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PETITION FROM THE "COMITATO CENTRALE DEI COMMERCianti", 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 4 September 1951 from the "Comitato Centrale dei Commercianti", 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.

To The Honourable Visiting Mission of the United Nations.

Mogadiscio

The Central Committee of Merchants trading in Mogadiscio has the honour and duty to bring the following remarks concerning the general situation of the country's trade and industry to the attention and fair judgment of the honourable Visiting Mission:

Somaliland's trade and industry, as well as all the big export and import firms, are monopolized by the Italians, whom the AFIS helps and favours by fair means or foul. To point out some characteristic and more important instances, we note:

1) The SAIS --which, in spite of its deceitful name "Italian and Somali Joint Stock Company", is exclusively Italian, without any Somali participation -- monopolizes the production and commerce of sugar, being free to fix its price regardless of any resulting damage to the indigenous inhabitants. Among many other complaints and petitions sent to the AFIS asking for protection, we enclose a copy of our own report on the SAIS, with the answer of the Administrator. At the time of our report, on 22 March 1951, the price of sugar was 171.15 shillings per quintal (one quintal equals 220 pounds) and, instead of obtaining the requested cut in price, sugar subsequently reached the price of S/213.70 per quintal, while in neighbouring Kenya the price is S/70 and in Mogadiscio S/110. Nevertheless the SAIS still demands S/204 per quintal. This exploitation has actually been admitted by the Manager of the SAIS himself, who, speaking not long ago before the Mogadiscio Chamber of Commerce, remarked that "the AFIS could not sell locally produced sugar for less than S/204 per quintal, because nobody could foresee what would happen to the Company and its equipment in nine years; hence the Society was obliged to employ every possible means of exploiting production at the present time."

2) Thé Cosmo de Vincenzi Electric Company of Mogadiscio is left quite free to act as it thinks fit. Returning to Somaliland in 1948 Mr. Cosmo de Vincenzi, owner of the Company, being the type of gentleman he is, decided to raise the price of electricity from S/0.45 to S/0.95 the Kwh.

/Since July

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Since July 1951, Mr. de Vincenzi has been asking S/1.45 the Kwh. As for the AFIS, it proposed a revision of the price only when it saw the frightening reaction and tremendous criticism of the public. Nevertheless Mr. de Vincenzi -- a well known fascist who came to Somaliland in 1922 as a lieutenant and druggist and is now a millionaire with interests not only in Somaliland but also in Italy and elsewhere abroad -- has insisted on asking his unlawful price, as is clearly demonstrated in the enclosed circular letter, dated 24 September 1951, in spite of the fact that such a price would be inadmissible in any other part of the world. While discussing these vital problems we wish to point out that both the companies mentioned above deal with native workers in a manner unparalleled in any other country. The inhabitants of the towns of Merca, Brava and Chisimaio are also ill-treated by the Italian owners of the Electric Companies. De Vincenzi's greed becomes even more apparent when one remembers that all the equipment of his Company was purchased in 1925. His amazing affluence has simply been squeezed from the Somali people.

3) The two drug stores in Mogadiscio and the one in Merca, under Italian management, charge incredible prices for drugs and other goods. This fact is, moreover, so well known that there is no need to provide a detailed list of their prices. In any case, no serious action has been decided upon by the AFIS to check the misdeeds of these drug stores.

4) The S.A.C.A. (Co-operative Agricultural Joint Stock Company) in Genale uses the absolute methods of a monopoly, since the requests of several well-known Somali tradesmen for shares in the Company have been turned down and their application to export bananas and other Somali fruits refused. The transport of bananas from the farms to the customs offices in Merca and Chisimaio is, moreover, entrusted for the most part to Italian lorry owners and their associates, leaving the Somali people out of any earnings gained in such an important branch of work.

5) Customs tariffs have been steadily rising for both exports and imports. The same is true of all other taxes. Every trading permit in any field is subjected to the levy of various taxes, to say nothing of taxes for occupation of public land, on huts, buildings, rents, grain and cattle markets. A tax is levied even upon an egg or a bottle of yogourt. By taxing a calf

/from the

from the Bardera to Mogadiscio market, for instance, and on through the stockyard to the distributor, the AFIS collects as much as S/40 upon a single calf.

6) To levy these taxes and the other duties and numerous types of fines, as well as to proclaim or enforce new laws, the AFIS bases its action upon edicts issued from 1924 -- the year the first fascist Governor, Quadrumviro Maria Cesare De Vecchi, came to Somaliland -- to 1940, including those edicts referring to the Italian Empire in East Africa, despite the fact that in the Trusteeship Agreement the Italian Government assumed the obligation of enacting new edicts and laws as soon as it came into power, more consistent with the present needs of the Territory. When it is to their convenience the AFIS re-issues proclamations promulgated by the British occupation authority under war conditions, while all the British laws considered to be against Italian interests have been suppressed.

To crush any moral reaction of the Somali people, the AFIS screens itself with its so-called "laws" or the fascist edicts mentioned above.

7) The State Monopoly of tobacco and matches has even forbidden the small quantity formerly imported freely from Zanzibar and used by the natives as chewing tobacco. The State Monopoly has taken over this chewing tobacco and is now selling it at a very high price. By a recent decree -- No. 123 of 19 September 1951 -- the AFIS has increased the price of goods sold by the Monopoly, that is to say all kinds of cigarettes and matches made in Italy, which are of a poor quality and the kind we like least. The price of matches has been increased by 50 per cent, while foreign tobacco, the import of which is strictly forbidden, is almost impossible to find, although formerly it was much cheaper and much more popular.

8) Up to now the Banks opened by the AFIS have not shown any satisfactory signs of helping Somali businessmen, even those who own large estates in Mogadiscio, while the smallest Italian farmer, tradesman or industrialist gets any financial help he asks for, no matter how great.

9) When it came to power, the AFIS requisitioned our brick buildings to help its Italian officials and employees and all Italians in general, even though it was against our will and they fixed inadequately low rents.

10) Under the former British Administration order and security were satisfactorily maintained solely by the Somali Police Corps. Now, besides the Somali Police Corps, the AFIS has reinstated former fascist organizations, such as the Guardie di Finanza, Vigili Urbani and Carabinieri (Customs Police, City police, Military police) which, apart from causing an increase of expenditure in our budget, are harmful for our people and most of all for the tradesmen. These military corps are superfluous and the Territory does not need them.

11) No widely known tradesman is allowed to participate in Territorial, Municipal, Residential or Public Health Councils. The Somali representatives in these councils are all chosen and subsidized (by the AFIS) to stifle the voice of the people.

To sum up, we find ourselves at a very low ebb and we suffer greatly. Instead of improving economically we are not far from the miserable standard of living we had under Fascist rule, which lasted from 1924 to 1940 and of which the memories make us cry tears of blood.

After 1941 Somaliland revived. It is a very young tree which needs fatherly care and help, while, to be outspoken, this tree is now shrivelling because the AFIS waters it every day with "hydrochloric acid and sour milk". Unless saved by the justice and daily care of the great United Nations, its fatal decay and death is undoubtedly assured.

From every point of view we still need United Nations care and guidance, if this great and supreme Organization still cares for Somaliland's welfare.

With the most sincere and deepest gratitude, please accept our devoted homage.

THE COMMITTEE:

* Scerif Akil Abubaker
* Mohamud Hassan
* Hassan Barre
* Omar Hassan
* Scek Abdulla Mohamed
* Ahmed Scek Ali

Ali Mohamed known as "Afuene"
* Hagi Osman Adan
Mohamed Ossoble
* Abdi Hagi Hussen
* Osman Ahmed Roble
* Hagi Hasci Ahmed
* Osman Scek Oman known as "Talin"
* Hagi Mohamud Abdulla
* Hagi Ahmed Barre (signed in Arabic)
Hagi Abo Imanchio

* Those starred signed document personally.

/To His

To His Excellency the Ambassador Giovanni Fornari
Administrator of Somaliland
and to: Territorial Council,
Consultative Council of the United Nations
Mogadiscio

We, the undersigned members of the Committee of Somali tradesmen for the "Makaie" and grocery shops in Mogadiscio, with all the respect due to Your Excellency, state the following in the general interest of our people:

1) Lately, commerce in sugar, the most necessary foodstuff for the natives, has become more and more difficult, deteriorating from every point of view. This is the obvious consequence of the monopoly now controlled by the SAIS. This Italian company practises any and every possible system to obtain illicit benefits without any consideration for the interest and the eventual harm to the natives;

2) The present system, used by the SAIS for distribution of sugar, is not based upon any principle of fairness, pity, or humanity. In effect, racial and other discrimination is widely practised. Some Europeans get all the white sugar they want daily. Moreover, the SAIS grants the largest possible quantity of sugar to its Somali wholesalers, even if they do not possess the prescribed licence for trade. These wholesalers, well known as selfish speculators, sell the sugar in the black market for extremely high prices. No one can deny the existence of unlawful interests behind the present system of distribution and sale of sugar.

3) Even more grave is the fact that, while it is impossible to find any sugar on the market, the SAIS helps some fellows who are not "recommended" or licensed salesmen and who are able to obtain large quantities of sugar, which they sell on the black market for a price never less than S/2,340 per sack, while the regular price is S/171.15;

4) In consequence, to obtain one quintal of sugar the owners of the "Makaie" and other groceries in Mogadiscio are obliged to go to the SAIS offices every morning for more than a month, remaining there under the hot sun for hours on end.

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5) With the full approval of the officials controlling sugar distribution, the SAIS allows the distribution of brown sugar only to the natives. Indeed, some well-known Italians among these officials, when asked why such unfair and regrettable treatment should be maintained, answered: "You are brown and as such you shall get brown sugar, the others (the Italians) are white and so shall get white sugar." Let us ask where are the human rights and the equality of democracy? We have been wounded by all types of injury. And on this question we remind Your Excellency that in several circumstances brown sugar has been found dangerous for the health.

6) Besides being a wholesale company, the SAIS has also practised retail trade which should have been reserved for the natives, by opening special stores for the retail sale of sugar;

7) Our brothers come from the interior of the Territory with regular purchase licences granted by their authorities, but after a painful sojourn of several weeks in Mogadiscio they are not able to obtain more than five per cent of the quantity authorized by their district officials, while the officials of the SAIS retain their licences, making it look as if the whole quantity they were entitled to had been given out. Where does the difference go? That is very easy to discover.

8) The wholesale price of locally produced sugar, fixed by the SAIS, is excessive. A quintal of sugar costs S/171.15 while in neighbouring Kenya its price is S/70.00. We are told that sugar cannot be imported because the SAIS have obtained monopoly rights on sugar granted by the authorities in Rome, for which they pay the AFIS a tax of S/145.00 per quintal. This means that no consideration is given to the interests of the population of the Territory or the damage which they subsequently suffer. It would be fairer to consider the interests of the natives, by finding some system which could function in the combined interests of both the Italians and our people;

9) It has been brought to our knowledge that the SAIS has taken upon itself the obligation of producing all the sugar necessary to meet the total needs of the population in the Territory, in order to avoid free trade in this product. Nevertheless we have ascertained that this company is completely unable to meet our need of sugar;

(/10) During

10) During the British Administration -- a period of full-scale war and later of military occupation -- we never had such confusion or so many difficulties over sugar as we do now; everything was well and intelligently organized; all shops were classified in various categories, on the basis of a fair principle of distribution, by which we were able to obtain large quantities of sugar to keep in storage, which later was sold in addition to the sugar ration.

11) It is our duty to state that we have continuously informed the Office of Industry, Internal Trade and Work, and protested about the situation, always requesting some remedy. But, unfortunately we have obtained no satisfactory results.

Your Excellency: The above-mentioned facts which we take the liberty of placing before Your Excellency truly represent the present situation, with neither exaggerations nor lies. Accordingly, we beseech Your Excellency to be good enough to protect the natives, once and for all, in accordance with democratic justice, ^{and} to safeguard their interests against the yoke of the SAIS monopoly.

We beg Your Excellency authoritatively and fairly to examine the possibility of decreeing, as a first measure, the complete freedom of the sugar trade in Somaliland, permitting the import from abroad of whatever quantity is needed. We also beg Your Excellency to adopt whatsoever measures Your Excellency may deem wise in order to rectify the situation we have described.

With the most profound respect,

Mogadiscio, 22 March 1951

THE COMMITTEE:

- 1) Ali Mohamed, known as "Afuen" (signed)
- 2) Mohamed Farah Hassan (signed)
- 3) Ahmed Sceek Ali
- 4) Saydi Herzi Nur (signed)
- 5) Maani Sceek Abudaker (signed)
- 6) Osman Ahmed Roble (signed)
- 7) Abbas Farah Hussen
- 8) Mohamed Issa Ali (signed)
- 9) Mohamed Uehlie Barre (signed)
- 10) Abdalla Abduraman, known as Cidea (signed)
- 11) Mohamed Omar Mohamed (signed)

A.F.I.S.

OFFICE OF INDUSTRY, INTERIOR TRADE AND WORK

Prot. N. 378005

Mogadiscio, 10 April 1951.

Subject: Sugar trade

To: Mr. Ali Mohamed, otherwise known as Afuenne, representative of the Committee owners of "Makaie" and food shops.

Mogadiscio

Reference is made to your statement of 22 March.

The results of a careful inquiry into the difficulties described in your petition are the following:

1) The difficulties pertaining to the distribution of sugar have indeed increased. The cause of this must be found in the exceptional increase of consumption. The average sale per month is now more than double the quantity distributed according to the rationing scheme introduced by the former Administration.

2) No monopolies of any kind and in favour of anybody exist. During the second half of 1950, several companies imported about 10,000 quintals of sugar from abroad and three different companies are at present importing more than 30,000 quintals of sugar.

3) The Administration has been concerned for some time with the distribution of sugar and the problem of eliminating the troubles you complain of. To this end it has detached two sergeants of the Custom and Duties Corps for duty at the SAIS; as far as is known, they execute their duty with perfect alacrity, fairness and courtesy, in spite of the frequently aggressive and menacing behaviour of the tradesmen.

Moreover, it has been possible to ascertain that the personnel of the distribution branch have never addressed any kind of abusive language to anybody.

4) Distribution is carried out according to principles of absolute impartiality laid down by this Administration. Last month, in comparison with 5,477 quintals of sugar distributed to the native tradesmen, only 221 quintals were granted to the managers of Italian shops and bars, which

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moreover are patronized by native customers, and 159 quintals were granted to the factories making syrups and candies for the almost exclusive use of the natives.

5) The yellow sugar (SIC) at present on sale is perfectly edible and now represents a very small part of our production, whereas formerly the proportion of the yellow sugar was often eighty per cent of the total production.

6) Tradesmen coming from the interior have to wait a long time to be served because of their exorbitant demands, which in some instances reach ten times the normal requests. Some difficulties have been eliminated by centralizing the issue of residents' warrants in the Office of Industry, Interior Trade and Work.

7) The sale price of sugar has been fixed by the Price Control Committee on the basis of a rigorous analysis of production costs.

It should be pointed out that the present price asked by the SAIS (S/115.00 per quintal) is considerably cheaper than the prices in the neighbouring markets of Aden and Djibouti, where a quintal FOB costs about S/150.00.

8) The SAIS has no other organization for wholesale distribution except the SCIS, which is the Commercial Branch of the SAIS.

There is no evidence that the SCIS has any retail branches.

(Signed) G. Fornari

Administrator
