteeship the Youth League were demanding might, in the shifting temper of European policies, give place to Italian rule again, when after a few years the poor territory still failed to become economically solvent.

The Youth Club did not realise that the Ten Years' Trusteeship, which they reluctantly admitted to be necessary, owing to the abject condition of ignorance and subjection in which Italian colonisation had kept the Somali population, would be obviated by union to Ethiopia, where a stable and progressive Government could immediately provide the necessary administration, and would at once proceed to train the local population to share the privileges and responsibilities of a self-governing people.

It was not known to the leaders of the Youth League that the policy of detaching all Somalis from Ethiopia, to unite them under British or other European administration, had been paralleled, only a little earlier, in respect of the Gallas, who had failed to respond to the proposal of a Galla State, because they have become far too completely integrated with the whole Ethiopian population to be influenced at all by separatist propaganda. Nor did the Somalis of the ex-Colony know that even at that very time, an unsuccessful attempt was being made to detach from Ethiopia the Christian Tigrinya-speaking people of the northern Tigré, to join them with the population of ex-Italian Eritrea, in order to create another little subject people under trusteeship.

Italian rule had always aimed at dividing the people of East Africa into discordant segments. Colonial policy and distance combined to render the Ethiopian Capital inaccessible to the inhabitants of the Somaliland Colony.

Following the Italian defeat, the British Military Administration of all the Somalilands, with the policy of rigid maintenance of the temporary frontier with the rest of Ethiopia, imposed a formidable obstacle which almost prevented visits by the Somalis of Italy's former Colony to the Ethiopian Capital. The status of Muslims in Ethiopia and their relations with the administration were, in consequence, virtually unknown to the mass of the Youth League membership.

The Somali Youth League, who had taken the lead among the people of the Colony, were in the tragic position of putting before