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FORMER ITALIAN COLONIES

SUPPLEMENT TO THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSIONER IN LIBYA

Letter dated 22 September 1950 from the United Nations
Commissioner in Libya to the Secretary-General

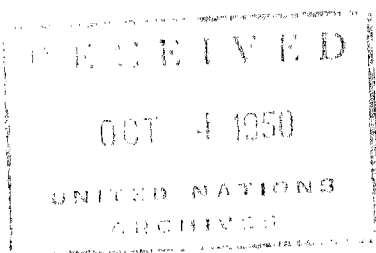
Paris, 22 September 1950

Referring to my letter of 4 September 1950, I have the honour to transmit herewith a supplementary report on the Libyan question. I should be grateful if you would have this supplementary report distributed to the Members of the General Assembly in order that it may be discussed at the fifth session.

As the report states, it could not be submitted for consultation to the Council for Libya as the latter adjourned on 3 September.

(Signed) A. BELT

United Nations Commissioner in Libya.



/SUPPLEMENT TO

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSIONER
IN LIBYA

This supplementary report was not drawn up in consultation with the Council for Libya, as it was drafted after the Committee of Twenty-One had adjourned and while the Council for Libya was no longer in session.

THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY-ONE

1. On 25 July the Commissioner invited the twenty-one persons indicated in the list approved by the Council for Libya to meet in committee at Tripoli (see Chapter VII of the Annual Report, paragraphs 175-177).
2. He so informed the Acting Chief Administrator. The Committee of Twenty-One met for the first time on 27 July 1950 in the Commissioner's office. It adopted its rules of procedure which laid down in particular that the Committee's decisions should be taken by a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting, and that fifteen members would constitute a quorum.
3. After approving the rules of procedure, the Committee elected as its chairman one of the representatives of Tripolitania, His Eminence the Mufti, and as secretaries a representative of the Fezzan and a representative of Cyrenaica. It also adopted an agenda for the study of a plan providing for the representatives of the inhabitants of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan to meet as a National Assembly. The agenda was as follows:
 - (a) Number of members of the National Assembly.
 - (b) Should representation on the National Assembly be proportional to the number of inhabitants, or equal for the three territories composing Libya?
 - (c) Should the National Assembly be elected or appointed?
 - (d) If the principle of appointment were adopted, how should the members of the Assembly be appointed?
 - (e) Date and place

(c) Date and place of the meeting of the Assembly.

4. It was also decided that the question of the representation of the minorities on the National Assembly should be discussed after the items on the above agenda had been exhausted.
5. At its meeting on 7 August 1950, the Committee decided that the National Assembly should consist of sixty representatives on the basis of an equal number of representatives for each of the three territories of Libya. At the same meeting the Committee studied the question whether the members of the National Assembly should be elected or appointed. The members from the Fezzan supported the principle of election asserting that it was the only one which was in conformity with the democratic principles in force in civilized countries, and that it was, moreover, the only way of ascertaining the wishes and aspirations of the people. The members from Tripolitania took a different view, they considered that ⁱⁿ the present circumstances it would be difficult to hold elections in Tripolitania since there was no national government in that territory, and that no reliance could be placed on the British administration which could, if it so wished, influence the results of the elections.
6. The representatives of Cyrenaica supported their colleagues from Tripolitania and emphasized that, in their opinion, elections in Tripolitania would be ill-timed and that if such elections were held a considerable interval of time would be required to prepare the electoral campaign.
7. On being put to the vote, the proposal that members of the National Assembly should be appointed received only 13 votes, or less than the two-thirds majority laid down in the rules of procedure. The proposal that members of the National Assembly should be elected received only 4 votes. In order to find a way out of the impasse, the Committee decided to adjourn the meeting in the hope that in the interval a compromise solution might be reached.
8. Meanwhile, the Fezzan representatives went to Sebha to consult Ahmed Bey Seif el Nasr on this important matter, and the meetings of the Committee were postponed. On the return of the Fezzan representatives from Sebha the Committee held an important meeting on Tuesday 29 August. The Fezzan representatives maintained their view and insisted that representatives to the National Assembly should be elected. The Tripolitanians and the Cyrenaicans said they were opposed to the holding of elections, and the same arguments were reiterated by both sides. The following day, Wednesday 30 August, the Committee rejected

by 7 votes to 10, (four members being absent) the proposal that representatives to the National Assembly should be elected.

9. A further meeting was arranged for Thursday 7 September to discuss the manner of appointing representatives to the National Assembly. The idea of the postponement was to enable the members of the Commission to agree on the manner of appointment and to try to convince the representatives from the Fezzan to change their attitude in the light of the vote which had just taken place in the Commission.

10. The United Nations Commissioner had returned to Tripoli on 7 September and had immediately asked the members of the Commission about the progress of the work. At a meeting held on 8 September 1950, the Commission unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the Commissioner's assistance in its efforts to find a solution to the fundamental question which had been delaying its work for some time. The resolution also requested the Commissioner to inform the Commission of the outcome of his endeavours by 18 September 1950 at the latest. That particular date had been chosen because of the forthcoming departure of the Commissioner for Lake Success and because the members had to return home for the feast of Bairam. The Commissioner immediately began conversations with the leaders of the political parties in Tripolitania, Ahmed Seif el Nasr Bey, at Sabha, and Emir el Senussi, near Benghazi. He wanted to persuade Ahmed Seif el Nasr Bey and his Council to accept the principle of appointment and to get the political parties in Tripolitania to agree to a list of Tripolitanian members for the approval of the Commission which would be as representative as possible.

11. The conversations held for several days with the political parties in Tripolitania showed promise of a successful outcome; unfortunately, Ahmed Seif el Nasr Bey maintained his attitude and continued to ask for elections to the National Assembly and the immediate return of the Fezzan delegation to Sabha for the celebrations.

At the beginning of the meeting between the Commissioner and Ahmed Seif el Nasr Bey on 13 September, at Sabha, the Bey handed the Commissioner a verbal note which is summarized below.

During the conversation which followed, the Bey repeatedly emphasized that in no circumstances would he be able to agree to minorities being represented in the Libyan National Assembly.

/In a conversation :

In a conversation which the Commissioner then held with His Highness the Emir, at Beda (Cyrenaica), the latter also expressed the view that minorities could not be represented in the National Assembly. The Emir agreed to a suggestion made by the Commissioner and previously discussed with Ahmed Bey that the Committee of 21 should adjourn on 16 September and resume its work on 9 October.

In the above-mentioned verbal note, Ahmed Beif el Near Bey, speaking in the interest both of the Fezzan population and of the other two territories, asked the Commission for time to think matters over since the decision would determine Libya's future for a long time to come. "Too much haste", he said, "might have disastrous consequences both for the Fezzan and the other two territories".

Ahmed Bey asked for the extra time in order to enable the inhabitants of the Fezzan to become acquainted with the work of the Committee of Twenty-One, through consultations with him and his Counsellors and the Chamber of Representatives.

As for the National Assembly, it could only be truly representative of the wishes of the inhabitants of Libya if its members were elected.

According to Ahmed Bey that is the golden rule of democracy as opposed to the autocratic method of arbitrary selection which he rejects, recalling that the representative of Tripolitania to the Council of Libya is a member of a certain political party -- the National Congress Party --, that the seven ^{1/} representatives of Tripolitania on the Committee of Twenty-One are members or followers of the National Congress Party, and finally that Tripolitania's representation in the National Assembly is in danger -- if the method of appointment is adopted -- of being dominated by that same National Congress.

Ahmed Bey asked the Commissioner whether a majority opinion in Tripolitania was in favour of the method of appointment. Personally, he thought there was no information on the number of political parties in Tripolitania or their relative size.

^{1/} Of the seven members for Tripolitania on the Committee of 21, six are members of the National Congress Party or of parties affiliated to the Congress, while the seventh is an Italian representing the minorities,

While recognizing all the varied difficulties inherent in the electoral system, he asked the Commissioner whether the method of appointment was not also likely to create difficulties for the future. Ahmed Bey said that "it is better to build on solid foundations right from the very beginning".

Ahmed Bey was also against the notion that any "foreign authority" should undertake to choose representatives for Tripolitania. Following these remarks, he spoke in favour of a secret vote in the three territories for the election of representatives to the National Assembly, as that was the only method that would enable the inhabitants of these territories to express their views freely.

Lastly, Ahmed Bey wanted the question of the participation of minorities in the National Assembly to be discussed after the question of the election had been settled. He did, however, agree that the Commission should resume its work after the Bairam celebrations.

On Saturday 16, the Commissioner informed the Committee of 21 of the outcome of his conversations. In the light of this information, the Commission and in particular its Tripolitanian members felt it would be useless to pursue conversations on the preparation of a list of twenty persons who could represent Tripolitania in the National Assembly, the more so as there did not remain sufficient time before the holidays to take a decision either on the principle of selection or on the participation of minorities. In those circumstances, the Commission unanimously decided to postpone its work until Monday, 9 October 1950, while thanking the Commissioner for his efforts and expressing the hope that upon resuming its work it would fulfil its mission successfully.