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PETITION FROM THE "UNIONE AFRICANI - SOMALIA", MOGADISCIO
CONCERNING SOMALILAND UNDER ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 84, and supplementary rules F and L of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council, to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of Somaliland, and to the Governments of Colombia, Egypt, and the Philippines as members of the Advisory Council for the Trust Territory of Somaliland, a communication dated 20 September 1951 from the "Unione Africani - Somalia", Mogadiscio concerning the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration.

This communication was transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa.

THE UNION OF AFRICAN PEOPLE (SOMALILAND)
- Central Bureau -
MOGADISCIO

20 September 1951

MEMORANDUM TO THE UNITED NATIONS VISITING MISSION TO SOMALILAND,
FROM THE UNION OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE IN SOMALILAND.

This party -- now independent of the Conference of Somaliland (Party) -- has no objections to raise against the activities of the Italian Administering Authority since its installation in the territory.

There is no need for us to stress the improvement in the standard of living, security, better schools and cultural organizations and the founding of several new democratic organs for the purpose of allowing the people of Somaliland to have a greater share in the political life of their country. The United Nations Visiting Mission will be fully able to see this for themselves.

We should like, however, to call the attention of the United Nations to a situation that we find reprehensible.

Upon assuming office, the Italian Administering Authority took over the bureaucratic system established by the British.

The latter had based their policy on a political party which had an anti-Italian bias and an extremist nationalist programme. To carry out their policy, the British had seen to it that at least 95 per cent of those employed by the Administration and of the Police were people belonging to the only pro-British Party.

The Italian Administering Authority has been willing to maintain this situation, which we, for our part, find quite intolerable.

We have always championed the equality of all Somali people in the Administration. We ourselves have asked that there should be no recriminations nor any political discrimination upon Italy's return to Somaliland as Administering Authority on behalf of the United Nations.

/We cannot

We cannot therefore tolerate the fact that the Administration still maintains those principles of discrimination against us adopted by the British, whereby scarcely 5 per cent of the work available in the Administration is left open to members of our Party, who, above all things, constitute the true and absolute majority of the Somali people.

Signed

POLITICAL SECRETARY GENERAL

/UNION OF

UNION OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE OF SOMALILAND (U.A.S.)
Central Bureau

Mogadiscio, 19 May 1951

POLITICAL EVOLUTION IN SOMALILAND

ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES ON THE U.A.S. POLICY ON THE PROBLEM OF
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND TRIBES, IN RESPECT
BOTH TO THE PRESENT SITUATION AND TO THE FUTURE OF SOMALILAND.

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It will be necessary to start with a short historical summary:

It can be said that no political movement capable of being called a "party" existed in Somaliland up to the outbreak of World War II. Up to that time the concept of "party" was practically unknown to the mass of the Somali people. In the period between 1938 and 1939 there were some signs of new developments. Some new ideas -- as yet totally theoretical and idealistic -- arose among a very few of the more cultivated Somalis, usually people who had lived abroad occupying fairly important posts. Upon their return to Somaliland, these people brought with them their new ideas and the fruit of their observation but neither the times nor the system of government allowed of any development of those ideas. The mass of the people, who were not accustomed to look beyond the limits of their tribe or, at the very most, of their country, were content to live according to the traditional system and under the direction of the Governor and his paternal rule.

War, contact with other African peoples under British Administration and the wave of new political and social ideas and undertakings awakened new concepts and opened new horizons. We will not analyse the causes, the reasons and motives of such an awakening, nor will we express our judgement of such a phenomenon. We will only state the facts:

Up until 1940 the tribe was the only political and social element around which the Somalis could gather.

Between 1941 and 1950, several parties arose and developed, hesitantly at first and with limited social aims, then with distinct political and combative characteristics, thereby establishing a new institution in Somali political and social life. Here again we are concerned with facts and not with any opinion concerning the individual parties or with any inquiry into the causes of their formation or development.

/The first

The first parties formed did not have specifically political characteristics; only later, in fact did they claim the name "party". Nevertheless, the idea found fertile ground; the parties grew fast, forming relatively perfect and well disciplined organizations with clear programmes and aims. The idea of a type of political organization beyond the limits of the tribe had therefore been launched and -- one can readily say -- successfully.

As the moment approached for the decision on Somaliland's future, more and more of the parties and political organizations started to establish purely political programmes as they awaited the arrival in Somaliland of the Four Power Commission of 1948. Then the parties began to flourish with fresh vigour. New parties were created and new political groups formed. There was a great expansion of propaganda from the towns to the most obscure and distant villages. This development took place spontaneously as well as resulting from the political influence exercised by the European countries interested in the eventual status of the territory.

As a result of these and other circumstances which need not be mentioned here, the various parties developed and new ideas reached the people and their traditional chieftains. Villages and chiefs aligned themselves more or less openly with one particular movement or party and for the first time allowed themselves to be advised and guided.

As an interesting point in our thesis, we may record the fact that not every party had a clear-cut national and intertribal character: Many parties were based exclusively upon the tribe, as if the tribe itself had simply undergone an outward transformation while still clinging to the strong traditional ancestral allegiance. Even so, one can say that such an occurrence reflected at least the new needs and the necessity of finding something new outside, if not above, the clan itself.

The year 1947 and the beginning of 1948 mark the peak of the development and activity of the various parties and movements.

One can say that in that period, either directly or indirectly, the prevailing influence in Somali political life had passed to the parties, with the ethnic groups following the new movements, led to a great extent by young and progressive people.

/Once the

Once the heat of the political struggle had died down, party activity became calmer.

After the transfer of power to the AFIS the relative position of the two political forces -- the tribes, representing tradition, and the parties, representing new hopes -- was in a state of fluidity.

After a year of Italian administration it may be said that the forces of tribe and tradition have regained a great part of the lost ground and today they once again represent the main force in Somali society. I repeat that it is not my intention here either to express opinions or to inquire into the causes of these events, but to confine myself to the facts.

Today we face a serious problem: Tribe or Party? Opinions of Somali exponents differ on this question, which is often considered from a purely individual and selfish point of view. The traditionalists foster the interests of the tribe, while there are others who see a solution for all the problems of Somaliland in the rapid abolition of all tribal ties. We do not propose here to go into the arguments put forward by the two opposing factors or the consequences they would probably have.

Realizing the importance of this question, the U.A.S. has made a long study of it and our conclusions may be summed up as follows: It is a fact beyond any doubt that in the tribes and traditions are to be found the most vigorous forces in present-day Somali life. To disregard these forces or to try to ignore them is to disregard reality. Apart from the fact that the history of Somaliland must not be forgotten or denied, our traditions are bound up with the tribes and it is to their force that for centuries we owe our victories and achievements against other strong and warlike nations.

On the other hand, this new party activity does exist. It demonstrates the longing and the hope to achieve a new and more evolved social and political structure, the hope of entering, with pride, the group of civilized and free nations, the need for finding a constitutional means to give us the greatest opportunity for political evolution.

The U.A.S. is convinced that both truths should be taken into account if a realistic rather than a factious or theoretical policy is aimed at. The actual problem, we think, should be put in these terms: Assuming that the objective we should aim at is the formation of a free and civilized State, upon which force should we rely? Tribe or Party?

/We have

We have the opportunity, offered for the first time in world history, to build our independence step by step -- I would say almost scientifically -- with objective and experienced guidance. Thus we can plan and not think solely of attaining our ends through violent social upheaval. Politics is, among other things, the science of finding the means to an end. To all honest people in Somaliland, the aim to be achieved is peaceful: the point is to agree upon the way to follow, honestly and freely and with full respect for the opinion of minorities.

We repeat: two forces -- now apparently in opposition and fighting one another to exhaustion -- do exist. This struggle is extremely harmful, because it produces a stalemate instead of (political) activity. But is it really necessary to base a political programme upon one or the other? We believe it is not. Here is our programme, our cause: UNITE THE LIVING AND VITAL FORCES OF OUR TRADITION AND OUR FAITH WITH THE NEW FORCE OF THE PARTIES. Some say this is impossible. We believe it can be done, even though it is not an easy task. Of course it would be far easier to adopt an extreme solution than to weld together what is best in the two movements. The way is wearisome, filled with misunderstandings and perhaps even temporary failures. But we believe that is the sure path and we intend to follow it with all our heartfelt patriotism.

We should outgrow the concept of tribe without renouncing our history and tradition, through a spontaneous process of constitutional evolution growing out of the very tribes themselves and not violently imposed from without.

Thus we evolve from a real force, the tribe, and -- through a gradual and natural transformation, by strengthening whatever good may exist in the tribe -- we will be able to outgrow the tribal system without social agitation and unrest, preserving our strength and increasing it as we move toward the new and better concept of the modern State.

Are we too optimistic? No. We have before us ten years of peaceful work, hand in hand with the Administration, which will undoubtedly be in sympathy with our impartial endeavours. Above all, however, in this as in other cases, we cannot expect everything to come from the Administration, as the rain falls from heaven: we ourselves must experiment. This toil will foster our spiritual and political growth and, perhaps more than the forces of culture, will enable us to face the responsibilities of government which require, above all, character and courage.

/Our programme

Our programme is clear and simple. We have no ulterior motives to hide. We work in the open, ready to defend our work and our patriotism, just as we are ready to accept honest advice, to recognize any mistakes we may make and to correct them.

Gradually, as the authority of the tribe disappears, it will pass to the party. In the party the chief will gradually come to realize that besides the narrow interest of his own tribe, there are the broad interests of all the Somali people. The rank and file will not see in the party -- as is too often the case today -- a mere solution to their personal problems through political influence. We think that a party should have a higher function -- the function of political education of the masses and chiefs -- though it should not forget cultural and social activities which can also be handled by non-political agencies. The chiefs must regard us with confidence and not think that our intention is to cast them aside or replace them. The chiefs are by tradition accustomed to wield power and to handle collective problems; it would be foolish, therefore, to cast aside their natural and acknowledged capabilities and influence. Within the party, contemplating the boundless and marvelous horizon of a Somali nation, they themselves, with courage and enthusiasm, will do their part towards enlarging the present restricted outlook, thereby becoming, together with the younger generation, the builders of the Somali State.

With such a programme, with pure aims and the clear determination to go on our way without wavering, we call upon all the Somali people and all the political movements in Somaliland to accomplish the supreme aim of our life.

Signed: Mohamed Scek Osman Haile
Political Secretary-General of the U.A.S. and
Territorial Counsellor.