

concerning Greece, the disposal of the former Italian colonies, and Palestine, which were urgent and had already been subject to study and consideration by the Committee, should not be shifted further down on the agenda. The item submitted by the Soviet Union was interconnected with the Chinese problem, and a preliminary consideration of the latter might come as a result of the USSR proposal, which he felt should be maintained in the third place on the agenda. In view of the negotiations being conducted between the Netherlands Government and the representatives of the Indonesian Republic, he thought that the Indonesian question might wait a little, and proposed that the Chinese question be placed before it. The Chinese proposal would then be fifth on the agenda, the question of Indonesia sixth, the seventh item being the report of the Security Council.

38. Mr. BEBLER (Yugoslavia) stated that he had abstained on the point raised by the Polish delegation because, while opposed to the addition of the item proposed by China, he considered that it was difficult to hold that the mere addition of a new item amounted to the reconsideration of a previous decision. However, he considered that rule 112 should be applied as soon as the Committee was concerned with anything more than the mere addition of a new item.

39. He thought that the Committee would be acting against the decision taken a few days previously if it inserted the Chinese item before the USSR proposal. Moreover, the point raised by the representative of China would lead into the realm of ideological dispute, which would not augur well for solution of the third item, relating to the prevention of a new war. He therefore favoured any proposal which would insert the Chinese item in the agenda as late as possible.

40. Mr. HOOD (Australia) stated that his delegation would support the insertion of the Chinese item in the place of the present third item, but saw no reason why the remainder of the order should be disturbed at that point. However, if the insertion of the Chinese item resulted in any undue detriment to the Palestine question, then he thought there would be no objection to examining items 4 and 5, namely the USSR proposal and the Palestine question, concurrently. He pointed out that there had been at least one precedent for such simultaneous discussion of two items by the Committee.

41. Mr. WIERBLOWSKI (Poland) said that the question was not merely of the order of consideration of items on the agenda, but was much more far-reaching. That had been understood by one of the representatives, who had said that war was raging in China and that therefore the Committee had to hasten to the crystallization of the

United Nations point of view on the issue. In addition, there were political events occurring in China. The Kuomintang Government was being liquidated, although it was still represented in the United Nations. What was at stake, therefore, was the adoption, in time, of decisions that would hamper the constructive work of peace until the Kuomintang Government finally crashed and absconded to Formosa, or somewhere else. Mr. Wierblowski praised the sense of responsibility shown by the representative of Iceland and considered that the latter's proposal should be viewed as a compromise. There was no sense in the Australian proposal, which was likely to lead only to disorder and chaos in the Committee's debate. On the other hand, the proposal of Iceland would contribute to a calm and serene atmosphere, and he therefore supported it.

42. The CHAIRMAN, referring to a point of procedure raised by several representatives, and in particular by the representative of Yugoslavia, reiterated that in his view the Committee was competent to decide the position to be given to the Chinese item on the agenda, but that if any other matter was raised which affected the order of the other items on the agenda, not consequential upon the Chinese item, rule 112 did apply.

43. Mr. ALVAREZ (Cuba) said that in view of the Chairman's interpretation, he would withdraw his proposed amendment.

44. The CHAIRMAN stated that a vote would be taken on the Chinese proposal to the effect that the item should become item three on the Committee's agenda.

The proposal was not adopted, there being 22 votes in favour, 22 against and 9 abstentions.

45. Mr. KISELEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) withdrew his delegation's proposal in favour of that put forward by the representative of Iceland.

46. The CHAIRMAN stated that a vote would be taken on the proposal submitted by the representative of Iceland to the effect that the Chinese item be included in the agenda in the sixth position, immediately after the question of Indonesia.

The proposal was rejected by 30 votes to 14, with 12 abstentions.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that he would put the proposal of El Salvador to the vote. That proposal, which had also been put forward by other delegations, including Egypt, was that the Chinese question be placed fifth on the agenda, immediately after the question of Palestine but before that of Indonesia.

The proposal was adopted by 41 votes to 3, with 13 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 1.5 p.m.

TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Friday, 30 September 1949, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Lester B. PEARSON (Canada).

Question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies: general discussion

1. The CHAIRMAN read a letter (A/C.1/478/Rev.1) from the Italian observer with the United

Nations, dated 14 September 1949, asking the First Committee to allow representatives of Italy to take part in the discussion on the disposal of the former Italian colonies. He proposed that the request should be granted.

2. Mr. AL-JAMALI (Iraq) thought that if representatives of the Italian Government were invited to take part in the discussions, the same should be done with regard to all other parties concerned.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the question he had raised related solely to the admission of Italian representatives and that the admission of other interested parties should be considered separately. He recalled that a similar procedure had been adopted during the second part of the third session of the General Assembly.

At the Chairman's invitation, the representative of Italy took a seat at the Committee table.

4. Mr. McNEIL (United Kingdom) expressed his Government's regret that it had not been found possible to reach a solution during the second part of the third session and pointed out that the Assembly was responsible for the future welfare of more than three million men. The Committee should strive to find a solution which, in accordance with the Treaty of Peace with Italy, would be in harmony with the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security, taking also into consideration the views of other interested Governments.

5. During the second part of the third session of the Assembly the United Kingdom delegation had voted for a draft resolution (A/873) to grant Libya independence at the end of a period of ten years, during which period its constituent territories would be placed under the system of international trusteeship. The proposal had been lost by a narrow majority.¹ His Majesty's Government believed that in existing circumstances the trusteeship system no longer seemed practicable for those territories. In particular, it could not continue to refuse the people of Cyrenaica its indisputable right to the greatest possible measure of self-government consistent with the international obligations of the United Kingdom Government and with the rights of the General Assembly, under the Treaty of Peace with Italy, to make recommendations on the future of those territories. At the beginning of September the United Kingdom Government had therefore given the Emir of Cyrenaica absolute powers in the internal affairs of that territory within the limits just mentioned and without prejudice to the question of Libyan unity. With the entire approval of the United Kingdom Government and after having consulted his people, the Emir had proclaimed a constitution under which a Government of Cyrenaica would shortly be set up. Faced with a demand from representatives of the people of Cyrenaica for independence — a demand which it could not grant because of its international obligations — the United Kingdom Government, after careful deliberation, had decided that in accordance with the Treaty of Peace with Italy and the terms of the Charter from which its powers derived, it could not do less than grant Cyrenaica that full measure of self-government. Such measures would be not merely inevitable, but entirely justified in the case of the neighbouring territory of Tripolitania, should the Assembly again fail to reach agreement.

6. Although Libya was a backward territory, the United Kingdom Government thought that a system of international trusteeship was neither

advisable nor easy to apply so far as Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were concerned and that, after such long delay, those territories should be granted independence as soon as possible. With the best intentions, delegations might perhaps maintain that that evolution should take place under the trusteeship system. The United Kingdom Government, however, could not share that opinion, for it believed that the territories in question might achieve independence within a period of three to five years, whereas at least two years would be needed for the setting up and organization of a trusteeship system. The United Nations would thus spend twenty-four months in preparing for twelve months of action. If the Assembly adopted a proposal for the earlier granting of independence to those territories, the United Kingdom Government would immediately take the necessary steps in accordance with the provisions of Annex XI and article 23, paragraph 3, of the Treaty of Peace with Italy to give effect to such recommendations. Great efforts would be needed on the part of all concerned. However, the British administration had already called on Libyans to co-operate to a considerable extent in the task, and had thus initiated, so to speak, the "libyanization" of the country. For instance, in Cyrenaica, all the Ministers taking up their duties under the provisions of the agreement mentioned above would be Libyans. The police force had already been "libyanized", and the district officials in various districts of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania were Libyans. The creation of a modern society was a highly complex undertaking. The Assembly should therefore decide whether a time-limit should be fixed for the Administering Power to complete its task and, if so, what that time-limit should be. The time allotted for the transfer of powers neither could nor should be long. Nevertheless, the question required careful study, and the United Kingdom delegation would welcome frank and open discussion both within and without the Committee.

7. The question of Libyan unity had often been discussed. Since its liberation, Libya had been administered in three distinct territories, and that division was not entirely artificial in view of the large tracts of desert which separated them. The United Kingdom delegation thought that the union of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica appeared inevitable. It was, however, essential to know what form such a union should take. The physical and practical difficulties were so great that any hasty decision would be unwise, since it might impose on the inhabitants of the two territories a political structure which would be neither adapted to their needs nor in accordance with their desires. The best plan would be to let the inhabitants of Libya themselves decide the question once the respective territories had achieved the necessary development.

8. The United Kingdom Government was meanwhile co-ordinating the respective administrations through its control organs in London and it proposed, in accordance with the decisions accepted by the people of Cyrenaica, to provide the inhabitants of those territories with consultative facilities which would begin to function the following year.

9. As is known, Tripolitania had been closely associated with Italy in the past. The United Kingdom Government was fully aware of the special position of the Italian community in Tripolitania and of the close economic and geo-

¹ See *Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II*, 218th plenary meeting.

graphical links between the territory and Italy. Modern democratic Italy was well placed to supply those territories with the economic and, perhaps, the technical aid they might need. Those facts should be taken into consideration in any resolution the Assembly might adopt on the disposal of the territories. It would be to the economic and social interest of any future government of Tripolitania or Libya to conclude an agreement with Italy. Those questions would obviously have to be settled by negotiations between Italy and the future government of Tripolitania or Libya.

10. With regard to the Fezzan, the United Kingdom Government recognized the special interests of the French Government in the territory and would be glad to hear the views of that Government before expressing an opinion.

11. Turning to the question of Italian Somaliland, Mr. McNeil stated that the United Kingdom delegation supported the proposal submitted during the previous session of the General Assembly (A/873) for placing that territory under a system of international trusteeship with Italy as the Administering Power.

12. The situation with regard to Eritrea was more complicated. The United Kingdom delegation maintained its views that the central and eastern provinces, namely Massawa, Hamasien, Akkele-Guzai and Séraé, should be ceded to Ethiopia, subject to guarantees given to the Italian and other minorities and to municipal charters for the city of Asmara and the port of Massawa. At the previous session of the General Assembly, the United Kingdom delegation had supported¹ the proposal to incorporate the Western Province into the adjacent Sudan. It was again prepared to support such a proposal, for ethnic, geographical and religious reasons. If, however, the majority of the Assembly should consider such a solution inappropriate, or if a better solution were put forward, the United Kingdom delegation would raise no objection.

13. In some quarters, Mr. McNeil recalled, the proposals for the future of Eritrea had been described as dismemberment, and in the past months, there had been considerable propaganda for immediate independence. He considered such criticisms quite unjustified and urged the Committee to study very carefully the report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation on the territory. Like most colonial territories in Africa, Eritrea was not the product of any organic political growth, but the legacy of old merchant companies, of the colonial expansion of the nineteenth century, and of other fortuitous circumstances. Eritrea was a conglomeration of widely disparate races and religions.

14. Geographically speaking, the central provinces were part of the Ethiopian plateau, whereas the Danakil Coast and the port of Assab were connected geographically with the hinterland and had no lateral communication with Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, except by sea. The Western Province had geographical affinities with the Sudan. Eritrea was not homogenous, from either the religious or the racial point of view. The largest racial community was that of the Coptic Christians of Tigrean, or Ethiopian, race, who inhabited Asmara and the three neighbouring cen-

tral provinces. According to the most accurate estimates, they numbered 470,000 out of a total population of a little over a million, and they comprised 63 per cent of the population of the region which in accordance with United Kingdom proposals should be ceded to Ethiopia. Members of the Commission could have verified from the report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation that those Coptic Christians of Ethiopian race wished to be reunited with the Coptic Christians on the other side of the existing frontier.

15. The other racial groups in Eritrea which should be incorporated in Ethiopia were, first, the Danakils, a Moslem tribe of Arab-Afar origin, of whom approximately 80,000 inhabited the coastal strip south of Massawa. Most of the other members of that tribe were already included within the existing frontiers of Ethiopia. Then there were approximately 80,000 Saho-speaking Moslems who inhabited the eastern part of Akkéle-Guzai. Under the United Kingdom proposals, they could be incorporated in Ethiopia. Finally, there were 30,000 Moslems resident in Asmara, along with 60,000 Coptic Christians.

16. The Western Province was almost exclusively Moslem. Except for some semi-negroid tribes, the inhabitants were Beja Arabs. The largest of the Beja Arab tribes, the Beni Amar, was split between the Sudan and Eritrea. The Beja Arabs numbered some 300,000, out of a total population of 350,000. The United Kingdom Government therefore proposed that those peoples should not be incorporated in Ethiopia.

17. There was no common language in that territory. The Coptic Christians spoke Tigrinya, the same language as that spoken in the Tigré Province of Ethiopia. The Danakils spoke Afar. The Saho Moslems also spoke their own language. In the Western Province, however, the predominant languages were Tigrai and Beja Arabic. Bilen, Arabic, Baria and Baza were also spoken in the Western Province.

18. He thought those details were necessary in order to show how ill-founded was the propaganda campaign for retaining those territories as a unit under one form of administration or another. The territories had none of the racial, linguistic and geographic similarities which were the essential prerequisites of any independent State.

19. The United Kingdom proposals were not intended to dismember a living organism, but to separate into its component parts a completely artificial unit that it would be impossible to set up as a State, since it would be a prey to every form of internal conflict. Moreover, any other solution would deprive the 450,000 Coptic Christians of their undoubted right to unite with their fellow Copts. It was true that the report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation had stressed an almost unanimous desire that the country should be disposed of as a whole. The fact was, however, that the Coptic Christians who had expressed that view had done so because they wanted to see not only their own territory but also the Western Province incorporated into Ethiopia. The Moslem tribes had also expressed the opinion that the territory should be treated as a whole, but their reason for doing so was their hope that, as the representatives of a small majority, their views on the disposal of

¹ See *Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II*, 218th plenary meeting.

the territory would prevail if it were treated as a whole. Those Moslems really did not wish to be incorporated in Ethiopia. The current United Kingdom proposals went very far towards meeting that point of view, by reducing to the minimum the number of Moslems whose homes would in future be under Ethiopian sovereignty. Furthermore, the majority of the inhabitants of Ethiopia were Moslems and enjoyed equal rights in that country. The United Kingdom Government had also reason to believe that the Moslems of the plateau provinces, while not welcoming incorporation in Ethiopia, would accept it. That was the information conveyed during the latest conversations the British experts had had with the representatives of those areas.

20. In fact, the policy now recommended by the United Kingdom Government gave the fullest effect possible to the wishes of the various communities composing the territory and was a real contribution to the establishment of peaceful conditions in that part of the African continent. The United Kingdom proposals could not be considered incompatible with economic and political realities. It was to be hoped above all that no attempt would be made to exploit the situation for political propaganda purposes and that the three million human beings whose fate was at stake would not be used as instruments of some less worthy purpose than that of carrying out the task entrusted to the Committee.

21. Mr. ZARUBIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the Chairman for having had the text of the USSR draft resolution on the disposal of the former Italian colonies (A/C.1/487) distributed. The USSR delegation would explain its reasons for submitting that draft resolution during the consideration of the question at future meetings of the Committee.

22. Mr. JESSUP (United States of America) recalled that at its third session the General Assembly had devoted nearly six weeks to consideration of the problem of the disposal of the former Italian colonies without being able to reach a decision. A solution would have to be found which would above all be in conformity with the three principles laid down in article 11 of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, namely, the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants, the interests of peace and security, and the views of the interested Governments. But the principles relating to Non-Self-Governing Territories laid down in Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter would also have to be taken into account. The task was urgent, since, as Mr. McNeil had just pointed out, the destinies of some three million people were at stake. The United States Government had given intensive study to the problem in the light of opinions expressed during the previous session in the First Committee, and had sought to formulate its position by a balanced consideration of all the factors and principles involved.

23. With regard to Libya, the United States delegation was in favour of the establishment of an independent united Libya at a definite date in the near future. During the previous session of the General Assembly it had been recognized unanimously that Libya, of all the former Italian colonies, was furthest along the road to self-government. An overwhelming majority had been in favour of giving independence to that territory.

The people of Cyrenaica had already set up an internal administration under the Emir Sayid Idris el Senussi. The inhabitants of Tripolitania had expressed their hope of participating more completely in the government of their territory. A definite date acceptable to the General Assembly should be set for the granting of independence to that region. A reasonable period might be provided for the achievement of self-government.

24. On 21 September last the Secretary of State, Mr. Acheson, had stated¹ that the General Assembly ought to prepare a plan for the establishment of a united and independent Libya, during the current session. It should be possible to carry out that plan in three to four years. The type of government to be established should be specified by the inhabitants of Libya themselves, and should not be imposed by a foreign Power or even by the United Nations.

25. The form of the new State might be federal, unitary or of whatever form would be most acceptable to the population. The General Assembly might wish to recommend that the representatives of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan be consulted at least one year in advance in order to determine the type of association that would be most suitable. The existing Administrations of the United Kingdom and France should be charged with the responsibility of co-operating in the establishment of governmental institutions and of preparing Libya for its independence by taking whatever steps the General Assembly might deem necessary. They should submit annual reports to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, so as to inform the Members of the Organization of the measures in the interim period.

26. It might be appropriate for an administrative council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, to consult with the British and French Administrations and give them its views on the establishment of a government for a unified Libya and such related problems as common services, a common currency and frontier rectifications. It is obvious that such a council should in no way interfere in the administration of the territories.

27. With regard to Eritrea, the United States delegation maintained the views it had expressed during the previous session of the General Assembly, namely, that, with the exception of the Western Province, those territories should all be incorporated into Ethiopia. That incorporation should be subject to appropriate guarantees for the protection of minorities and to special municipal charters for the towns of Asmara and Massawa. The Western Province could be incorporated in the Sudan. The territory had been created artificially and its inhabitants were almost half and half Moslems and Coptic Christians.

The provinces of the Eritrean plateau were a continuation of the Ethiopian plateau. Although the population of the port of Massawa and of the province of that name was predominantly Moslem, it could not be separated from the Eritrean plateau without economic disruption. Assab and the Danakil coast had no lateral communication with the central provinces nor with the capital, Asmara. That area was geographically part of Ethiopia. Most of the members of the tribe to which the Danakils belonged lived within the

¹ See *Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly, 222nd plenary meeting.*

frontiers of Ethiopia. It seemed that the majority of the inhabitants of Eritrea, with the exception of those of the Western Province, were in favour of union with Ethiopia. The Western Province of Eritrea should be annexed to the Sudan for the following reasons: (a) the majority of the inhabitants were Moslems, as were the populations across the border in the Sudan; (b) three-fourths of the population of the Western Province were nomadic or semi-nomadic and led an entirely different life from that of the farmers of the central plateau of Eritrea; (c) the climatic conditions of the greater part of the hot and dry western and coastal plain comprising that area were similar to those of the Sudan; (d) the inhabitants of the region had religious ties with the Sudan, through the adherence of certain tribes such as the Beni Amer of the Western Province to the teachings of the Maghani Tariga or confraternity, which was closely related to some 30,000 of its members in Sudanese territory; (e) the basis of social organizations for both nomad and sedentary populations in Eritrea was the same as in the Sudan, namely the kinship idea; (f) the economic resources of the Western Province were limited; it could not survive as an independent modern State.

29. The General Assembly had the chance of making a long-term settlement for Eritrea. He was gratified that a majority in the last Assembly had supported the return of the eastern part of those territories to Ethiopia. It was to be hoped that further consideration of the problem would convince delegations that the Western Province should be incorporated into the Sudan.

30. The peoples of Italian Somaliland aspired to independence, which would enable them to develop their country and enable it to become a full member of the community of nations, enjoying all its rights. They should, therefore, be assisted towards that goal through the Trusteeship System of the United Nations. Political institutions in that country, in which the population was largely tribal and pastoral, were, as yet, underdeveloped. Were that population's need for a trusteeship system recognized, the type of trusteeship best suited to the circumstances should then be decided upon.

31. During the third session, the First Committee had discarded as unsuitable in the existing circumstances, both a direct United Nations trusteeship and a trusteeship with a multiple or joint administration. The problem at present reduced itself to a choice of the Power best qualified to administer that territory. The United States Government had consistently maintained that the Italian Government was best suited to assume that responsibility. At the preceding session of the General Assembly, that view had been shared by thirty-five Member nations.¹ The Italian Government, which had indicated its willingness to assume that responsibility, had formally declared that it would discharge such a task in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and, in particular, with the provisions which dealt with the International Trusteeship System (250th meeting). Having carefully considered the objections to such a solution of the problem, the United States Government had

come to the conclusion that the Italian Government, under a trusteeship agreement approved by the General Assembly, could and should provide an administration which would assist the peoples of Italian Somaliland in their economic, social and political development and in their progress towards independence and self-government. His Government had full confidence in the determination and ability of the democratic Italian Government and people to discharge faithfully such obligation toward the General Assembly of the United Nations and the people of Italian Somaliland.

32. His Government regarded the settlement of that complex problem as the best way for the United Nations General Assembly to face its grave responsibilities towards the peoples of those areas. That problem also afforded the General Assembly its first opportunity to demonstrate that it could discharge the solemn duty of making a great political decision which the four great Powers signatory of the Peace Treaty with Italy had agreed in advance to accept. His Government also shared the obligation to accept as binding the decision which the General Assembly might take.

33. The United States Government realized that the peoples of the areas concerned were in various stages of development. In regard to all those populations, however, primary concern should be for their interests, welfare and development until such time as they would become full-fledged members of the community of nations.

34. Ato AKLILOU (Ethiopia) recalled that his delegation had already provided a considerable amount of documentation on the importance that Ethiopia attached to the problem and on its claims. Ethiopia was bounded on the north and south by two former Italian colonies, with which its history had been closely connected and which, since their occupation by Italy, had served as bases for three aggressions against the country.

35. The Ethiopians, like their brothers in Eritrea, originally came from Arabia and had emigrated to Ethiopia through the former territory of Tigré. That country, which was now Eritrea, had formerly been the centre of the Ethiopian Empire and, in spite of the Italian occupation, age-old ties had remained unbroken between the two countries, where Christians and Moslems lived side by side under the same conditions. Hundreds of thousands of Eritreans spent several months of each year on the high Ethiopian plateau, and 200,000 Eritreans had settled in Ethiopia. Ten per cent of the officials in Ethiopia were pure Eritreans. They held important posts, especially in diplomacy, although the population of Eritrea was only one-fifteenth that of Ethiopia. Thus, there were fundamental arguments in favour of the reintegration of Eritrea with Ethiopia.

36. The Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris in 1946, and then the Paris Conference, had studied the problem, on which an investigation and a hearing of the parties concerned had been held the following year. Finally, during its third session, a four-fifths majority of the General Assembly had decided in favour of the Ethiopian claims.²

¹ See *Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II, 218th plenary meeting.*

² *Ibid.*

37. The Ethiopian delegation, which had always manifested the greatest possible objectivity and had taken care to refrain from carrying on any propaganda, wished to recall certain concrete and essential facts. In the first place, Eritrea had constituted an integral part of Ethiopia for thousands of years, and the whole population of the Eastern Eritrea of the high plateau was closely linked to Ethiopia by its language, religion, customs and political structure. Furthermore, 96 per cent of the population of the Asmara region on the high plateau wanted union with Ethiopia. The Danakil coast was inhabited by tribes whose chiefs lived in Ethiopia, and whose members lived in predominant numbers in that country. The plateau and the coast contained nearly 70 per cent of the whole population of Eritrea. Finally, hundreds of Eritreans had settled in Ethiopia or resided there periodically.

38. In the second place, Eritrea had never been an independent State. During the third session of the General Assembly, the representatives of Chile had stated (270th meeting) that, although the United Nations was under the obligation to help nations to become independent, it should not sponsor the creation of artificial States. Mr. Santa Cruz had also pointed out that only the colonial power had united the various parts of Eritrea. Thus, Eritrea had always been an integral part of Ethiopia, and the re-establishment of that situation would represent not an annexation, but rather the attainment of the aspirations of the Eritrean people. As the Australian representative had pointed out in his note of 6 August 1948 to the Deputy Foreign Ministers, Eritrea was an artificial administrative unit and the possibility therefore arose of either parts or the whole of Eritrea being combined with neighbouring countries.

39. In the third place, Eritrea would never, not even in the distant future, constitute an independent economic entity. The report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation gave adequate proof of the fact that, since Eritrea had been separated from Ethiopia, its imports, 50 per cent of which consisted of food products from Ethiopia, had always exceeded its exports by 200 per cent. It was stated in the report that Eritrea was not able to provide for its population and that its industry was in its initial stages of development. It was further stated that its national wealth and revenue could not provide for the development of the country.

40. Furthermore in 1935 only 5,000 Europeans were settled in that desertic territory called Eritrea. Since the end of the war, thousands of Italian unemployed had lived in camps maintained by the British Military Administration. Although Libya, with a population which did not exceed that of Eritrea, had absorbed 78,721 Italians in twenty-five years, Italy had been able to install only 4,100 of its nationals in Eritrea, and its long-term investments in that country over twice as long a period had amounted to only one million pounds sterling. It was also important to remember that the port of Massawa was dependent on trade with Ethiopia and that transit dues were an important element of the Eritrean budget. Massawa could not be cut off from its Ethiopian hinterland.

¹ See *Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly*, 225th plenary meeting.

41. The report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation indicated that a maximum of 10 per cent of the population was politically conscious. The representative of Pakistan had recalled that statement by the Commission of Investigation during the third session of the General Assembly and the representative of India had concluded that the inhabitants were not yet capable of self-administration (244th meeting). Finally, the Italian representative himself had stated before the Deputy Foreign Ministers, on 30 July 1948, that the former Italian colonies would need assistance for varying periods.

42. The representative of Ethiopia referred to the conclusion reached by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, who had said¹ that if the General Assembly had rejected the solution of unconditional independence by an overwhelming majority it was due to the fact that those territories were insufficiently developed politically and economically.

43. In May 1949 a number of political groups had demanded the creation of an independent Eritrea. Unable to achieve a settlement of their individual claims, those groups had united in a concerted demand for immediate independence, without reference to the inhabitants. The General Assembly, however, had upheld the Ethiopian claims by a four-fifths majority. It was possible that those same groups would put forward identical claims on the pretext that the situation had changed in three months. The fact remained, however, that a desert country such as Eritrea could not enjoy an independent economic existence and that the Christian population of the high plateau, under the ecclesiastical leadership of the Coptic Patriarch of Ethiopia, had chosen in favour of that country. The fate of at least 70 per cent of the population was closely bound with the destiny of Ethiopia and, in the region of Asmara, 96 per cent of the votes had been in favour of a union with Ethiopia. The leaders of the so-called political parties involved were thinking only of their personal interest and, given the utter impossibility of complete independence at however distant a period, their claims, in the same way as the establishment of further commissions of inquiry, would end only in delaying a solution.

44. Any attempt to establish an independent government would result in placing 70 per cent of the population under the subjection of a minority of 30 per cent localized in the Western Province. That would result both in domestic troubles and foreign intervention, in contempt of the provision of the Treaty of Peace with Italy relating to the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security. The situation would grow even more acute if Somaliland were put under the trusteeship of Italy.

45. The representative of Ethiopia went on to quote Mr. Schuman, Foreign Minister of France, who had warned the General Assembly of the danger of poverty and disorder and had stated that liberty should not take the form of a snare or an adventure for the territories in question.²

46. The problem was in urgent need of solution. Extreme poverty reigned in Eritrea and its trade deficit was greater than that of the other territories under discussion. The return of Eastern Eritrea to Ethiopia would no more be an an-

² *Ibid.*

nexation than had been the reunion of Piedmont with the other Italian states. So far as the Western Province was concerned the settlement approved by a four-fifths majority of the Assembly in the previous May left the door open to any kind of solution.

47. To Eritrea, independence meant the right to settle its own affairs and freedom from a foreign yoke. The report of the Four-Power Commission of Investigation brought out the fact that the Unionist Party drew no distinction between independence and union with Ethiopia.

48. If Italy would admit that Eritrea could not be separated from Ethiopia, a wholehearted and fruitful co-operation between former enemies could ensue. Italians were already working peacefully in Ethiopia. If Italy would have confidence in the firm intention of the Ethiopian Government to protect Italian interests in Eritrea there would be nothing to prevent immigration which could be of considerable advantage to Italy. As the representative of Argentina had pointed out in May 1949, thousands of Italians were living at perfect peace with the local Eritrean population.

49. All that Ethiopia asked was that the United Nations should recognize the reality of the situa-

tion in East Africa. Ethiopia had nothing but praise for the just and liberal policy of the United Kingdom, the United States and France. France, in particular, had declared that, although voting against the United Kingdom resolution, it was not taking sides against the Ethiopian claim.¹

50. It was thus the responsibility of the smaller nations to put an end to fifty years of imperialism in East Africa. Moreover, it was they who would first feel the effects if the General Assembly failed in its responsibilities under the Treaty of Peace with Italy and did not reach a solution. Was it not in the Charter, the pledge of justice and collective security, that the little nations put their trust? Ethiopia, confident because of the vote cast in its favour at previous sessions, hoped for the satisfaction for which it had waited so long.

51. Mr. McNEIL (United Kingdom) said it would be expedient that the representative of Italy should take part in the discussion at the earliest opportunity.

52. Mr. TARCHIANI (Italy) stated that the Italian Foreign Minister would be in a position to make a statement at the following day's meeting.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH MEETING

Held at Lake Success, New York, on Saturday, 1 October 1949, at 10.45 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Lester B. PEARSON (Canada).

Question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies: general discussion (continued)

1. Mr. COUVE DE MURVILLE (France) said that his delegation had deeply regretted the failure of the United Nations Assembly to solve the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies during the previous session, on account of the serious disadvantages inherent in the prolongation of a system of temporary administration. It was obvious that the question needed an urgent settlement. As at the previous session the French delegation would be guided by the principle of the welfare of the indigenous inhabitants and the special considerations which should be duly given to the interests and views of the States concerned with those territories, namely Ethiopia and democratic Italy. The task of the Committee, therefore, was to discover to what point the previous discussions of the General Assembly had led and what the possible solutions were.

2. With regard to Libya earlier discussions had shown that the essential problems were the independence of that territory, its unity and the choice of the authority responsible for its emancipation. All delegations had agreed that Libya was ready for independence, and that fact was borne out by the almost unanimous approval by the previous Assembly of a clause providing for the independence of Libya within a period of ten years.² However, most delegations felt that in view of the political immaturity of the local

population, the granting of independence should be subject to a transitional period. The Committee (272nd meeting) and the General Assembly had voted in favour of granting Libya independence after a transitional period under trusteeship. Unfortunately, that arrangement had been rejected because some delegations were opposed to Italian trusteeship over a part of Libya. Moreover, as the United Kingdom representative had remarked (278th meeting), a new fact had arisen, namely the establishment in Cyrenaica of a Government under the authority of the Emir of the Senussi, an important event which to some extent anticipated the decisions of the United Nations. That had led to the conclusion that the trusteeship method was outmoded and that new methods should be explored with a view to sparing the people concerned the risks of disorder, anarchy and poverty.

3. Although many representatives had stressed the importance of the unity of Libya and although the three territories constituting Libya obviously had affinities, the resemblances should not be exaggerated and the features distinguishing and even sometimes dividing Libya should not be overlooked. It was an error to attribute a common history to Tripolitania and Cyrenaica since the term "Libya" had been introduced only in 1934 when the Italian Government had decided to merge both territories into a single colony. It was equally erroneous to believe in the common economic bonds and the political similarities of those territories. Undoubtedly, delegations had

¹ See *Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II*, 218th plenary meeting.

² See *Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II*, 218th plenary meeting.